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Author: Baron Edward Bulwer Lytton Lytton

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EUGENE ARAM

By Edward Bulwer-Lytton

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE MARRIAGE SETTLED.—LESTER'S HOPES AND SCHEMES.—GAIETY OF TEMPER A GOOD SPECULATION.—THE TRUTH AND FERVOUR OF ARAM'S LOVE.

> Love is better than a pair of spectacles, to make
> every thing seem greater which is seen through it.
> —Sir Philip Sydney's Arcadia.

Aram's affection to Madeline having now been formally announced to Lester, and Madeline's consent having been somewhat less formally obtained, it only remained to fix the time for their wedding. Though Lester forbore to question Aram as to his circumstances, the Student frankly confessed, that if not affording what the generality of persons would consider even a competence, they enabled one of his moderate wants and retired life to dispense, especially in the remote and cheap district in which they lived, with all fortune in a wife, who, like Madeline, was equally with himself enamoured of obscurity. The good Lester, however, proposed to bestow upon his daughter such a portion as might allow for the wants of an increased family, or the probable contingencies of Fate. For though Fortune may often slacken her wheel, there is no spot in which she suffers it to be wholly still.

It was now the middle of September, and by the end of the ensuing month it was agreed that the spousals of the lovers should be held. It is certain that Lester felt one pang for his nephew, as he subscribed to this proposal; but he consoled himself with recurring to a hope he had long cherished,

viz. that Walter would return home not only cured of his vain attachment to Madeline, but of the disposition to admit the attractions of her sister. A marriage between these two cousins had for years been his favourite project. The lively and ready temper of Ellinor, her household turn, her merry laugh, a winning playfulness that characterised even her defects, were all more after Lester's secret heart than the graver and higher nature of his elder daughter. This might mainly be, that they were traits of disposition that more reminded him of his lost wife, and were therefore more accordant with his ideal standard of perfection; but I incline also to believe that the more persons advance in years, the more, even if of staid and sober temper themselves, they love gaiety and elasticity in youth. I have often pleased myself by observing in some happy family circle embracing all ages, that it is the liveliest and wildest child that charms the grandsire the most. And after all, it is perhaps with characters as with books, the grave and thoughtful may be more admired than the light and cheerful, but they are less liked; it is not only that the former, being of a more abstruse and recondite nature, find fewer persons capable of judging of their merits, but also that the great object of the majority of human beings is to be amused, and that they naturally incline to love those the best who amuse them most. And to so great a practical extent is this preference pushed, that I think were a nice observer to make a census of all those who have received legacies, or dropped unexpectedly into fortunes; he would find that where one grave disposition had so benefited, there would be at least twenty gay. Perhaps, however, it may be said that I am taking the cause for the effect!

But to return from our speculative disquisitions; Lester then, who, though he so slowly discovered his nephew's passion for Madeline, had long since guessed the secret of Ellinor's affection for him, looked forward with a hope rather sanguine than anxious to the ultimate realization of his cherished domestic scheme. And he pleased himself with thinking that when all soreness would, by this double wedding, be banished from Walter's mind, it would be impossible to conceive a family group more united or more happy.

And Ellinor herself, ever since the parting words of her cousin, had seemed, so far from being inconsolable for his absence, more bright of cheek and elastic of step than she had been for months before. What a world of all feelings, which forbid despondence, lies hoarded in the hearts of the young! As one fountain is filled by the channels that exhaust another; we cherish wisdom at the expense of hope. It thus happened from one cause or another, that Walter's absence created a less cheerless blank in the family circle than might have been expected, and the approaching bridals of Madeline and her lover, naturally diverted in a great measure the thoughts of each, and engrossed their conversation.

Whatever might be Madeline's infatuation as to the merits of Aram, one merit—the greatest of all in the eyes of a woman who loves, he at least possessed. Never was mistress more burningly and deeply loved than she, who, for the first time, awoke the long slumbering passions in the heart of Eugene Aram. Every day the ardour of his affections seemed to increase. With what anxiety he watched her footsteps!—with what idolatry he hung upon her words!—with what unspeakable and yearning emotion he gazed upon the changeful eloquence of her cheek. Now that Walter was gone, he almost took up his abode at the manor-house. He came thither in the early morning, and rarely returned home before the family retired for the night; and even then, when all was hushed, and they believed him in his solitary home, he lingered for hours around the house, to look up to Madeline's window, charmed to the spot which held the intoxication of her presence. Madeline discovered this habit, and chid it; but so tenderly, that it was not cured. And still at times, by the autumnal moon, she marked from her window his dark figure gliding among the shadows of the trees, or pausing by the lowly tombs in the still churchyard—the resting-place of hearts that once, perhaps, beat as wildly as his own.

It was impossible that a love of this order, and from one so richly gifted as Aram; a love, which in substance was truth, and yet in language poetry, could fail wholly to subdue and inthral a girl so young, so romantic, so enthusiastic, as Madeline Lester. How intense and delicious must have been her sense of happiness! In the pure heart of a girl loving for the first time—love is far more ecstatic than in man, inasmuch as it is unfevered by desire—love then and there makes the only state of human existence which is at once capable of calmness and transport!

CHAPTER II.

A FAVOURABLE SPECIMEN OF A NOBLEMAN AND A COURTIER.—A MAN OF SOME FAULTS AND MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

> Titinius Capito is to rehearse. He is a man of an excellent

disposition, and to be numbered among the chief ornaments of his age. He cultivates literature—he loves men of learning, etc.

—Lord Orrery: Pliny.

About this time the Earl of _____, the great nobleman of the district, and whose residence was within four miles of Grassdale, came down to pay his wonted yearly visit to his country domains. He was a man well known in the history of the times; though, for various reasons, I conceal his name. He was a courtier;—deep—wily—accomplished; but capable of generous sentiments and enlarged views. Though, from regard to his interests, he seized and lived as it were upon the fleeting spirit of the day—the penetration of his intellect went far beyond its reach. He claims the merit of having been the one of all his co-temporaries (Lord Chesterfield alone excepted), who most clearly saw, and most distinctly prophesied, the dark and fearful storm that at the close of the century burst over the vices, in order to sweep away the miseries, of France—a terrible avenger—a salutary purifier.

From the small circle of sounding trifles, in which the dwellers of a court are condemned to live, and which he brightened by his abilities and graced by his accomplishments, the sagacious and far-sighted mind of Lord—comprehended the vast field without, usually invisible to those of his habits and profession. Men who the best know the little nucleus which is called the world, are often the most ignorant of mankind; but it was the peculiar attribute of this nobleman, that he could not only analyse the external customs of his species, but also penetrate their deeper and more hidden interests.

The works, and correspondence he has left behind him, though far from voluminous, testify a consummate knowledge of the varieties of human nature The refinement of his taste appears less remarkable than the vigour of his understanding. It might be that he knew the vices of men better than their virtues; yet he was no shallow disbeliever in the latter: he read the heart too accurately not to know that it is guided as often by its affections as its interests. In his early life he had incurred, not without truth, the charge of licentiousness; but even in pursuit of pleasure, he had been neither weak on the one hand, nor gross on the other;—neither the headlong dupe, nor the callous sensualist: but his graces, his rank, his wealth, had made his conquests a matter of too easy purchase; and hence, like all voluptuaries, the part of his worldly knowledge, which was the most fallible, was that which related to the sex. He judged of women by a standard too distinct from that by which he judged of men, and considered those foibles peculiar to the sex, which in reality are incident to human nature.

His natural disposition was grave and reflective; and though he was not without wit, it was rarely used. He lived, necessarily, with the frivolous and the ostentatious, yet ostentation and frivolity were charges never brought against himself. As a diplomatist and a statesman, he was of the old and erroneous school of intriguers; but his favourite policy was the science of conciliation. He was one who would so far have suited the present age, that no man could better have steered a nation from the chances of war; James the First could not have been inspired with a greater affection for peace; but the Peer's dexterity would have made that peace as honourable as the King's weakness could have made it degraded. Ambitious to a certain extent, but neither grasping nor mean, he never obtained for his genius the full and extensive field it probably deserved. He loved a happy life above all things; and he knew that while activity is the spirit, fatigue is the bane, of happiness.

In his day he enjoyed a large share of that public attention which generally bequeaths fame; yet from several causes (of which his own moderation is not the least) his present reputation is infinitely less great than the opinions of his most distinguished cotemporaries foreboded.

It is a more difficult matter for men of high rank to become illustrious to posterity, than for persons in a sterner and more wholesome walk of life. Even the greatest among the distinguished men of the patrician order, suffer in the eyes of the after-age for the very qualities, mostly dazzling defects, or brilliant eccentricities, which made them most popularly remarkable in their day. Men forgive Burns his amours and his revellings with greater ease than they will forgive Bolingbroke and Byron for the same offences.

Our Earl was fond of the society of literary men; he himself was well, perhaps even deeply, read. Certainly his intellectual acquisitions were more profound than they have been generally esteemed, though with the common subtlety of a ready genius, he could make the quick adaptation of a timely fact, acquired for the occasion, appear the rich overflowing of a copious erudition. He was a man who instantly perceived, and liberally acknowledged, the merits of others. No connoisseur had a more felicitous knowledge of the arts, or was more just in the general objects of his patronage. In short, what with all his advantages, he was one whom an aristocracy may boast of, though a people may forget; and if not a great man, was at least a most remarkable lord.

The Earl of—, in his last visit to his estates, had not forgotten to seek out the eminent scholar who shed an honour upon his neighbourhood; he had been greatly struck with the bearing and conversation

of Aram, and with the usual felicity with which the accomplished Earl adapted his nature to those with whom he was thrown, he had succeeded in ingratiating himself with Aram in return. He could not indeed persuade the haughty and solitary Student to visit him at the castle; but the Earl did not disdain to seek any one from whom he could obtain instruction, and he had twice or thrice voluntarily encountered Aram, and effectually drawn him from his reserve. The Earl now heard with some pleasure, and more surprise, that the austere Recluse was about to be married to the beauty of the county, and he resolved to seize the first occasion to call at the manor- house to offer his compliments and congratulations to its inmates.

Sensible men of rank, who, having enjoyed their dignity from their birth, may reasonably be expected to grow occasionally tired of it; often like mixing with those the most who are the least dazzled by the condescension; I do not mean to say, with the vulgar parvenus who mistake rudeness for independence; —no man forgets respect to another who knows the value of respect to himself; but the respect should be paid easily; it is not every Grand Seigneur, who like Louis XIVth., is only pleased when he puts those he addresses out of countenance.

There was, therefore, much in the simplicity of Lester's manners, and those of his nieces, which rendered the family at the manor-house, especial favourites with Lord—; and the wealthier but less honoured squirearchs of the county, stiff in awkward pride, and bustling with yet more awkward veneration, heard with astonishment and anger of the numerous visits which his Lordship, in his brief sojourn at the castle, always contrived to pay to the Lesters, and the constant invitations, which they received to his most familiar festivities.

Lord—was no sportsman, and one morning, when all his guests were engaged among the stubbles of September, he mounted his quiet palfrey, and gladly took his way to the Manor-house.

It was towards the latter end of the month, and one of the earliest of the autumnal fogs hung thinly over the landscape. As the Earl wound along the sides of the hill on which his castle was built, the scene on which he gazed below received from the grey mists capriciously hovering over it, a dim and melancholy wildness. A broader and whiter vapour, that streaked the lower part of the valley, betrayed the course of the rivulet; and beyond, to the left, rose wan and spectral, the spire of the little church adjoining Lester's abode. As the horseman's eye wandered to this spot, the sun suddenly broke forth, and lit up as by enchantment, the quiet and lovely hamlet embedded, as it were, beneath,—the cottages, with their gay gardens and jasmined porches, the streamlet half in mist, half in light, while here and there columns of vapour rose above its surface like the chariots of the water genii, and broke into a thousand hues beneath the smiles of the unexpected sun: But far to the right, the mists around it yet unbroken, and the outline of its form only visible, rose the lone house of the Student, as if there the sadder spirits of the air yet rallied their broken armament of mist and shadow.

The Earl was not a man peculiarly alive to scenery, but he now involuntarily checked his horse, and gazed for a few moments on the beautiful and singular aspect which the landscape had so suddenly assumed. As he so gazed, he observed in a field at some little distance, three or four persons gathered around a bank, and among them he thought he recognised the comely form of Rowland Lester. A second inspection convinced him that he was right in his conjecture, and, turning from the road through a gap in the hedge, he made towards the group in question. He had not proceeded far, before he saw, that the remainder of the party was composed of Lester's daughters, the lover of the elder, and a fourth, whom he recognised as a celebrated French botanist who had lately arrived in England, and who was now making an amateur excursion throughout the more attractive districts of the island.

The Earl guessed rightly, that Monsieur de N—had not neglected to apply to Aram for assistance in a pursuit which the latter was known to have cultivated with such success, and that he had been conducted hither, as a place affording some specimen or another not unworthy of research. He now, giving his horse to his groom, joined the group.

CHAPTER III.

WHEREIN THE EARL AND THE STUDENT CONVERSE ON GRAVE BUT DELIGHTFUL MATTERS.—THE STUDENT'S NOTION OF THE ONLY EARTHLY HAPPINESS.

ARAM. If the witch Hope forbids us to be wise,
Yet when I turn to these—Woe's only friends,
And with their weird and eloquent voices calm

The stir and Babel of the world within,
I can but dream that my vex'd years at last
Shall find the quiet of a hermit's cell:—
And, neighbouring not this hacked and jaded world,
Beneath the lambent eyes of the loved stars,
And, with the hollow rocks and sparry caves,
The tides, and all the many-music'd winds

My oracles and co-mates;—watch my life
Glide down the Stream of Knowledge, and behold
Its waters with a musing stillness glass
The thousand hues of Nature and of Heaven.
—From Eugene Aram, a MS. Tragedy.

The Earl continued with the party he had joined; and when their occupation was concluded and they turned homeward, he accepted the Squire's frank invitation to partake of some refreshment at the Manor- house. It so chanced, or perhaps the Earl so contrived it, that Aram and himself, in their way to the village lingered a little behind the rest, and that their conversation was thus, for a few minutes, not altogether general.

"Is it I, Mr. Aram?" said the Earl smiling, "or is it Fate that has made you a convert? The last time we sagely and quietly conferred together, you contended that the more the circle of existence was contracted, the more we clung to a state of pure and all self-dependent intellect, the greater our chance of happiness. Thus you denied that we were rendered happier by our luxuries, by our ambition, or by our affections. Love and its ties were banished from your solitary Utopia. And you asserted that the true wisdom of life lay solely in the cultivation—not of our feelings, but our faculties. You know, I held a different doctrine: and it is with the natural triumph of a hostile partizan, that I hear you are about to relinquish the practice of one of your dogmas;—in consequence, may I hope, of having forsworn the theory?"

"Not so, my Lord," answered Aram, colouring slightly; "my weakness only proves that my theory is difficult,—not that it is wrong. I still venture to think it true. More pain than pleasure is occasioned us by others—banish others, and you are necessarily the gainer. Mental activity and moral quietude are the two states which, were they perfected and united, would constitute perfect happiness. It is such a union which constitutes all we imagine of Heaven, or conceive of the majestic felicity of a God."

"Yet, while you are on earth you will be (believe me) happier in the state you are about to choose," said the Earl. "Who could look at that enchanting face (the speaker directed his eyes towards Madeline) and not feel that it gave a pledge of happiness that could not be broken?"

It was not in the nature of Aram to like any allusion to himself, and still less to his affections: he turned aside his head, and remained silent: the wary Earl discovered his indiscretion immediately.

"But let us put aside individual cases," said he,—"the meum and the tuum forbid all argument:—and confess, that there is for the majority of human beings a greater happiness in love than in the sublime state of passionless intellect to which you would so chillingly exalt us. Has not Cicero said wisely, that we ought no more to subject too slavishly our affections, than to elevate them too imperiously into our masters? Neque se nimium erigere, nec subjacere serviliter."

"Cicero loved philosophizing better than philosophy," said Aram, coldly; "but surely, my Lord, the affections give us pain as well as pleasure. The doubt, the dread, the restlessness of love,—surely these prevent the passion from constituting a happy state of mind; to me one knowledge alone seems sufficient to embitter all its enjoyments,—the knowledge that the object beloved must die. What a perpetuity of fear that knowledge creates! The avalanche that may crush us depends upon a single breath!"

"Is not that too refined a sentiment? Custom surely blunts us to every chance, every danger, that may happen to us hourly. Were the avalanche over you for a day,—I grant your state of torture,—but had an avalanche rested over you for years, and not yet fallen, you would forget that it could ever fall; you would eat, sleep, and make love, as if it were not!"

"Ha! my Lord, you say well—you say well," said Aram, with a marked change of countenance; and, quickening his pace, he joined Lester's side, and the thread of the previous conversation was broken off.

The Earl afterwards, in walking through the gardens (an excursion which he proposed himself, for he was somewhat of an horticulturist), took an opportunity to renew the subject.

"You will pardon me," said he, "but I cannot convince myself that man would be happier were he without emotions; and that to enjoy life he should be solely dependant on himself!"

"Yet it seems to me," said Aram, "a truth easy of proof; if we love, we place our happiness in others. The moment we place our happiness in others, comes uncertainty, but uncertainty is the bane of happiness. Children are the source of anxiety to their parents;—his mistress to the lover. Change, accident, death, all menace us in each person whom we regard. Every new tie opens new channels by which grief can invade us; but, you will say, by which joy also can flow in;—granted! But in human life is there not more grief than joy? What is it that renders the balance even? What makes the staple of our happiness,—endearing to us the life at which we should otherwise repine? It is the mere passive, yet stirring, consciousness of life itself!—of the sun and the air of the physical being; but this consciousness every emotion disturbs. Yet could you add to its tranquillity an excitement that never exhausts itself,—that becomes refreshed, not sated, with every new possession, then you would obtain happiness. There is only one excitement of this divine order,—that of intellectual culture. Behold now my theory! Examine it— it contains no flaw. But if," renewed Aram, after a pause, "a man is subject to fate solely in himself, not in others, he soon hardens his mind against all fear, and prepares it for all events. A little philosophy enables him to bear bodily pain, or the common infirmities of flesh: by a philosophy somewhat deeper, he can conquer the ordinary reverses of fortune, the dread of shame, and the last calamity of death. But what philosophy could ever thoroughly console him for the ingratitude of a friend, the worthlessness of a child, the death of a mistress? Hence, only when he stands alone, can a man's soul say to Fate, 'I defy thee.'"

"You think then," said the Earl, reluctantly diverting the conversation into a new channel "that in the pursuit of knowledge lies our only active road to real happiness. Yet here how eternal must be the disappointments even of the most successful! Does not Boyle tell us of a man who, after devoting his whole life to the study of one mineral, confessed himself, at last, ignorant of all its properties?"

"Had the object of his study been himself, and not the mineral, he would not have been so unsuccessful a student," said Aram, smiling. "Yet," added he, in a graver tone, "we do indeed cleave the vast heaven of Truth with a weak and crippled wing: and often we are appalled in our way by a dread sense of the immensity around us, and of the inadequacy of our own strength. But there is a rapture in the breath of the pure and difficult air, and in the progress by which we compass earth, the while we draw nearer to the stars,—that again exalts us beyond ourselves, and reconciles the true student unto all things,—even to the hardest of them all,—the conviction how feebly our performance can ever imitate the grandeur of our ambition! As you see the spark fly upward,—sometimes not falling to earth till it be dark and quenched,—thus soars, whither it recks not, so that the direction be above, the luminous spirit of him who aspires to Truth; nor will it back to the vile and heavy clay from which it sprang, until the light which bore it upward be no more!"

CHAPTER IV.

A DEEPER EXAMINATION INTO THE STUDENT'S HEART.—THE VISIT TO THE CASTLE.—PHILOSOPHY PUT TO THE TRIAL.

I weigh not fortune's frown or smile,
I joy not much in earthly joys,
I seek not state, I seek not stile,
I am not fond of fancy's toys;
I rest so pleased with what I have,
I wish no more, no more I crave.
—Joshua Sylvester.

The reader must pardon me, if I somewhat clog his interest in my tale by the brief conversations I have given, and must for a short while cast myself on his indulgence and renew. It is not only the history of his life, but the character and tone of Aram's mind, that I wish to stamp upon my page. Fortunately, however, the path my story assumes is of such a nature, that in order to effect this object, I shall never have to desert, and scarcely again even to linger by, the way.

Every one knows the magnificent moral of Goethe's "Faust!" Every one knows that sublime discontent —that chafing at the bounds of human knowledge—that yearning for the intellectual Paradise beyond, which "the sworded angel" forbids us to approach—that daring, yet sorrowful state of mind—that sense

of defeat, even in conquest, which Goethe has embodied,—a picture of the loftiest grief of which the soul is capable, and which may remind us of the profound and august melancholy which the Great Sculptor breathed into the repose of the noblest of mythological heroes, when he represented the God resting after his labours, as if more convinced of their vanity than elated with their extent!

In this portrait, the grandeur of which the wild scenes that follow in the drama we refer to, do not (strangely wonderful as they are) perhaps altogether sustain, Goethe has bequeathed to the gaze of a calmer and more practical posterity, the burning and restless spirit—the feverish desire for knowledge more vague than useful, which characterised the exact epoch in the intellectual history of Germany, in which the poem was inspired and produced.

At these bitter waters, the Marah of the streams of Wisdom, the soul of the man whom we have made the hero of these pages, had also, and not lightly, quaffed. The properties of a mind, more calm and stern than belonged to the visionaries of the Hartz and the Danube, might indeed have preserved him from that thirst after the impossibilities of knowledge, which gives so peculiar a romance, not only to the poetry, but the philosophy of the German people. But if he rejected the superstitions, he did not also reject the bewilderments of the mind. He loved to plunge into the dark and metaphysical subtleties which human genius has called daringly forth from the realities of things:—

"To spin

A shroud of thought, to hide him from the sun

Of this familiar life, which seems to be,

But is not—or is but quaint mockery

Of all we would believe;—or sadly blame

The jarring and inexplicable frame

Of this wrong world: and then anatomize

The purposes and thoughts of man, whose eyes

Were closed in distant years; or widely guess

The issue of the earth's great business,

When we shall be, as we no longer are,

Like babbling gossips, safe, who hear the war

Of winds, and sigh!—but tremble not!"

Much in him was a type, or rather forerunner, of the intellectual spirit that broke forth when we were children, among our countrymen, and is now slowly dying away amidst the loud events and absorbing struggles of the awakening world. But in one respect he stood aloof from all his tribe—in his hard indifference to worldly ambition, and his contempt of fame. As some sages have seemed to think the universe a dream, and self the only reality, so in his austere and collected reliance upon his own mind—the gathering in, as it were, of his resources, he appeared to consider the pomps of the world as shadows, and the life of his own spirit the only substance. He had built a city and a tower within the Shinar of his own heart, whence he might look forth, unscathed and unmoved, upon the deluge that broke over the rest of earth.

Only in one instance, and that, as we have seen, after much struggle, he had given way to the emotions that agitate his kind, and had surrendered himself to the dominion of another. This was against his theories—but what theories ever resist love? In yielding, however, thus far, he seemed more on his guard than ever against a broader encroachment. He had admitted one 'fair spirit' for his 'minister,' but it was only with a deeper fervour to invoke 'the desert' as 'his dwelling-place.' Thus, when the Earl, who, like most practical judges of mankind, loved to apply to each individual the motives that actuate the mass, and who only unwillingly, and somewhat sceptically, assented to the exceptions, and was driven to search for peculiar clues to the eccentric instance,— finding, to his secret triumph, that Aram had admitted one intruding emotion into his boasted circle of indifference, imagined that he should easily induce him (the spell once broken) to receive another, he was surprised and puzzled to discover himself in the wrong.

Lord—at that time had been lately called into the administration, and he was especially anxious to secure the support of all the talent that he could enlist in its behalf. The times were those in which

party ran high, and in which individual political writings were honoured with an importance which the periodical press in general has now almost wholly monopolized. On the side opposed to Government, writers of great name and high attainments had shone with peculiar effect, and the Earl was naturally desirous that they should be opposed by an equal array of intellect on the side espoused by himself. The name alone of Eugene Aram, at a day when scholarship was renown, would have been no ordinary acquisition to the cause of the Earl's party; but that judicious and penetrating nobleman perceived that Aram's abilities, his various research, his extended views, his facility of argument, and the heat and energy of his eloquence, might be rendered of an importance which could not have been anticipated from the name alone, however eminent, of a retired and sedentary scholar; he was not therefore without an interested motive in the attentions he now lavished upon the Student, and in his curiosity to put to the proof the disdain of all worldly enterprise and worldly temptation, which Aram affected. He could not but think, that to a man poor and lowly of circumstance, conscious of superior acquirements, about to increase his wants by admitting to them a partner, and arrived at that age when the calculations of interest and the whispers of ambition have usually most weight;—he could not but think that to such a man the dazzling prospects of social advancement, the hope of the high fortunes, and the powerful and glittering influence which political life, in England, offers to the aspirant, might be rendered altogether irresistible.

He took several opportunities in the course of the next week, of renewing his conversation with Aram, and of artfully turning it into the channels which he thought most likely to produce the impression he desired to create. He was somewhat baffled, but by no means dispirited, in his attempts; but he resolved to defer his ultimate proposition until it could be made to the fullest advantage. He had engaged the Lesters to promise to pass a day at the castle; and with great difficulty, and at the earnest intercession of Madeline, Aram was prevailed upon to accompany them. So extreme was his distaste to general society, and, from some motive or another more powerful than mere constitutional reserve, so invariably had he for years refused all temptations to enter it, that natural as this concession was rendered by his approaching marriage to one of the party, it filled him with a sort of terror and foreboding of evil. It was as if he were passing beyond the boundary of some law, on which the very tenure of his existence depended. After he had consented, a trembling came over him; he hastily left the room, and till the day arrived, was observed by his friends of the Manor-house to be more gloomy and abstracted than they ever had known him, even at the earliest period of acquaintance.

On the day itself, as they proceeded to the castle, Madeline perceived with a tearful repentance of her interference, that he sate by her side cold and rapt; and that once or twice when his eyes dwelt upon her, it was with an expression of reproach and distrust.

It was not till they entered the lofty hall of the castle, when a vulgar diffidence would have been most abashed, that Aram recovered himself. The Earl was standing—the centre of a group in the recess of a window in the saloon, opening upon an extensive and stately terrace. He came forward to receive them with the polished and warm kindness which he bestowed upon al his inferiors in rank. He complimented the sisters; he jested with Lester; but to Aram only, he manifested less the courtesy of kindness than of respect. He took his arm, and leaning on it with a light touch, led him to the group at the window. It was composed of the most distinguished public men in the country, and among them (the Earl himself was connected through an illegitimate branch with the reigning monarch,) was a prince of the blood royal.

To these, whom he had prepared for the introduction, he severally, and with an easy grace, presented Aram, and then falling back a few steps, he watched with a keen but seemingly careless eye, the effect which so sudden a contact with royalty itself would produce on the mind of the shy and secluded Student, whom it was his object to dazzle and overpower. It was at this moment that the native dignity of Aram, which his studies, unworldly as they were, had certainly tended to increase, displayed itself, in a trial which, poor as it was in abstract theory, was far from despicable in the eyes of the sensible and practised courtier. He received with his usual modesty, but not with his usual shrinking and embarrassment on such occasions, the compliments he received; a certain and far from ungraceful pride was mingled with his simplicity of demeanour; no fluttering of manner, betrayed that he was either dazzled or humbled by the presence in which he stood, and the Earl could not but confess that there was never a more favourable opportunity for comparing the aristocracy of genius with that of birth; it was one of those homely every-day triumphs of intellect, which please us more than they ought to do, for, after all, they are more common than the men of courts are willing to believe.

Lord—did not however long leave Aram to the support of his own unassisted presence of mind and calmness of nerve; he advanced, and led the conversation, with his usual tact, into a course which might at once please Aram, and afford him the opportunity to shine. The Earl had imported from Italy some of the most beautiful specimens of classic sculpture which this country now possesses. These were disposed in niches around the magnificent apartment in which the guest were assembled, and as the Earl pointed them out, and illustrated each from the beautiful anecdotes and golden allusions of

antiquity, he felt that he was affording to Aram a gratification he could never have experienced before; and in the expression of which, the grace and copiousness of his learning would find vent. Nor was he disappointed. The cheek, which till then had retained its steady paleness, now caught the glow of enthusiasm; and in a few moments there was not a person in the group, who did not feel, and cheerfully feel, the superiority of the one who, in birth and fortune, was immeasureably the lowest of all.

The English aristocracy, whatever be the faults of their education, (and certainly the name of the faults is legion!) have at least the merit of being alive to the possession, and easily warmed to the possessor, of classical attainment: perhaps even from this very merit spring many of the faults we allude to; they are too apt to judge all talent by a classical standard, and all theory by classical experience. Without,— save in very rare instances,—the right to boast of any deep learning, they are far more susceptible than the nobility of any other nation to the spiritum Camoenae. They are easily and willingly charmed back to the studies which, if not eagerly pursued in youth, are still entwined with all their youth's brightest recollections; the schoolboy's prize, and the master's praise,—the first ambition, and its first reward. A felicitous quotation, a delicate allusion, is never lost upon their ear; and the veneration which at Eton they bore to the best verse-maker in the school, tinctures their judgment of others throughout life, mixing I know not what, both of liking and esteem, with their admiration of one who uses his classical weapons with a scholar's dexterity, not a pedant's inaptitude: for such a one there is a sort of agreeable confusion in their respect; they are inclined, unconsciously, to believe that he must necessarily be a high gentleman—ay, and something of a good fellow into the bargain.

It happened then that Aram could not have dwelt upon a theme more likely to arrest the spontaneous interest of those with whom he now conversed— men themselves of more cultivated minds than usual, and more capable than most (from that acute perception of real talent, which is produced by habitual political warfare,) of appreciating not only his endowments, but his facility in applying them.

"You are right, my Lord," said Sir—, the whipper-in of the—party, taking the Earl aside; "he would be an inestimable pamphleteer."

"Could you get him to write us a sketch of the state of parties; luminous, eloquent?'" whispered a lord of the bed-chamber.

The Earl answered by a bon mot, and turned to a bust of Caracalla.

The hours at that time were (in the country at least) not late, and the Earl was one of the first introducers of the polished fashion of France, by which we testify a preference of the society of the women to that of our own sex; so that, in leaving the dining-room, it was not so late but that the greater part of the guests walked out upon the terrace, and admired the expanse of country which it overlooked, and along which the thin veil of the twilight began now to hover.

Having safely deposited his royal guest at a whist table, and thus left himself a free agent, the Earl, inviting Aram to join him, sauntered among the loiterers on the terrace for a few moments, and then descended a broad flight of steps, which brought them into a more shaded and retired walk; on either side of which rows of orange-trees gave forth their fragrance, while, to the right, sudden and numerous vistas were cut among the more irregular and dense foliage, affording glimpses—now of some rustic statue—now of some lone temple—now of some quaint fountain, on the play of whose waters the first stars had begun to tremble.

It was one of those magnificent gardens, modelled from the stately glories of Versailles, which it is now the mode to decry, but which breathe so unequivocally of the Palace. I grant that they deck Nature with somewhat too prolix a grace; but is beauty always best seen in deshabille? And with what associations of the brightest traditions connected with Nature they link her more luxuriant loveliness! Must we breathe only the malaria of Rome to be capable of feeling the interest attached to the fountain or the statue?

"I am glad," said the Earl, "that you admired my bust of Cicero—it is from an original very lately discovered. What grandeur in the brow!— what energy in the mouth, and downward bend of the head! It is pleasant even to imagine we gaze upon the likeness of so bright a spirit;—and confess, at least of Cicero, that in reading the aspirations and outpourings of his mind, you have felt your apathy to Fame melting away; you have shared the desire to live to the future age,—'the longing after immortality?"

"Was it not that longing," replied Aram, "which gave to the character of Cicero its poorest and most frivolous infirmity? Has it not made him, glorious as he is despite of it, a byword in the mouths of every schoolboy? Wherever you mention his genius, do you not hear an appendix on his vanity?"

"Yet without that vanity, that desire for a name with posterity, would he have been equally great—would he equally have cultivated his genius?"

"Probably, my Lord, he would not have equally cultivated his genius, but in reality he might have been equally great. A man often injures his mind by the means that increase his genius. You think this, my Lord, a paradox, but examine it. How many men of genius have been but ordinary men, take them from the particular objects in which they shine. Why is this, but that in cultivating one branch of intellect they neglect the rest? Nay, the very torpor of the reasoning faculty has often kindled the imaginative. Lucretius composed his sublime poem under the influence of a delirium. The susceptibilities that we create or refine by the pursuit of one object, weaken our general reason; and I may compare with some justice the powers of the mind to the faculties of the body, in which squinting is occasioned by an inequality of strength in the eyes, and discordance of voice by the same inequality in the ears."

"I believe you are right," said the Earl; "yet I own I willingly forgive Cicero for his vanity, if it contributed to the production of his orations and his essays; and he is a greater man, even with his vanity unconquered, than if he had conquered his foible, and in doing so taken away the incitements to his genius."

"A greater man in the world's eye, my Lord, but scarcely in reality. Had Homer written his Iliad and then burnt it, would his genius have been less? The world would have known nothing of him, but would he have been a less extraordinary man on that account? We are too apt, my Lord, to confound greatness and fame.

"There is one circumstance," added Aram, after a pause, "that should diminish our respect for renown. Errors of life, as well as foibles of characters, are often the real enhancers of celebrity. Without his errors, I doubt whether Henri Quatre would have become the idol of a people. How many Whartons has the world known, who, deprived of their frailties, had been inglorious! The light that you so admire, reaches you only through the distance of time, on account of the angles and unevenness of the body whence it emanates. Were the surface of the moon smooth, it would be invisible."

"I admire your illustrations," said the Earl; "but I reluctantly submit to your reasonings. You would then neglect your powers, lest they should lead you into errors?"

"Pardon me, my Lord; it is because I think all the powers should be cultivated, that I quarrel with the exclusive cultivation of one. And it is only because I would strengthen the whole mind that I dissent from the reasonings of those who tell you to consult your genius."

"But your genius may serve mankind more than this general cultivation of intellect?"

"My Lord," replied Aram, with a mournful cloud upon his countenance; "that argument may have weight with those who think mankind can be effectually served, though they may be often dazzled, by the labours of an individual. But, indeed, this perpetual talk of 'mankind' signifies nothing: each of us consults his proper happiness, and we consider him a madman who ruins his own peace of mind by an everlasting fretfulness of philanthropy."

This was a doctrine that half pleased, half displeased the Earl—it shadowed forth the most dangerous notions which Aram entertained.

"Well, well," said the noble host, as, after a short contest on the ground of his guest's last remark, they left off where they began, "Let us drop these general discussions: I have a particular proposition to unfold. We have, I trust, Mr. Aram, seen enough of each other, to feel that we can lay a sure foundation for mutual esteem. For my part, I own frankly, that I have never met with one who has inspired me with a sincerer admiration. I am desirous that your talents and great learning should be known in the widest sphere. You may despise fame, but you must permit your friends the weakness to wish you justice, and themselves triumph. You know my post in the present administration—the place of my secretary is one of great trust—some influence, and large emolument. I offer it to you—accept it, and you will confer upon me an honour and an obligation. You will have your own separate house, or apartments in mine, solely appropriated to your use. Your privacy will never be disturbed. Every arrangement shall be made for yourself and your bride, that either of you can suggest. Leisure for your own pursuits you will have, too, in abundance—there are others who will perform all that is toilsome in your office. In London, you will see around you the most eminent living men of all nations, and in all pursuits. If you contract, (which believe me is possible—it is a tempting game,) any inclination towards public life, you will have the most brilliant opportunities afforded you, and I foretell you the most signal success. Stay yet one moment:—for this you will owe me no thanks. Were I not sensible that I consult my own interests in this proposal, I should be courtier enough to suppress it."

"My Lord," said Aram, in a voice which, in spite of its calmness, betrayed that he was affected, "it seldom happens to a man of my secluded habits, and lowly pursuits, to have the philosophy he affects put to so severe a trial. I am grateful to you—deeply grateful for an offer so munificent—so undeserved.

I am yet more grateful that it allows me to sound the strength of my own heart, and to find that I did not too highly rate it. Look, my Lord, from the spot where we now stand" (the moon had risen, and they had now returned to the terrace): "in the vale below, and far among those trees, lies my home. More than two years ago, I came thither, to fix the resting-place of a sad and troubled spirit. There have I centered all my wishes and my hopes; and there may I breathe my last! My Lord, you will not think me ungrateful, that my choice is made; and you will not blame my motive, though you may despise my wisdom."

"But," said the Earl astonished, "you cannot foresee all the advantages you would renounce. At your age—with your intellect—to choose the living sepulchre of a hermitage—it was wise to reconcile yourself to it, but not to prefer it! Nay, nay; consider—pause. I am in no haste for your decision; and what advantages have you in your retreat, that you will not possess in a greater degree with me? Quiet?—I pledge it to you under my roof. Solitude?—you shall have it at your will. Books?—what are those which you, which any individual possesses, to the public institutions, the magnificent collections, of the metropolis? What else is it you enjoy yonder, and cannot enjoy with me?"

"Liberty!" said Aram energetically.—"Liberty! the wild sense of independence. Could I exchange the lonely stars and the free air, for the poor lights and feverish atmosphere of worldly life? Could I surrender my mood, with its thousand eccentricities and humours—its cloud and shadow- -to the eyes of strangers, or veil it from their gaze by the irksomeness of an eternal hypocrisy? No, my Lord! I am too old to turn disciple to the world! You promise me solitude and quiet. What charm would they have for me, if I felt they were held from the generosity of another? The attraction of solitude is only in its independence. You offer me the circle, but not the magic which made it holy. Books! They, years since, would have tempted me; but those whose wisdom I have already drained, have taught me now almost enough: and the two Books, whose interest can never be exhausted—Nature and my own Heart—will suffice for the rest of life. My Lord, I require no time for consideration."

"And you positively refuse me?"

"Gratefully refuse you."

The Earl walked peevishly away for one moment; but it was not in his nature to lose himself for more.

"Mr. Aram," said he frankly, and holding out his hand; "you have chosen nobly, if not wisely; and though I cannot forgive you for depriving me of such a companion, I thank you for teaching me such a lesson. Henceforth, I will believe, that philosophy may exist in practice; and that a contempt for wealth and for honours, is not the mere profession of discontent. This is the first time, in a various and experienced life, that I have found a man sincerely deaf to the temptations of the world,— and that man of such endowments! If ever you see cause to alter a theory that I still think erroneous, though lofty—remember me; and at all times, and on all occasions," he added, with a smile, "when a friend becomes a necessary evil, call to mind our starlit walk on the castle terrace."

Aram did not mention to Lester, or even Madeline, the above conversation. The whole of the next day he shut himself up at home; and when he again appeared at the Manor-house, he heard with evident satisfaction that the Earl had been suddenly summoned on state affairs to London.

There was an unaccountable soreness in Aram's mind, which made him feel a resentment—a suspicion against all who sought to lure him from his retreat. "Thank Heaven!" thought he, when he heard of the Earl's departure; "we shall not meet for another year!" He was mistaken.— Another year!

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH THE STORY RETURNS TO WALTER AND THE CORPORAL.—THE RENCONTRE WITH A STRANGER, AND HOW THE STRANGER PROVES TO BE NOT ALTOGETHER A STRANGER.

> Being got out of town in the road to Penaflor, master of my own action, and forty good ducats; the first thing I did was to give my mule her head, and to go at what pace she pleased.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I left them in the inn, and continued my journey; I was hardly got half-a-mile farther, when I met a cavalier very genteel,

—Gil Blas.

It was broad and sunny noon on the second day of their journey, as Walter Lester, and the valorous attendant with whom it had pleased Fate to endow him, rode slowly into a small town in which the Corporal in his own heart, had resolved to bait his roman-nosed horse and refresh himself. Two comely inns had the younger traveller of the twain already passed with an indifferent air, as if neither bait nor refreshment made any part of the necessary concerns of this habitable world. And in passing each of the said hostelries, the roman-nosed horse had uttered a snort of indignant surprise, and the worthy Corporal had responded to the quadrupedal remonstrance by a loud hem. It seemed, however, that Walter heard neither of the above significant admonitions; and now the town was nearly passed, and a steep hill that seemed winding away into eternity, already presented itself to the rueful gaze of the Corporal.

"The boy's clean mad," grunted Bunting to himself—"must do my duty to him—give him a hint."

Pursuant to this notable and conscientious determination, Bunting jogged his horse into a trot, and coming alongside of Walter, put his hand to his hat and said:

"Weather warm, your honour—horses knocked up—next town far as hell!— halt a bit here—augh!"

"Ha! that is very true, Bunting; I had quite forgotten the length of our journey. But see, there is a sign-post yonder, we will take advantage of it."

"Augh! and your honour's right—fit for the forty-second;" said the Corporal, falling back; and in a few moments he and his charger found themselves, to their mutual delight, entering the yard of a small, but comfortable-looking inn.

The Host, a man of a capacious stomach and a rosy cheek—in short, a host whom your heart warms to see, stepped forth immediately, held the stirrup for the young Squire, (for the Corporal's movements were too stately to be rapid,) and ushered him with a bow, a smile, and a flourish of his napkin, into one of those little quaint rooms, with cupboards bright with high glasses and old china, that it pleases us still to find extant in the old-fashioned inns, in our remoter roads and less Londonized districts.

Mine host was an honest fellow, and not above his profession; he stirred the fire, dusted the table, brought the bill of fare, and a newspaper seven days old, and then bustled away to order the dinner and chat with the Corporal. That accomplished hero had already thrown the stables into commotion, and frightening the two ostlers from their attendance on the steeds of more peaceable men, had set them both at leading his own horse and his master's to and fro' the yard, to be cooled into comfort and appetite.

He was now busy in the kitchen, where he had seized the reins of government, sent the scullion to see if the hens had laid any fresh eggs, and drawn upon himself the objurgations of a very thin cook with a squint.

"Tell you, ma'am, you are wrong—quite wrong—have seen the world—old soldier—and know how to fry eggs better than any she in the three kingdoms—hold jaw—mind your own business—where's the frying-pan?— baugh!"

So completely did the Corporal feel himself in his element, while he was putting everybody else out of the way; and so comfortable did he find his new quarters, that he resolved that the "bait" should be at all events prolonged until his good cheer had been deliberately digested, and his customary pipe duly enjoyed.

Accordingly, but not till Walter had dined, for our man of the world knew that it is the tendency of that meal to abate our activity, while it increases our good humour, the Corporal presented himself to his master, with a grave countenance.

"Greatly vexed, your honour—who'd have thought it?—but those large animals are bad on long march."

"Why what's the matter now, Bunting?"

"Only, Sir, that the brown horse is so done up, that I think it would be as much as life's worth to go any farther for several hours."

"Very well, and if I propose staying here till the evening?—we have ridden far, and are in no great hurry."

"To be sure not—sure and certain not," cried the Corporal. "Ah, Master, you know how to command, I

see. Nothing like discretion—discretion, Sir, is a jewel. Sir, it is more than jewel—it's a pair of stirrups!"

"A what? Bunting."

"Pair of stirrups, your honour. Stirrups help us to get on, so does discretion; to get off, ditto discretion. Men without stirrups look fine, ride bold, tire soon: men without discretion cut dash, but knock up all of a crack. Stirrups—but what sinnifies? Could say much more, your honour, but don't love chatter."

"Your simile is ingenious enough, if not poetical," said Walter; "but it does not hold good to the last. When a man falls, his discretion should preserve him; but he is often dragged in the mud by his stirrups."

"Beg pardon—you're wrong," quoth the Corporal, nothing taken by surprise; "spoke of the new-fangled stirrups that open, crank, when we fall, and let us out of the scrape." [Note: Of course the Corporal does not speak of the patent stirrup: that would be an anachronism.]

Satisfied with this repartee, the Corporal now (like an experienced jester) withdrew to leave its full effect on the admiration of his master. A little before sunset the two travellers renewed their journey.

"I have loaded the pistols, Sir," said the Corporal, pointing to the holsters on Walter's saddle. "It is eighteen miles off to the next town— will be dark long before we get there."

"You did very right, Bunting, though I suppose there is not much danger to be apprehended from the gentlemen of the highway."

"Why the Landlord do say the revarse, your honour,—been many robberies lately in these here parts."

"Well, we are fairly mounted, and you are a formidable-looking fellow,
Bunting."

"Oh! your honour," quoth the Corporal, turning his head stiffly away, with a modest simper, "You makes me blush; though, indeed, bating that I have the military air, and am more in the prime of life, your honour is well nigh as awkward a gentleman as myself to come across."

"Much obliged for the compliment!" said Walter, pushing his horse a little forward—the Corporal took the hint and fell back.

It was now that beautiful hour of twilight when lovers grow especially tender. The young traveller every instant threw his dark eyes upward, and thought—not of Madeline, but her sister. The Corporal himself grew pensive, and in a few moments his whole soul was absorbed in contemplating the forlorn state of the abandoned Jacobina.

In this melancholy and silent mood, they proceeded onward till the shades began to deepen; and by the light of the first stars Walter beheld a small, spare gentleman riding before him on an ambling nag, with cropped ears and mane. The rider, as he now came up to him, seemed to have passed the grand climacteric, but looked hale and vigorous; and there was a certain air of staid and sober aristocracy about him, which involuntarily begat your respect.

He looked hard at Walter as the latter approached, and still more hard at the Corporal. He seemed satisfied with the survey.

"Sir," said he, slightly touching his hat to Walter, and with an agreeable though rather sharp intonation of voice, "I am very glad to see a gentleman of your appearance travelling my road. Might I request the honour of being allowed to join you so far as you go? To say the truth, I am a little afraid of encountering those industrious gentlemen who have been lately somewhat notorious in these parts; and it may be better for all of us to ride in as strong a party as possible."

"Sir," replied Walter, eyeing in his turn the speaker, and in his turn also feeling satisfied with the scrutiny, "I am going to—, where I shall pass the night on my way to town; and shall be very happy in your company."

The Corporal uttered a loud hem; that penetrating man of the world was not too well pleased with the advances of a stranger.

"What fools them boys be!" thought he, very discontentedly; "howsomever, the man does seem like a decent country gentleman, and we are two to one: besides, he's old, little, and—augh, baugh—I dare say, we are safe enough, for all he can do."

The Stranger possessed a polished and well-bred demeanour; he talked freely and copiously, and his

conversation was that of a shrewd and cultivated man. He informed Walter that, not only the roads had been infested by those more daring riders common at that day, and to whose merits we ourselves have endeavoured to do justice in a former work of blessed memory, but that several houses had been lately attempted, and two absolutely plundered.

"For myself," he added, "I have no money, to signify, about my person: my watch is only valuable to me for the time it has been in my possession; and if the rogues robbed one civilly, I should not so much mind encountering them; but they are a desperate set, and use violence when there is nothing to be got by it. Have you travelled far to-day, Sir?"

"Some six or seven-and-twenty miles," replied Walter. "I am proceeding to London, and not willing to distress my horses by too rapid a journey."

"Very right, very good; and horses, Sir, are not now what they used to be when I was a young man. Ah, what wagers I used to win then! Horses galloped, Sir, when I was twenty; they trotted when I was thirty-five; but they only amble now. Sir, if it does not tax your patience too severely, let us give our nags some hay and water at the half-way house yonder."

Walter assented; they stopped at a little solitary inn by the side of the road, and the host came out with great obsequiousness when he heard the voice of Walter's companion.

"Ah, Sir Peter!" said he, "and how be'st your honour—fine night, Sir Peter—hope you'll get home safe, Sir Peter."

"Safe—ay! indeed, Jock, I hope so too. Has all been quiet here this last night or two?"

"Whish, Sir!" whispered my host, jerking his thumb back towards the house; "there be two ugly customers within I does not know: they have got famous good horses, and are drinking hard. I can't say as I knows any thing agen 'em, but I think your honours had better be jogging."

"Aha! thank ye, Jock, thank ye. Never mind the hay now," said Sir Peter, pulling away the reluctant mouth of his nag; and turning to Walter, "Come, Sir, let us move on. Why, zounds! where is that servant of yours?"

Walter now perceived, with great vexation, that the Corporal had disappeared within the alehouse; and looking through the casement, on which the ruddy light of the fire played cheerily, he saw the man of the world lifting a little measure of "the pure creature" to his lips; and close by the hearth, at a small, round table, covered with glasses, pipes, he beheld two men eyeing the tall Corporal very wistfully, and of no prepossessing appearance themselves. One, indeed, as the fire played full on his countenance, was a person of singularly rugged and sinister features; and this man, he now remarked, was addressing himself with a grim smile to the Corporal, who, setting down his little "noggin," regarded him with a stare, which appeared to Walter to denote recognition. This survey was the operation of a moment; for Sir Peter took it upon himself to despatch the landlord into the house, to order forth the unseasonable carouser; and presently the Corporal stalked out, and having solemnly remounted, the whole trio set onward in a brisk trot. As soon as they were without sight of the ale-house, the Corporal brought the aquiline profile of his gaunt steed on a level with his master's horse.

"Augh, Sir!" said he, with more than his usual energy of utterance, "I see'd him!"

"Him! whom?"

"Man with ugly face what drank at Peter Dealtry's, and knew Master Aram,- -knew him in a crack,—sure he's a Tartar!"

"What! does your servant recognize one of those suspicious fellows whom Jock warned us against?" cried Sir Peter, pricking up his ears.

"So it seems, Sir," said Walter: "he saw him once before, many miles hence; but I fancy he knows nothing really to his prejudice."

"Augh!" cried the Corporal; "he's d—d ugly any how!"

"That's a tall fellow of yours," said Sir Peter, jerking up his chin with that peculiar motion common to the brief in stature, when they are covetous of elongation. "He looks military:—has he been in the army? Ay, I thought so; one of the King of Prussia's grenadiers, I suppose? Faith, I hear hoofs behind!"

"Hem!" cried the Corporal, again coming alongside of his master. "Beg pardon, Sir—served in the 42nd—nothing like regular line—stragglers always cut off—had rather not straggle just now—enemy behind!"

Walter looked back, and saw two men approaching them at a hand-gallop. "We are a match at least for them, Sir," said he, to his new acquaintance.

"I am devilish glad I met you," was Sir Peter's rather selfish reply.

" 'Tis he! 'tis the devil!" grunted the Corporal, as the two men now gained their side and pulled up; and Walter recognised the faces he had marked in the ale-house.

"Your servant, gentlemen," quoth the uglier of the two; "you ride fast—"

"And ready;—bother—baugh!" chimed in the Corporal, plucking a gigantic pistol from his holster, without any farther ceremony.

"Glad to hear it, Sir!" said the hard-featured Stranger, nothing dashed.
"But I can tell you a secret!"

"What's that—augh?" said the Corporal, cocking his pistol.

"Whoever hurts you, friend, cheats the gallows!" replied the stranger, laughing, and spurring on his horse, to be out of reach of any practical answer with which the Corporal might favour him. But Bunting was a prudent man, and not apt to be choleric.

"Bother!" said he, and dropped his pistol, as the other stranger followed his ill-favoured comrade.

"You see we are too strong for them!" cried Sir Peter, gaily; "evidently highwaymen! How very fortunate that I should have fallen in with you!"

A shower of rain now began to fall. Sir Peter looked serious—he halted abruptly—unbuckled his cloak, which had been strapped before his saddle- -wrapped himself up in it—buried his face in the collar—muffled his chin with a red handkerchief, which he took out of his pocket, and then turning to Walter, he said to him, "What! no cloak, Sir? no wrapper even? Upon my soul I am very sorry I have not another handkerchief to lend you!"

"Man of the world—baugh!" grunted the Corporal, and his heart quite warmed to the stranger he had at first taken for a robber.

"And now, Sir," said Sir Peter, patting his nag, and pulling up his cloak-collar still higher, "let us go gently; there is no occasion for hurry. Why distress our horses?—"

"Really, Sir," said Walter, smiling, "though I have a great regard for my horse, I have some for myself; and I should rather like to be out of this rain as soon as possible."

"Oh, ah! you have no cloak. I forgot that; to be sure—to be sure, let us trot on, gently—though—gently. Well, Sir, as I was saying, horses are not so swift as they were. The breed is bought up by the French! I remember once, Johnny Courtland and I, after dining at my house, till the champagne had played the dancing-master to our brains, mounted our horses, and rode twenty miles for a cool thousand the winner. I lost it, Sir, by a hair's breadth; but I lost it on purpose; it would have half ruined Johnny Courtland to have paid me, and he had that delicacy, Sir,— he had that delicacy, that he would not have suffered me to refuse taking his money,—so what could I do, but lose on purpose? You see I had no alternative!"

"Pray, Sir," said Walter, charmed and astonished at so rare an instance of the generosity of human friendships—"Pray, Sir, did I not hear you called Sir Peter, by the landlord of the little inn? can it be, since you speak so familiarly of Mr. Courtland, that I have the honour to address Sir Peter Hales?"

"Indeed that is my name," replied the gentleman, with some surprise in his voice. "But I have never had the honour of seeing you before."

"Perhaps my name is not unfamiliar to you," said Walter. "And among my papers I have a letter addressed to you from my uncle Rowland Lester.

"God bless me!" cried Sir Peter, "What Rowy!—well, indeed I am overjoyed to hear of him. So you are his nephew? Pray tell me all about him, a wild, gay, rollicking fellow still, eh?" Always fencing, sa—sa! or playing at billiards, or hot in a steeple chace; there was not a jollier, better-humoured fellow in the world than Rowy Lester.

"You forget, Sir Peter," said Walter, laughing at a description so unlike his sober and steady uncle, "that some years have passed since the time you speak of."

"Ah, and so there have," replied Sir Peter; "and what does your uncle say of me?"

"That, when he knew you, you were generosity, frankness, hospitality itself."

"Humph, humph!" said Sir Peter, looking extremely disconcerted, a confusion which Walter imputed solely to modesty. "I was hairbrained foolish fellow then, quite a boy, quite a boy; but bless me, it rains sharply, and you have no cloak. But we are close on the town now. An excellent inn is the "Duke of Cumberland's Head," you will have charming accommodation there."

"What, Sir Peter, you know this part of the country well!"

"Pretty well, pretty well; indeed I live near, that is to say not very far from, the town. This turn, if you please. We separate here. I have brought you a little out of your way—not above a mile or two—for fear the robbers should attack me if I was left alone. I had quite forgot you had no cloak. That's your road—this mine. Aha! so Rowy Lester is still alive and hearty, the same excellent, wild fellow, no doubt. Give my kindest remembrance to him when you write. Adieu, Sir."

This latter speech having been delivered during a halt, the Corporal had heard it: he grinned delightedly as he touched his hat to Sir Peter, who now trotted off, and muttered to his young master:—

"Most sensible man, that, Sir!"

CHAPTER VI.

SIR PETER DISPLAYED.—ONE MAN OF THE WORLD SUFFERS FROM ANOTHER.—THE INCIDENT OF THE BRIDLE BEGETS THE INCIDENT OF THE SADDLE; THE INCIDENT OF THE SADDLE BEGETS THE INCIDENT OF THE WHIP; THE INCIDENT OF THE WHIP BEGETS WHAT THE READER MUST READ TO SEE.

Nihil est aliud magnum quam multa minuta.
—Vetus Auctor.

[Nor is their anything that hath so great
a power as the aggregate of small things.]

"And so," said Walter, the next morning to the head waiter, who was busied about their preparations for breakfast; "and so, Sir Peter Hales, you say, lives within a mile of the town?"

"Scarcely a mile, Sir,—black or green? you passed the turn to his house last night;—Sir, the eggs are quite fresh this morning. This inn belongs to Sir Peter."

"Oh!—Does Sir Peter see much company?"

The waiter smiled.

"Sir Peter gives very handsome dinners, Sir; twice a year! A most clever gentleman, Sir Peter! They say he is the best manager of property in the whole county. Do you like Yorkshire cake?—toast? yes, Sir!"

"So so," said Walter to himself, "a pretty true description my uncle gave me of this gentleman. 'Ask me too often to dinner, indeed!'—'offer me money if I want it!'—'spend a month at his house!'—'most hospitable fellow in the world!'—My uncle must have been dreaming."

Walter had yet to learn, that the men most prodigal when they have nothing but expectations, are often most thrifty when they know the charms of absolute possession. Besides, Sir Peter had married a Scotch lady, and was blessed with eleven children! But was Sir Peter Hales much altered? Sir Peter Hales was exactly the same man in reality that he always had been. Once he was selfish in extravagance; he was now selfish in thrift. He had always pleased himself, and damned other people; that was exactly what he valued himself on doing now. But the most absurd thing about Sir Peter was, that while he was for ever extracting use from every one else, he was mightily afraid of being himself put to use. He was in parliament, and noted for never giving a frank out of his own family. Yet withal, Sir Peter Hales was still an agreeable fellow; nay, he was more liked and much more esteemed than ever. There is something conciliatory in a saving disposition; but people put themselves in a great passion when a man is too liberal with his own. It is an insult on their own prudence. "What right has he to be so extravagant? What an example to our servants!" But your close neighbour does not humble you. You love your close neighbour; you respect your close neighbour; you have your harmless jest against him—but he is a most respectable man.

"A letter, Sir, and a parcel, from Sir Peter Hales," said the waiter, entering.

The parcel was a bulky, angular, awkward packet of brown paper, sealed once and tied with the smallest possible quantity of string; it was addressed to Mr. James Holwell, Saddler,—Street,—The letter was to— Lester Esq., and ran thus, written in a very neat, stiff, Italian character.

"Dr Sr,

"I trust you had no difficulty in findg ye Duke of Cumberland's Head, it is an excellent In.

"I greatly regt yt you are unavoidy oblig'd to go on to Londn; for, otherwise I shd have had the sincerest please in seeing you here at dinr, introducing you to Ly Hales. Anothr time I trust we may be more fortunate.

"As you pass thro' ye litte town of …, exactly 21 miles from hence, on the road to Londn, will you do me the favr to allow your servt to put the little parcel I send into his pockt, drop it as directd. It is a bridle I am forc'd to return. Country workn are such bungrs.

"I shd most certainy have had ye honr to wait on you persony, but the rain has given me a mo seve cold;—hope you have escap'd, tho' by ye by, you had no cloke, nor wrappr!

"My kindest regards to your mo excellent unce. I am quite sure he's the same fine merry fellw he always was,—tell him so!

"Dr Sr, Yours faithy,

"Peter Grindlescrew Hales.

"P.S. You know perhs yt poor Jno Courtd, your uncle's mo intime friend, lives in …, the town in which your servt will drop ye bride. He is much alter'd,—poor Jno!"

"Altered! alteration then seems the fashion with my uncle's friends!" thought Walter, as he rang for the Corporal, and consigned to his charge the unsightly parcel.

"It is to be carried twenty-one miles at the request of the gentleman we met last night,—a most sensible man, Bunting."

"Augh—whaugh,—your honour!" grunted the Corporal, thrusting the bridle very discontentedly into his pocket, where it annoyed him the whole journey, by incessantly getting between his seat of leather and his seat of honour. It is a comfort to the inexperienced, when one man of the world smarts from the sagacity of another; we resign ourselves more willingly to our fate. Our travellers resumed their journey, and in a few minutes, from the cause we have before assigned, the Corporal became thoroughly out of humour.

"Pray, Bunting," said Walter, calling his attendant to his side, "do you feel sure that the man we met yesterday at the alehouse, is the same you saw at Grassdale some months ago?"

"Damn it!" cried the Corporal quickly, and clapping his hand behind.

"How, Sir!"

"Beg pardon, your honour—slip tongue, but this confounded parcel!—augh —bother!"

"Why don't you carry it in your hand?"

"'Tis so ungainsome, and be d—d to it; and how can I hold parcel and pull in this beast, which requires two hands; his mouth's as hard as a brickbat,—augh!"

"You have not answered my question yet?"

"Beg pardon, your honour. Yes, certain sure the man's the same; phiz not to be mistaken."

"It is strange," said Walter, musing, "that Aram should know a man, who, if not a highwayman as we suspected, is at least of rugged manner and disreputable appearance; it is strange too, that Aram always avoided recurring to the acquaintance, though he confessed it." With this he broke into a trot, and the Corporal into an oath.

They arrived by noon, at the little town specified by Sir Peter, and in their way to the inn (for Walter resolved to rest there), passed by the saddler's house. It so chanced that Master Holwell was an adept in his craft, and that a newly-invented hunting-saddle at the window caught Walter's notice. The artful saddler persuaded the young traveller to dismount and look at "the most convenientest and handsomest

saddle what ever was seed;" and the Corporal having lost no time in getting rid of his encumbrance, Walter dismissed him to the inn with the horses, and after purchasing the saddle, in exchange for his own, he sauntered into the shop to look at a new snaffle. A gentleman's servant was in the shop at the time, bargaining for a riding whip; and the shopboy, among others, shewed him a large old-fashioned one, with a tarnished silver handle. Grooms have no taste for antiquity, and in spite of the silverhandle, the servant pushed it aside with some contempt. Some jest he uttered at the time, chanced to attract Walter's notice to the whip; he took it up carelessly, and perceived with great surprise that it bore his own crest, a bittern, on the handle. He examined it now with attention, and underneath the crest were the letters G. L., his father's initials.

"How long have you had this whip?" said he to the saddler, concealing the emotion, which this token of his lost parent naturally excited.

"Oh, a nation long time, Sir," replied Mr. Holwell; "it is a queer old thing, but really is not amiss, if the silver was scrubbed up a bit, and a new lash put on; you may have it a bargain, Sir, if so be you have taken a fancy to it."

"Can you at all recollect how you came by it," said Walter, earnestly; "the fact is that I see by the crest and initials, that it belonged to a person whom I have some interest in discovering."

"Why let me see," said the saddler, scratching the tip of his right ear, "'tis so long ago sin I had it, I quite forgets how I came by it."

"Oh, is it that whip, John?" said the wife, who had been attracted from the back parlour by the sight of the handsome young stranger. "Don't you remember, it's a many year ago, a gentleman who passed a day with Squire Courtland, when he first come to settle here, called and left the whip to have a new thong put to it. But I fancies he forgot it, Sir, (turning to Walter,) for he never called for it again; and the Squire's people said as how he was a gone into Yorkshire; so there the whip's been ever sin. I remembers it, Sir, 'cause I kept it in the little parlour nearly a year, to be in the way like."

"Ah! I thinks I do remember it now," said Master Holwell. "I should think it's a matter of twelve yearn ago. I suppose I may sell it without fear of the gentleman's claiming it again."

"Not more than twelve years!" said Walter, anxiously, for it was some seventeen years since his father had been last heard of by his family.

"Why it may be thirteen, Sir, or so, more or less, I can't say exactly."

"More likely fourteen!" said the Dame, "it can't be much more, Sir, we have only been a married fifteen year come next Christmas! But my old man here, is ten years older nor I."

"And the gentleman, you say, was at Mr. Courtland's."

"Yes, Sir, that I'm sure of," replied the intelligent Mrs. Holwell; "they said he had come lately from Ingee."

Walter now despairing of hearing more, purchased the whip; and blessing the worldly wisdom of Sir Peter Hales, that had thus thrown him on a clue, which, however faint and distant, he resolved to follow up, he inquired the way to Squire Courtland's, and proceeded thither at once.

CHAPTER VII.

WALTER VISITS ANOTHER OF HIS UNCLE'S FRIENDS.—MR. COURTLAND'S STRANGE COMPLAINT.—WALTER LEARNS NEWS OF HIS FATHER, WHICH SURPRISES HIM.—THE CHANGE IN HIS DESTINATION.

> God's my life, did you ever hear the like, what a strange man is this!
> What you have possessed me withall, I'll discharge it amply.
> —Ben Jonson's Every Man in his Humour.

Mr. Courtland's house was surrounded by a high wall, and stood at the outskirts of the town. A little wooden door buried deep within the wall, seemed the only entrance. At this Walter paused, and after twice applying to the bell, a footman of a peculiarly grave and sanctimonious appearance, opened the

door.

In reply to Walter's inquiries, he informed him that Mr. Courtland was very unwell, and never saw "Company."—Walter, however, producing from his pocket-book the introductory letter given him by his father, slipped it into the servant's hand, accompanied by half a crown, and begged to be announced as a gentleman on very particular business.

"Well, Sir, you can step in," said the servant, giving way; "but my master is very poorly, very poorly indeed."

"Indeed, I am sorry to hear it: has he been long so?"

"Going on for ten—years, sir!" replied the servant, with great gravity; and opening the door of the house which stood within a few paces of the wall, on a singularly flat and bare grass-plot, he showed him into a room, and left him alone.

The first thing that struck Walter in this apartment, was its remarkable lightness. Though not large, it had no less than seven windows. Two sides of the wall, seemed indeed all window! Nor were these admittants of the celestial beam-shaded by any blind or curtain,—

"The gaudy, babbling, and remorseless day"

made itself thoroughly at home in this airy chamber. Nevertheless, though so light, it seemed to Walter any thing but cheerful. The sun had blistered and discoloured the painting of the wainscot, originally of a pale sea-green; there was little furniture in the apartment; one table in the centre, some half a dozen chairs, and a very small Turkey-carpet, which did not cover one tenth part of the clean, cold, smooth, oak boards, constituted all the goods and chattels visible in the room. But what particularly added effect to the bareness of all within, was the singular and laborious bareness of all without. From each of these seven windows, nothing but a forlorn green flat of some extent was to be seen; there was not a tree, or a shrub, or a flower in the whole expanse, although by several stumps of trees near the house, Walter perceived that the place had not always been so destitute of vegetable life.

While he was yet looking upon this singular baldness of scene, the servant re-entered with his master's compliments, and a message that he should be happy to see any relation of Mr. Lester.

Walter accordingly followed the footman into an apartment possessing exactly the same peculiarities as the former one; viz. a most disproportionate plurality of windows, a commodious scantiness of furniture, and a prospect without, that seemed as if the house had been built on the middle of Salisbury plain.

Mr. Courtland, himself a stout man, and still preserving the rosy hues and comely features, though certainly not the same hilarious expression, which Lester had attributed to him, sat in a large chair, close by the centre window, which was open. He rose and shook Walter by the hand with great cordiality.

"Sir, I am delighted to see you! How is your worthy uncle? I only wish he were with you—you dine with me of course. Thomas, tell the cook to add a tongue and chicken to the roast beef—no,—young gentleman, I will have no excuse; sit down, sit down; pray come near the window; do you not find it dreadfully close? not a breath of air? This house is so choked up; don't you find it so, eh? Ah, I see, you can scarcely gasp."

"My dear Sir, you are mistaken; I am rather cold, on the contrary: nor did I ever in my life see a more airy house than yours."

"I try to make it so, Sir, but I can't succeed; if you had seen what it was, when I first bought it! a garden here, Sir; a copse there; a wilderness, God wot! at the back: and a row of chesnut trees in the front! You may conceive the consequence, Sir; I had not been long here, not two years, before my health was gone, Sir, gone—the d—d vegetable life sucked it out of me. The trees kept away all the air —I was nearly suffocated, without, at first, guessing the cause. But at length, though not till I had been withering away for five years, I discovered the origin of my malady. I went to work, Sir; I plucked up the cursed garden, I cut down the infernal chesnuts, I made a bowling green of the diabolical wilderness, but I fear it is too late. I am dying by inches,— have been dying ever since. The malaria has effectually tainted my constitution."

Here Mr. Courtland heaved a deep sigh, and shook his head with a most gloomy expression of countenance.

"Indeed, Sir," said Walter, "I should not, to look at you, imagine that you suffered under any

complaint. You seem still the same picture of health, that my uncle describes you to have been when you knew him so many years ago."

"Yes, Sir, yes; the confounded malaria fixed the colour to my cheeks; the blood is stagnant, Sir. Would to God I could see myself a shade paler!— the blood does not flow; I am like a pool in a citizen's garden, with a willow at each corner;—but a truce to my complaints. You see, Sir, I am no hypochondriac, as my fool of a doctor wants to persuade me: a hypochondriac shudders at every breath of air, trembles when a door is open, and looks upon a window as the entrance of death. But I, Sir, never can have enough air; thorough draught or east wind, it is all the same to me, so that I do but breathe. Is that like hypochondria?—pshaw! But tell me, young gentleman, about your uncle; is he quite well,—stout,—hearty,—does he breathe easily,—no oppression?"

"Sir, he enjoys exceedingly good health: he did please himself with the hope that I should give him good tidings of yourself, and another of his old friends whom I accidentally saw yesterday,—Sir Peter Hales."

"Hales, Peter Hales!—ah! a clever little fellow that: how delighted Lester's good heart will be to hear that little Peter is so improved;—no longer a dissolute, harum-scarum fellow, throwing away his money, and always in debt. No, no; a respectable steady character, an excellent manager, an active member of Parliament, domestic in private life,—Oh! a very worthy man, Sir, a very worthy man!"

"He seems altered indeed, Sir," said Walter, who was young enough in the world to be surprised at this eulogy; "but is still agreeable and fond of anecdote. He told me of his race with you for a thousand guineas."

"Ah, don't talk of those days," said Mr. Courtland, shaking his head pensively, "it makes me melancholy. Yes, Peter ought to recollect that, for he has never paid me to this day; affected to treat it as a jest, and swore he could have beat me if he would. But indeed it was my fault, Sir; Peter had not then a thousand farthings in the world, and when he grew rich, he became a steady character, and I did not like to remind him of our former follies. Aha! can I offer you a pinch of snuff?—You look feverish, Sir; surely this room must affect you, though you are too polite to say so. Pray open that door, and then this window, and put your chair right between the two. You have no notion how refreshing the draught is."

Walter politely declined the proffered ague, and thinking he had now made sufficient progress in the acquaintance of this singular non- hypochondriac to introduce the subject he had most at heart, hastened to speak of his father.

"I have chanced, Sir," said he, "very unexpectedly upon something that once belonged to my poor father;" here he showed the whip. "I find from the saddler of whom I bought it, that the owner was at your house some twelve or fourteen years ago. I do not know whether you are aware that our family have heard nothing respecting my father's fate for a considerably longer time than that which has elapsed since you appear to have seen him, if at least I may hope that he was your guest, and the owner of this whip; and any news you can give me of him, any clue by which he can possibly be traced, would be to us all—to me in particular- -an inestimable obligation."

"Your father!" said Mr. Courtland. "Oh,—ay, your uncle's brother. What was his Christian name?—Henry?"

"Geoffrey."

"Ay, exactly; Geoffrey! What, not been heard of?—his family not know where he is? A sad thing, Sir; but he was always a wild fellow; now here, now there, like a flash of lightning. But it is true, it is true, he did stay a day here, several years ago, when I first bought the place. I can tell you all about it;—but you seem agitated,—do come nearer the window:—there, that's right. Well, Sir, it is, as I said, a great many years ago,—perhaps fourteen,—and I was speaking to the landlord of the Greyhound about some hay he wished to sell, when a gentleman rode into the yard full tear, as your father always did ride, and in getting out of his way I recognised Geoffrey Lester. I did not know him well—far from it; but I had seen him once or twice with your uncle, and though he was a strange pickle, he sang a good song, and was deuced amusing. Well, Sir, I accosted him, and, for the sake of your uncle, I asked him to dine with me, and take a bed at my new house. Ah! I little thought what a dear bargain it was to be. He accepted my invitation, for I fancy—no offence, Sir,—there were few invitations that Mr. Geoffrey Lester ever refused to accept. We dined tete-a-tete,—I am an old bachelor, Sir,—and very entertaining he was, though his sentiments seemed to me broader than ever. He was capital, however, about the tricks he had played his creditors,—such manoeuvres,—such escapes! After dinner he asked me if I ever corresponded with his brother. I told him no; that we were very good friends, but never heard from each other; and he then said, 'Well, I shall surprise him with a visit shortly; but in case you should

unexpectedly have any communication with him, don't mention having seen me; for, to tell you the truth, I am just returned from India, where I should have scraped up a little money, but that I spent it as fast as I got it. However, you know that I was always proverbially the luckiest fellow in the world—(and so, Sir, your father was!)—and while I was in India, I saved an old Colonel's life at a tiger-hunt; he went home shortly afterwards, and settled in Yorkshire; and the other day on my return to England, to which my ill-health drove me, I learned that my old Colonel was really dead, and had left me a handsome legacy, with his house in Yorkshire. I am now going down to Yorkshire to convert the chattels into gold—to receive my money, and I shall then seek out my good brother, my household gods, and, perhaps, though it's not likely, settle into a sober fellow for the rest of my life.' I don't tell you, young gentleman, that those were your father's exact words,—one can't remember verbatim so many years ago;—but it was to that effect. He left me the next day, and I never heard any thing more of him: to say the truth, he was looking wonderfully yellow, and fearfully reduced. And I fancied at the time, he could not live long; he was prematurely old, and decrepit in body, though gay in spirit; so that I had tacitly imagined in never hearing of him more—that he had departed life. But, good Heavens! did you never hear of this legacy?"

"Never: not a word!" said Walter, who had listened to these particulars in great surprise. "And to what part of Yorkshire did he say he was going?"

"That he did not mention."

"Nor the Colonel's name?"

"Not as I remember; he might, but I think not. But I am certain that the county was Yorkshire, and the gentleman, whatever was his name, was a Colonel. Stay! I recollect one more particular, which it is lucky I do remember. Your father in giving me, as I said before, in his own humorous strain, the history of his adventures, his hair-breadth escapes from his duns, the various disguises, and the numerous aliases he had assumed, mentioned that the name he had borne in India, and by which, he assured me, he had made quite a good character—was Clarke: he also said, by the way, that he still kept to that name, and was very merry on the advantages of having so common an one. 'By which,' he said wittily, 'he could father all his own sins on some other Mr. Clarke, at the same time that he could seize and appropriate all the merits of all his other namesakes.' Ah, no offence; but he was a sad dog, that father of yours! So you see that, in all probability, if he ever reached Yorkshire, it was under the name of Clarke that he claimed and received his legacy."

"You have told me more," said Walter joyfully, "than we have heard since his disappearance, and I shall turn my horses' heads northward to-morrow, by break of day. But you say, 'if he ever reached Yorkshire,'—What should prevent him?"

"His health!" said the non-hypochondriac, "I should not be greatly surprised if—if—In short you had better look at the grave-stones by the way, for the name of Clarke."

"Perhaps you can give me the dates, Sir," said Walter, somewhat cast down from his elation.

"Ay! I'll see, I'll see, after dinner; the commonness of the name has its disadvantages now. Poor Geoffrey!—I dare say there are fifty tombs, to the memory of fifty Clarkes, between this and York. But come, Sir, there's the dinner-bell."

Whatever might have been the maladies entailed upon the portly frame of Mr. Courtland by the vegetable life of the departed trees, a want of appetite was not among the number. Whenever a man is not abstinent from rule, or from early habit, as in the case of Aram, Solitude makes its votaries particularly fond of their dinner. They have no other event wherewith to mark their day—they think over it, they anticipate it, they nourish its soft idea with their imagination; if they do look forward to any thing else more than dinner, it is—supper!

Mr. Courtland deliberately pinned the napkin to his waistcoat, ordered all the windows to be thrown open, and set to work like the good Canon in Gil Blas. He still retained enough of his former self, to preserve an excellent cook; so far at least as the excellence of a she-artist goes; and though most of his viands were of the plainest, who does not know what skill it requires to produce an unexceptionable roast, or a blameless boil? Talk of good professed cooks, indeed! they are plentiful as blackberries: it is the good, plain cook, who is the rarity!

Half a tureen of strong soup; three pounds, at least, of stewed carp; all the under part of a sirloin of beef; three quarters of a tongue; the moiety of a chicken; six pancakes and a tartlet, having severally disappeared down the jaws of the invalid,

"Et cuncta terrarum subacta
Praeter atrocem animum Catonis,"

[And everything of earth subdued,
except the resolute mind of Cato.]

he still called for two deviled biscuits and an anchovy!

When these were gone, he had the wine set on a little table by the window, and declared that the air seemed closer than ever. Walter was no longer surprised at the singular nature of the nonhypochondriac's complaint.

Walter declined the bed that Mr. Courtland offered him—though his host kindly assured him that it had no curtains, and that there was not a shutter to the house—upon the plea of starting the next morning at daybreak, and his consequent unwillingness to disturb the regular establishment of the invalid: and Courtland, who was still an excellent, hospitable, friendly man, suffered his friend's nephew to depart with regret. He supplied him, however, by a reference to an old note-book, with the date of the year, and even month, in which he had been favoured by a visit from Mr. Clarke, who, it seemed, had also changed his Christian name from Geoffrey, to one beginning with D—; but whether it was David or Daniel the host remembered not. In parting with Walter, Courtland shook his head, and observed:—"Entre nous, Sir, I fear this may be a wildgoose chase. Your father was too facetious to confine himself to fact—excuse me, Sir—and perhaps the Colonel and the legacy were merely inventions—pour passer le temps—there was only one reason indeed, that made me fully believe the story."

"What was that, Sir?" asked Walter, blushing deeply, at the universality of that estimation his father had obtained.

"Excuse me, my young friend."

"Nay, Sir, let me press you."

"Why, then, Mr. Geoffrey Lester did not ask me to lend him any money."

The next morning, instead of repairing to the gaieties of the metropolis, Walter had, upon this slight and dubious clue, altered his journey northward, and with an unquiet yet sanguine spirit, the adventurous son commenced his search after the fate of a father evidently so unworthy of the anxiety he had excited.

CHAPTER VIII.

WALTER'S MEDITATIONS.—THE CORPORAL'S GRIEF AND ANGER.—THE CORPORAL PERSONALLY DESCRIBED.—AN EXPLANATION WITH HIS MASTER.—THE CORPORAL OPENS HIMSELF TO THE YOUNG TRAVELLER.— HIS OPINIONS ON LOVE;—ON THE WORLD;—ON THE PLEASURE AND RESPECTABILITY OF CHEATING;—ON LADIES —AND A PARTICULAR CLASS OF LADIES;—ON AUTHORS;—ON THE VALUE OF WORDS;—ON FIGHTING; —WITH SUNDRY OTHER MATTERS OF EQUAL DELECTATION AND IMPROVEMENT.—AN UNEXPECTED EVENT.

Quale per incertam Lunam sub luce maligna
Est iter.
—Virgil.

[Even as a journey by the upropitious light
of the uncertain moon.]

The road prescribed to our travellers by the change in their destination led them back over a considerable portion of the ground they had already traversed, and since the Corporal took care that they should remain some hours in the place where they dined, night fell upon them as they found themselves in the midst of the same long and dreary stage in which they had encountered Sir Peter Hales and the two suspected highwaymen.

Walter's mind was full of the project on which he was bent. The reader can fully comprehend how vivid must have been his emotions at thus chancing on what might prove a clue to the mystery that hung over his father's fate; and sanguinely did he now indulge those intense meditations with which the imaginative minds of the young always brood over every more favourite idea, until they exalt the hope into a passion. Every thing connected with this strange and roving parent, had possessed for the breast of his son, not only an anxious, but so to speak, indulgent interest. The judgment of a young man is always inclined to sympathize with the wilder and more enterprising order of spirits; and Walter had

been at no loss for secret excuses wherewith to defend the irregular life and reckless habits of his parent. Amidst all his father's evident and utter want of principle, Walter clung with a natural and self-deceptive partiality to the few traits of courage or generosity which relieved, if they did not redeem, his character; traits which, with a character of that stamp, are so often, though always so unprofitably blended, and which generally cease with the commencement of age. He now felt elated by the conviction, as he had always been inspired by the hope, that it was to be his lot to discover one whom he still believed living, and whom he trusted to find amended. The same intimate persuasion of the "good luck" of Geoffrey Lester, which all who had known him appeared to entertain, was felt even in a more credulous and earnest degree by his son. Walter gave way now, indeed, to a variety of conjectures as to the motives which could have induced his father to persist in the concealment of his fate after his return to England; but such of those conjectures as, if the more rational, were also the more despondent, he speedily and resolutely dismissed. Sometimes he thought that his father, on learning the death of the wife he had abandoned, might have been possessed with a remorse which rendered him unwilling to disclose himself to the rest of his family, and a feeling that the main tie of home was broken; sometimes he thought that the wanderer had been disappointed in his expected legacy, and dreading the attacks of his creditors, or unwilling to throw himself once more on the generosity of his brother, had again suddenly quitted England and entered on some enterprise or occupation abroad. It was also possible, to one so reckless and changeful, that even, after receiving the legacy, a proposition from some wild comrade might have hurried him away on any continental project on the mere impulse of the moment, for the impulse of the moment had always been the guide of his life; and once abroad he might have returned to India, and in new connections forgotten the old ties at home. Letters from abroad too, miscarry; and it was not improbable that the wanderer might have written repeatedly, and receiving no answer to his communications, imagined that the dissoluteness of his life had deprived him of the affections of his family, and, deserving so well to have the proffer of renewed intercourse rejected, believed that it actually was so. These, and a hundred similar conjectures, found favour in the eyes of the young traveller; but the chances of a fatal accident, or sudden death, he pertinaciously refused at present to include in the number of probabilities. Had his father been seized with a mortal illness on the road, was it not likely that he would, in the remorse occasioned in the hardiest by approaching death, have written to his brother, and recommending his child to his care, have apprised him of the addition to his fortune? Walter then did not meditate embarrassing his present journey by those researches among the dead, which the worthy Courtland had so considerately recommended to his prudence: should his expedition, contrary to his hopes, prove wholly unsuccessful, it might then be well to retrace his steps and adopt the suggestion. But what man, at the age of twenty-one, ever took much precaution on the darker side of a question on which his heart was interested?

With what pleasure, escaping from conjecture to a more ultimate conclusion—did he, in recalling those words, in which his father had more than hinted to Courtland of his future amendment, contemplate recovering a parent made wise by years and sober by misfortunes, and restoring him to a hearth of tranquil virtues and peaceful enjoyments! He imaged to himself a scene of that domestic happiness, which is so perfect in our dreams, because in our dreams monotony is always excluded from the picture. And, in this creation of Fancy, the form of Ellinor—his bright- eyed and gentle cousin, was not the least conspicuous. Since his altercation with Madeline, the love he had once thought so ineffaceable, had faded into a dim and sullen hue; and, in proportion as the image of Madeline grew indistinct, that of her sister became more brilliant. Often, now, as he rode slowly onward, in the quiet of the deepening night, and the mellow stars softening all on which they shone, he pressed the little token of Ellinor's affection to his heart, and wondered that it was only within the last few days he had discovered that her eyes were more beautiful than Madeline's, and her smile more touching. Meanwhile the redoubted Corporal, who was by no means pleased with the change in his master's plans, lingered behind, whistling the most melancholy tune in his collection. No young lady, anticipative of balls or coronets, had ever felt more complacent satisfaction in a journey to London than that which had cheered the athletic breast of the veteran on finding himself, at last, within one day's gentle march of the metropolis. And no young lady, suddenly summoned back in the first flush of her debut, by an unseasonable fit of gout or economy in papa, ever felt more irreparably aggrieved than now did the dejected Corporal. His master had not yet even acquainted him with the cause of the countermarch; and, in his own heart, he believed it nothing but the wanton levity and unpardonable fickleness "common to all them ere boys afore they have seen the world." He certainly considered himself a singularly ill-used and injured man, and drawing himself up to his full height, as if it were a matter with which Heaven should be acquainted at the earliest possible opportunity, he indulged, as we before said, in the melancholy consolation of a whistled death-dirge, occasionally interrupted by a long-drawn interlude half sigh, half snuffle of his favourite augh—baugh.

And here, we remember, that we have not as yet given to our reader a fitting portrait of the Corporal on horseback. Perhaps no better opportunity than the present may occur; and perhaps, also, Corporal Bunting, as well as Melrose Abbey, may seem a yet more interesting picture when viewed by the pale moonlight.

The Corporal then wore on his head a small cocked hat, which had formerly belonged to the Colonel of the Forty-second—the prints of my uncle Toby may serve to suggest its shape;—it had once boasted a feather—that was gone; but the gold lace, though tarnished, and the cockade, though battered, still remained. From under this shade the profile of the Corporal assumed a particular aspect of heroism: though a good-looking man on the main, it was his air, height, and complexion, which made him so; and a side view, unlike Lucian's one-eyed prince, was not the most favourable point in which his features could be regarded. His eyes, which were small and shrewd, were half hid by a pair of thick shaggy brows, which, while he whistled, he moved to and fro, as a horse moves his ears when he gives warning that he intends to shy; his nose was straight—so far so good—but then it did not go far enough; for though it seemed no despicable proboscis in front, somehow or another it appeared exceedingly short in profile; to make up for this, the upper lip was of a length the more striking from being exceedingly straight;—it had learned to hold itself upright, and make the most of its length as well as its master! his under lip, alone protruded in the act of whistling, served yet more markedly to throw the nose into the background; and, as for the chin— talk of the upper lip being long indeed!—the chin would have made two of it; such a chin! so long, so broad, so massive, had it been put on a dish might have passed, without discredit, for a round of beef! it looked yet larger than it was from the exceeding tightness of the stiff black- leather stock below, which forced forth all the flesh it encountered into another chin,—a remove to the round. The hat, being somewhat too small for the Corporal, and being cocked knowingly in front, left the hinder half of the head exposed. And the hair, carried into a club according to the fashion, lay thick, and of a grizzled black, on the brawny shoulders below. The veteran was dressed in a blue coat, originally a frock; but the skirts, having once, to the imminent peril of the place they guarded, caught fire, as the Corporal stood basking himself at Peter Dealtry's, had been so far amputated, as to leave only the stump of a tail, which just covered, and no more, that part which neither Art in bipeds nor Nature in quadrupeds loves to leave wholly exposed. And that part, ah, how ample! had Liston seen it, he would have hid for ever his diminished- -opposite to head!—No wonder the Corporal had been so annoyed by the parcel of the previous day, a coat so short, and a—; but no matter, pass we to the rest! It was not only in its skirts that this wicked coat was deficient; the Corporal, who had within the last few years thriven lustily in the inactive serenity of Grassdale, had outgrown it prodigiously across the chest and girth; nevertheless he managed to button it up. And thus the muscular proportions of the wearer bursting forth in all quarters, gave him the ludicrous appearance of a gigantic schoolboy. His wrists, and large sinewy hands, both employed at the bridle of his hard-mouthed charger, were markedly visible; for it was the Corporal's custom whenever he came into an obscure part of the road, carefully to take off, and prudently to pocket, a pair of scrupulously clean white leather gloves which smartened up his appearance prodigiously in passing through the towns in their route. His breeches were of yellow buckskin, and ineffably tight; his stockings were of grey worsted, and a pair of laced boots, that reached the ascent of a very mountainous calf, but declined any farther progress, completed his attire.

Fancy then this figure, seated with laborious and unswerving perpendicularity on a demi-pique saddle, ornamented with a huge pair of well-stuffed saddle-bags, and holsters revealing the stocks of a brace of immense pistols, the horse with its obstinate mouth thrust out, and the bridle drawn as tight as a bowstring! its ears laid sullenly down, as if, like the Corporal, it complained of going to Yorkshire, and its long thick tail, not set up in a comely and well-educated arch, but hanging sheepishly down, as if resolved that its buttocks should at least be better covered than its master's!

And now, reader, it is not our fault if you cannot form some conception of the physical perfections of the Corporal and his steed.

The reverie of the contemplative Bunting was interrupted by the voice of his master calling upon him to approach.

"Well, well!" muttered he, "the younker can't expect one as close at his heels as if we were trotting into Lunnon, which we might be at this time, sure enough, if he had not been so damned flighty,—augh!"

"Bunting, I say, do you hear?"

"Yes, your honour, yes; this ere horse is so 'nation sluggish."

"Sluggish! why I thought he was too much the reverse, Bunting? I thought he was one rather requiring the bridle than the spur."

"Augh! your honour, he's slow when he should not, and fast when he should not; changes his mind from pure whim, or pure spite; new to the world, your honour, that's all; a different thing if properly broke. There be a many like him!"

"You mean to be personal, Mr. Bunting," said Walter, laughing at the evident ill-humour of his

attendant.

"Augh! indeed and no!—I daren't—a poor man like me—go for to presume to be parsonal,—unless I get hold of a poorer!"

"Why, Bunting, you do not mean to say that you would be so ungenerous as to affront a man because he was poorer than you?—fie!"

"Whaugh, your honour! and is not that the very reason why I'd affront him? surely it is not my betters I should affront; that would be ill bred, your honour,—quite want of discipline."

"But we owe it to our great Commander," said Walter, "to love all men."

"Augh! Sir, that's very good maxim,—none better—but shows ignorance of the world, Sir—great!"

"Bunting, your way of thinking is quite disgraceful. Do you know, Sir, that it is the Bible you were speaking of?"

"Augh, Sir! but the Bible was addressed to them Jew creturs! How somever, it's an excellent book for the poor; keeps 'em in order, favours discipline,—none more so." "Hold your tongue. I called you, Bunting, because I think I heard you say you had once been at York. Do you know what towns we shall pass on our road thither?"

"Not I, your honour; it's a mighty long way.—What would the Squire think?—just at Lunnon, too. Could have learnt the whole road, Sir, inns all, if you had but gone on to Lunnon first. Howsomever, young gentlemen will be hasty,—no confidence in those older, and who are experienced in the world. I knows what I knows," and the Corporal recommenced his whistle.

"Why, Bunting, you seem quite discontented at my change of journey. Are you tired of riding, or were you very eager to get to town?"

"Augh! Sir; I was only thinking of what best for your honour,—I!—'tis not for me to like or dislike. Howsomever, the horses, poor creturs, must want rest for some days. Them dumb animals can't go on for ever, bumpety, bumpety, as your honour and I do.—Whaugh!" "It is very true, Bunting, and I have had some thoughts of sending you home again with the horses, and travelling post."

"Eh!" grunted the Corporal, opening his eyes; "hopes your honour ben't serious."

"Why if you continue to look so serious, I must be serious too; you understand, Bunting?"

"Augh—and that's all, your honour," cried the Corporal, brightening up, "shall look merry enough to-morrow, when one's in, as it were, like, to the change of road. But you see, Sir, it took me by surprise. Said I to myself, says I, it is an odd thing for you, Jacob Bunting, on the faith of a man, it is! to go tramp here, tramp there, without knowing why or wherefore, as if you was still a private in the Forty-second, 'stead of a retired Corporal. You see, your honour, my pride was a hurt; but it's all over now;—only spites those beneath me,—I knows the world at my time o' life."

"Well, Bunting, when you learn the reason of my change of plan, you'll be perfectly satisfied that I do quite right. In a word, you know that my father has been long missing; I have found a clue by which I yet hope to trace him. This is the reason of my journey to Yorkshire."

"Augh!" said the Corporal, "and a very good reason: you're a most excellent son, Sir;—and Lunnon so nigh!"

"The thought of London seems to have bewitched you; did you expect to find the streets of gold since you were there last?"

"A—well Sir; I hears they be greatly improved."

"Pshaw! you talk of knowing the world, Bunting, and yet you pant to enter it with all the inexperience of a boy. Why even I could set you an example."

"'Tis 'cause I knows the world," said the Corporal, exceedingly nettled, "that I wants to get back to it. I have heard of some spoonies as never kist a girl, but never heard of any one who had kist a girl once, that did not long to be at it again."

"And I suppose, Mr. Profligate, it is that longing which makes you so hot for London?"

"There have been worse longings nor that," quoth the Corporal gravely.

"Perhaps you meditate marrying one of the London belles; an heiress—eh?"

"Can't but say," said the Corporal very solemnly, "but that might be 'ticed to marry a fortin, if so be she was young, pretty, good-tempered, and fell desperately in love with me,—best quality of all."

"You're a modest fellow."

"Why, the longer a man lives, the more knows his value; would not sell myself a bargain now, whatever might at twenty-one!"

"At that rate you would be beyond all price at seventy," said Walter: "but now tell me, Bunting, were you ever in love,—really and honestly in love?"

"Indeed, your honour," said the Corporal, "I have been over head and ears; but that was afore I learnt to swim. Love's very like bathing. At first we go souse to the bottom, but if we're not drowned, then we gather pluck, grow calm, strike out gently, and make a deal pleasanter thing of it afore we've done. I'll tell you, Sir, what I thinks of love: 'twixt you and me, Sir, 'tis not that great thing in life, boys and girls want to make it out to be; if 'twere one's dinner, that would be summut, for one can't do without that; but lauk, Sir, Love's all in the fancy. One does not eat it, nor drink it; and as for the rest,—why it's bother!"

"Bunting, you're a beast," said Walter in a rage, for though the Corporal had come off with a slight rebuke for his sneer at religion, we grieve to say that an attack on the sacredness of love seemed a crime beyond all toleration to the theologian of twenty-one.

The Corporal bowed, and thrust his tongue in his cheek.

There was a pause of some moments.

"And what," said Walter, for his spirits were raised, and he liked recurring to the quaint shrewdness of the Corporal, "and what, after all, is the great charm of the world, that you so much wish to return to it?"

"Augh!" replied the Corporal, "'tis a pleasant thing to look about un with all one's eyes open; rogue here, rogue there—keeps one alive;—life in Lunnon, life in a village—all the difference 'twixt healthy walk, and a doze in arm-chair; by the faith of a man, 'tis!"

"What! it is pleasant to have rascals about one?"

"Surely yes," returned the Corporal drily; "what so delightful like as to feel one's cliverness and 'bility all set an end—bristling up like a porkypine; nothing makes a man tread so light, feel so proud, breathe so briskly, as the knowledge that he's all his wits about him, that he's a match for any one, that the Divil himself could not take him in. Augh! that's what I calls the use of an immortal soul—bother!"

Walter laughed.

"And to feel one is likely to be cheated is the pleasantest way of passing one's time in town, Bunting, eh?"

"Augh! and in cheating too!" answered the Corporal; "'cause you sees, Sir, there be two ways o' living; one to cheat,—one to be cheated. 'Tis pleasant enough to be cheated for a little while, as the younkers are, and as you'll be, your honour; but that's a pleasure don't last long— t'other lasts all your life; dare say your honour's often heard rich gentlemen say to their sons, 'you ought, for your own happiness' sake, like, my lad, to have summut to do—ought to have some profession, be you niver so rich,'—very true, your honour, and what does that mean? why it means that 'stead of being idle and cheated, the boy ought to be busy and cheat—augh!"

"Must a man who follows a profession, necessarily cheat, then?"

"Baugh! can your honour ask that? Does not the Lawyer cheat? and the Doctor cheat? and the Parson cheat, more than any? and that's the reason they all takes so much int'rest in their profession—bother!"

"But the soldier? you say nothing of him."

"Why, the soldier," said the Corporal, with dignity, "the private soldier, poor fellow, is only cheated; but when he comes for to get for to be as high as a corp'ral, or a sargent, he comes for to get to bully others, and to cheat. Augh! then 'tis not for the privates to cheat,— that would be 'sumpton indeed, save us!"

"The General, then, cheats more than any, I suppose?"

"'Course, your honour; he talks to the world 'bout honour an' glory, and love of his Country, and sich like—augh! that's proper cheating!"

"You're a bitter fellow, Mr. Bunting: and pray, what do you think of the Ladies—'are they as bad as the men?'"

"Ladies—augh! when they're married—yes! but of all them ere creturs, I respects the kept Ladies, the most—on the faith of a man, I do! Gad! how well they knows the world—one quite invies the she rogues; they beats the wives hollow! Augh! and your honour should see how they fawns and flatters, and butters up a man, and makes him think they loves him like winkey, all the time they ruins him. They kisses money out of the miser, and sits in their satins, while the wife, 'drot her, sulks in a gingham. Oh, they be cliver creturs, and they'll do what they likes with old Nick, when they gets there, for 'tis the old gentlemen they cozens the best; and then," continued the Corporal, waxing more and more loquacious, for his appetite in talking grew with that it fed on,—"then there be another set o' queer folks you'll see in Lunnon, Sir, that is, if you falls in with 'em,—hang all together, quite in a clink. I seed lots on 'em when lived with the Colonel—Colonel Dysart, you knows—augh?"

"And what are they?"

"Rum ones, your honour; what they calls Authors."

"Authors! what the deuce had you or the Colonel to do with Authors?"

"Augh! then, the Colonel was a very fine gentleman, what the larned calls a my-seen-ass, wrote little songs himself, 'crossticks, you knows, your honour: once he made a play—'cause why, he lived with an actress!"

"A very good reason, indeed, for emulating Shakespear; and did the play succeed?"

"Fancy it did, your honour; for the Colonel was a dab with the scissors."

"Scissors! the pen, you mean?"

"No! that's what the dirty Authors make plays with; a Lord and a Colonel, my-seen-asses, always takes the scissors."

"How?"

"Why the Colonel's Lady—had lots of plays—and she marked a scene here— a jest there—a line in one place—a sentiment in t' other—and the Colonel sate by with a great paper book—cut 'em out, pasted them in book. Augh! but the Colonel pleased the town mightily."

"Well, so he saw a great many authors; and did not they please you?"

"Why they be so damned quarrelsome," said the Corporal, "wringle, wrangle, wrongle, snap, growl, scratch; that's not what a man of the world does; man of the world niver quarrels; then, too, these creturs always fancy you forgets that their father was a clargyman; they always thinks more of their family, like, than their writings; and if they does not get money when they wants it, they bristles up and cries, 'not treated like a gentleman, by God!' Yet, after all, they've a deal of kindness in 'em, if you knows how to manage 'em—augh! but, cat-kindness, paw today, claw to-morrow. And then they always marries young, the poor things, and have a power of children, and live on the fame and forten they are to get one of these days; for, my eye! they be the most sanguinest folks alive!"

"Why, Bunting, what an observer you have been! who could ever have imagined that you had made yourself master of so many varieties in men!"

"Augh! your honour, I had nothing to do when I was the Colonel's valley, but to take notes to ladies and make use of my eyes. Always a 'flective man."

"It is odd that, with all your abilities, you did not provide better for yourself."

"'Twas not my fault," said the Corporal, quickly; "but somehow, do what will—'tis not always the cliverest as foresees the best. But I be young yet, your honour!"

Walter stared at the Corporal and laughed outright: the Corporal was exceedingly piqued.

"Augh! mayhap you thinks, Sir, that 'cause not so young as you, not young at all; but, what's forty, or fifty, or fifty-five, in public life? never hear much of men afore then. 'Tis the autumn that reaps, spring sows, augh!—bother!"

"Very true and very poetical. I see you did not live among authors for nothing."

"I knows summut of language, your honour," quoth the Corporal pedantically.

"It is evident."

"For, to be a man of the world, Sir, must know all the ins and outs of speechifying; 'tis words, Sir, that makes another man's mare go your road. Augh! that must have been a cliver man as invented language; wonders who 'twas—mayhap Moses, your honour?"

"Never mind who it was," said Walter gravely; "use the gift discreetly."

"Umph!" said the Corporal—"yes, your honour," renewed he after a pause. "It be a marvel to think on how much a man does in the way of cheating, as has the gift of the gab. Wants a Missis, talks her over —wants your purse, talks you out on it—wants a place, talks himself into it.—What makes the Parson? words!—the lawyer? words—the Parliament-man? words!— words can ruin a country, in the Big House —words save souls, in the Pulpits—words make even them ere authors, poor creturs, in every man's mouth.—Augh! Sir, take note of the words, and the things will take care of themselves—bother!"

"Your reflections amaze me, Bunting," said Walter smiling; "but the night begins to close in; I trust we shall not meet with any misadventure."

"'Tis an ugsome bit of road!" said the Corporal, looking round him.

"The pistols?"

"Primed and loaded, your honour."

"After all, Bunting, a little skirmish would be no bad sport—eh?— especially to an old soldier like you."

"Augh, baugh! 'tis no pleasant work, fighting, without pay, at least; 'tis not like love and eating, your honour, the better for being, what they calls, 'gratis!'"

"Yet I have heard you talk of the pleasure of fighting; not for pay,
Bunting, but for your King and Country!"

"Augh! and that's when I wanted to cheat the poor creturs at Grassdale, your honour; don't take the liberty to talk stuff to my master!"

They continued thus to beguile the way, till Walter again sank into a reverie, while the Corporal, who began more and more to dislike the aspect of the ground they had entered on, still rode by his side.

The road was heavy, and wound down the long hill which had stricken so much dismay into the Corporal's stout heart on the previous day, when he had beheld its commencement at the extremity of the town, where but for him they had not dined. They were now little more than a mile from the said town, the whole of the way was taken up by this hill, and the road, very different from the smoothened declivities of the present day, seemed to have been cut down the very steepest part of its centre; loose stones, and deep ruts encreased the difficulty of the descent, and it was with a slow pace and a guarded rein that both our travellers now continued their journey. On the left side of the road was a thick and lofty hedge; to the right, a wild, bare, savage heath, sloped downward, and just afforded a glimpse of the spires and chimneys of the town, at which the Corporal was already supping in idea! That incomparable personage was, however, abruptly recalled to the present instant, by a most violent stumble on the part of his hard-mouthed, Romannosed horse. The horse was all but down, and the Corporal all but over.

"Damn it," said the Corporal, slowly recovering his perpendicularity, "and the way to Lunnon was as smooth as a bowling-green!"

Ere this rueful exclamation was well out of the Corporal's mouth, a bullet whizzed past him from the hedge; it went so close to his ear, that but for that lucky stumble, Jacob Bunting had been as the grass of the field, which flourisheth one moment and is cut down the next!

Startled by the sound, the Corporal's horse made off full tear down the hill, and carried him several paces beyond his master, ere he had power to stop its career. But Walter reining up his better managed steed, looked round for the enemy, nor looked in vain.

Three men started from the hedge with a simultaneous shout. Walter fired, but without effect; ere he could lay hand on the second pistol, his bridle was seized, and a violent blow from a long double-handed bludgeon, brought him to the ground.

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