GEORGE MEREDITH

THE ADVENTURES OF HARRY RICHMOND. COMPLETE

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I. I AM A SUBJECT OF CONTENTION

One midnight of a winter month the sleepers in Riversley Grange were awakened by a ringing of the outer bell and blows upon the great hall-doors. Squire Beltham was master there: the other members of the household were, his daughter Dorothy Beltham; a married daughter Mrs. Richmond; Benjamin Sewis, an old half-caste butler; various domestic servants; and a little boy, christened Harry Lepel Richmond, the squire's grandson. Riversley Grange lay in a rich watered hollow of the Hampshire heath-country; a lonely circle of enclosed brook and pasture, within view of some of its dependent farms, but out of hail of them or any dwelling except the stables and the head-gardener's cottage. Traditions of audacious highwaymen, together with the gloomy surrounding fir-scenery, kept it alive to fears of solitude and the night; and there was that in the determined violence of the knocks and repeated bell-peals which assured all those who

had ever listened in the servants' hall to prognostications of a possible night attack, that the robbers had come at last most awfully. A crowd of maids gathered along the upper corridor of the main body of the building: two or three footmen hung lower down, bold in attitude. Suddenly the noise ended, and soon after the voice of old Sewis commanded them to scatter away to their beds; whereupon the footmen took agile leaps to the post of danger, while the women, in whose bosoms intense curiosity now supplanted terror, proceeded to a vacant room overlooking the front entrance, and spied from the window.

Meanwhile Sewis stood by his master's bedside. The squire was a hunter, of the old sort: a hard rider, deep drinker, and heavy slumberer. Before venturing to shake his arm Sewis struck a light and flashed it over the squire's eyelids to make the task of rousing him easier. At the first touch the squire sprang up, swearing by his Lord Harry he had just dreamed of fire, and muttering of buckets.

'Sewis! you're the man, are you: where has it broken out?'

'No, sir; no fire,' said Sewis; 'you be cool, sir.'

'Cool, sir! confound it, Sewis, haven't I heard a whole town of steeples at work? I don't sleep so thick but I can hear, you dog! Fellow comes here, gives me a start, tells me to be cool; what the deuce! nobody hurt, then? all right!'

The squire had fallen back on his pillow and was relapsing to sleep.

Sewis spoke impressively: 'There's a gentleman downstairs; a

gentleman downstairs, sir. He has come rather late.'

'Gentleman downstairs come rather late.' The squire recapitulated the intelligence to possess it thoroughly. 'Rather late, eh? Oh! Shove him into a bed, and give him hot brandy and water, and be hanged to him!'

Sewis had the office of tempering a severely distasteful announcement to the squire.

He resumed: 'The gentleman doesn't talk of staying. That is not his business. It 's rather late for him to arrive.'

'Rather late!' roared the squire. 'Why, what's it o'clock?'

Reaching a hand to the watch over his head, he caught sight of the unearthly hour. 'A quarter to two? Gentleman downstairs? Can't be that infernal apothecary who broke 's engagement to dine with me last night? By George, if it is I'll souse him; I'll drench him from head to heel as though the rascal 'd been drawn through the duck-pond. Two o'clock in the morning? Why, the man's drunk. Tell him I'm a magistrate, and I'll commit him, deuce take him; give him fourteen days for a sot; another fourteen for impudence. I've given a month 'fore now. Comes to me, a Justice of the peace!—man 's mad! Tell him he's in peril of a lunatic asylum. And doesn't talk of staying? Lift him out o' the house on the top o' your boot, Sewis, and say it 's mine; you 've my leave.'

Sewis withdrew a step from the bedside. At a safe distance he fronted his master steadily; almost admonishingly. 'It 's Mr. Richmond, sir,' he said.

'Mr....' The squire checked his breath. That was a name never uttered at the Grange. 'The scoundrel?' he inquired harshly, half in a tone of one assuring himself, and his rigid dropped jaw shut.

The fact had to be denied or affirmed instantly, and Sewis was silent.

Grasping his bedclothes in a lump, the squire cried:

'Downstairs? downstairs, Sewis? You've admitted him into my house?'

'No, sir.'

'You have!'

'He is not in the house, sir.'

'You have! How did you speak to him, then?'

'Out of my window, sir.'

'What place here is the scoundrel soiling now?'

'He is on the doorstep outside the house.'

'Outside, is he? and the door's locked?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Let him rot there!'

By this time the midnight visitor's patience had become exhausted. A renewal of his clamour for immediate attention fell on the squire's ear, amazing him to stupefaction at such challengeing insolence.

'Hand me my breeches,' he called to Sewis; 'I can't think brisk out of my breeches.'

Sewis held the garment ready. The squire jumped from the bed, fuming speechlessly, chafing at gaiters and braces, cravat

and coat, and allowed his buttons to be fitted neatly on his calves; the hammering at the hall-door and plucking at the bell going on without intermission. He wore the aspect of one who assumes a forced composure under the infliction of outrages on his character in a Court of Law, where he must of necessity listen and lock his boiling replies within his indignant bosom.

'Now, Sewis, now my horsewhip,' he remarked, as if it had been a simple adjunct of his equipment.

'Your hat, sir?'

'My horsewhip, I said.'

'Your hat is in the hall,' Sewis observed gravely.

'I asked you for my horsewhip.'

'That is not to be found anywhere,' said Sewis.

The squire was diverted from his objurgations against this piece of servitorial defiance by his daughter Dorothy's timid appeal for permission to come in. Sewis left the room. Presently the squire descended, fully clad, and breathing sharply from his nostrils. Servants were warned off out of hearing; none but Sewis stood by.

The squire himself unbolted the door, and threw it open to the limit of the chain.

'Who's there?' he demanded.

A response followed promptly from outside: 'I take you to be Mr. Harry Lepel Beltham. Correct me if I err. Accept my apologies for disturbing you at a late hour of the night, I pray.'

'Your name?'

‘Is plain Augustus Fitz-George Roy Richmond at this moment, Mr. Beltham. You will recognize me better by opening your door entirely: voices are deceptive. You were born a gentleman, Mr. Beltham, and will not reduce me to request you to behave like one. I am now in the position, as it were, of addressing a badger in his den. It is on both sides unsatisfactory. It reflects egregious discredit upon you, the householder.’

The squire hastily bade Sewis see that the passages to the sleeping apartments were barred, and flung the great chain loose. He was acting under strong control of his temper.

It was a quiet grey night, and as the doors flew open, a largely-built man, dressed in a high-collared great-coat and fashionable hat of the time, stood clearly defined to view. He carried a light cane, with the point of the silver handle against his under lip. There was nothing formidable in his appearance, and his manner was affectedly affable. He lifted his hat as soon as he found himself face to face with the squire, disclosing a partially bald head, though his whiskering was luxuriant, and a robust condition of manhood was indicated by his erect attitude and the immense swell of his furred great-coat at the chest. His features were exceedingly frank and cheerful. From his superior height, he was enabled to look down quite royally on the man whose repose he had disturbed.

The following conversation passed between them.

‘You now behold who it is, Mr. Beltham, that acknowledges to the misfortune of arousing you at an unseemly hour—unbetimes,

as our gossips in mother Saxon might say—and with profound regret, sir, though my habit is to take it lightly.'

'Have you any accomplices lurking about here?'

'I am alone.'

'What 's your business?'

'I have no business.'

'You have no business to be here, no. I ask you what 's the object of your visit?'

'Permit me first to speak of the cause of my protracted arrival, sir. The ridicule of casting it on the post-boys will strike you, Mr. Beltham, as it does me. Nevertheless, I must do it; I have no resource. Owing to a rascal of the genus, incontinent in liquor, I have this night walked seven miles from Ewling. My complaint against him is not on my own account.'

'What brought you here at all?'

'Can you ask me?'

'I ask you what brought you to my house at all?'

'True, I might have slept at Ewling.'

'Why didn't you?'

'For the reason, Mr. Beltham, which brought me here originally. I could not wait-not a single minute. So far advanced to the neighbourhood, I would not be retarded, and I came on. I crave your excuses for the hour of my arrival. The grounds for my coming at all you will very well understand, and you will applaud me when I declare to you that I come to her penitent; to exculpate myself, certainly, but despising self-justification. I love my wife,

Mr. Beltham. Yes; hear me out, sir. I can point to my unhappy star, and say, blame that more than me. That star of my birth and most disastrous fortunes should plead on my behalf to you; to my wife at least it will.'

'You've come to see my daughter Marian, have you?'

'My wife, sir.'

'You don't cross my threshold while I live.'

'You compel her to come out to me?'

'She stays where she is, poor wretch, till the grave takes her. You've done your worst; be off.'

'Mr. Beltham, I am not to be restrained from the sight of my wife.'

'Scamp!'

'By no scurrilous epithets from a man I am bound to respect will I be deterred or exasperated.'

'Damned scamp, I say!' The squire having exploded his wrath gave it free way. 'I've stopped my tongue all this while before a scoundrel 'd corkscrew the best-bottled temper right or left, go where you will one end o' the world to the other, by God! And here 's a scoundrel stinks of villany, and I've proclaimed him 'ware my gates as a common trespasser, and deserves hanging if ever rook did nailed hard and fast to my barn doors! comes here for my daughter, when he got her by stealing her, scenting his carcase, and talking 'bout his birth, singing what not sort o' foreign mewin' stuff, and she found him out a liar and a beast, by God! And she turned home. My doors are open to my flesh

and blood. And here she halts, I say, 'gainst the law, if the law's against me. She's crazed: you've made her mad; she knows none of us, not even her boy. Be off; you've done your worst; the light's gone clean out in her; and hear me, you Richmond, or Roy, or whatever you call yourself, I tell you I thank the Lord she has lost her senses. See her or not, you 've no hold on her, and see her you shan't while I go by the name of a man.'

Mr. Richmond succeeded in preserving an air of serious deliberation under the torrent of this tremendous outburst, which was marked by scarce a pause in the delivery.

He said, 'My wife deranged! I might presume it too truly an inherited disease. Do you trifle with me, sir? Her reason unseated! and can you pretend to the right of dividing us? If this be as you say—Oh! ten thousand times the stronger my claim, my absolute claim, to cherish her. Make way for me, Mr. Beltham. I solicit humbly the holiest privilege sorrow can crave of humanity. My wife! my wife! Make way for me, sir.'

His figure was bent to advance. The squire shouted an order to Sewis to run round to the stables and slip the dogs loose.

'Is it your final decision?' Mr. Richmond asked.

'Damn your fine words! Yes, it is. I keep my flock clear of a foul sheep.'

'Mr. Beltham, I implore you, be merciful. I submit to any conditions: only let me see her. I will walk the park till morning, but say that an interview shall be granted in the morning. Frankly, sir, it is not my intention to employ force: I throw myself utterly

on your mercy. I love the woman; I have much to repent of. I see her, and I go; but once I must see her. So far I also speak positively.'

'Speak as positively as you like,' said the squire.

'By the laws of nature and the laws of man, Marian Richmond is mine to support and comfort, and none can hinder me, Mr. Beltham; none, if I resolve to take her to myself.'

'Can't they!' said the squire.

'A curse be on him, heaven's lightnings descend on him, who keeps husband from wife in calamity!'

The squire whistled for his dogs.

As if wounded to the quick by this cold-blooded action, Mr. Richmond stood to his fullest height.

'Nor, sir, on my application during to-morrow's daylight shall I see her?'

'Nor, sir, on your application'—the squire drawled in uncontrollable mimicking contempt of the other's florid forms of speech, ending in his own style,—'no, you won't.'

'You claim a paternal right to refuse me: my wife is your child. Good. I wish to see my son.'

On that point the squire was equally decided. 'You can't. He's asleep.'

'I insist.'

'Nonsense: I tell you he's a-bed and asleep.'

'I repeat, I insist.'

'When the boy's fast asleep, man!'

'The boy is my flesh and blood. You have spoken for your daughter—I speak for my son. I will see him, though I have to batter at your doors till sunrise.'

Some minutes later the boy was taken out of his bed by his aunt Dorothy, who dressed him by the dark window-light, crying bitterly, while she said, 'Hush, hush!' and fastened on his small garments between tender huggings of his body and kissings of his cheeks. He was told that he had nothing to be afraid of. A gentleman wanted to see him: nothing more. Whether the gentleman was a good gentleman, and not a robber, he could not learn but his aunt Dorothy, having wrapped him warm in shawl and comforter, and tremblingly tied his hat-strings under his chin, assured him, with convulsive caresses, that it would soon be over, and he would soon be lying again snug and happy in his dear little bed. She handed him to Sewis on the stairs, keeping his fingers for an instant to kiss them: after which, old Sewis, the lord of the pantry, where all sweet things were stored, deposited him on the floor of the hall, and he found himself facing the man of the night. It appeared to him that the stranger was of enormous size, like the giants of fairy books: for as he stood a little out of the doorway there was a peep of night sky and trees behind him, and the trees looked very much smaller, and hardly any sky was to be seen except over his shoulders.

The squire seized one of the boy's hands to present him and retain him at the same time: but the stranger plucked him from his grandfather's hold, and swinging him high, exclaimed, 'Here

he is! This is Harry Richmond. He has grown a grenadier.'

'Kiss the little chap and back to bed with him,' growled the squire.

The boy was heartily kissed and asked if he had forgotten his papa. He replied that he had no papa: he had a mama and a grandpapa. The stranger gave a deep groan.

'You see what you have done; you have cut me off from my own,' he said terribly to the squire; but tried immediately to soothe the urchin with nursery talk and the pats on the shoulder which encourage a little boy to grow fast and tall. 'Four years of separation,' he resumed, 'and my son taught to think that he has no father. By heavens! it is infamous, it is a curst piece of inhumanity. Mr. Beltham, if I do not see my wife, I carry off my son.'

'You may ask till you're hoarse, you shall never see her in this house while I am here to command,' said the squire.

'Very well; then Harry Richmond changes homes. I take him. The affair is concluded.'

'You take him from his mother?' the squire sang out.

'You swear to me she has lost her wits; she cannot suffer. I can. I shall not expect from you, Mr. Beltham, the minutest particle of comprehension of a father's feelings. You are earthy; you are an animal.'

The squire saw that he was about to lift the boy, and said, 'Stop, never mind that. Stop, look at the case. You can call again to-morrow, and you can see me and talk it over.'

‘Shall I see my wife?’

‘No, you shan’t.’

‘You remain faithful to your word, sir, do you?’

‘I do.’

‘Then I do similarly.’

‘What! Stop! Not to take a child like that out of a comfortable house at night in Winter, man?’

‘Oh, the night is temperate and warm; he shall not remain in a house where his father is dishonoured.’

‘Stop! not a bit of it,’ cried the squire. ‘No one speaks of you. I give you my word, you ‘re never mentioned by man, woman or child in the house.’

‘Silence concerning a father insinuates dishonour, Mr. Beltham.’

‘Damn your fine speeches, and keep your blackguardly hands off that boy,’ the squire thundered. ‘Mind, if you take him, he goes for good. He doesn’t get a penny from me if you have the bringing of him up. You’ve done for him, if you decide that way. He may stand here a beggar in a stolen coat like you, and I won’t own him. Here, Harry, come to me; come to your grandad.’

Mr. Richmond caught the boy just when he was turning to run.

‘That gentleman,’ he said, pointing to the squire, ‘is your grandpapa. I am your papa. You must learn at any cost to know and love your papa. If I call for you to-morrow or next day they will have played tricks with Harry Richmond, and hid him. Mr. Beltham, I request you, for the final time, to accord me

your promise observe, I accept your promise—that I shall, at my demand, to-morrow or the next day, obtain an interview with my wife.'

The squire coughed out an emphatic 'Never!' and fortified it with an oath as he repeated it upon a fuller breath.

'Sir, I will condescend to entreat you to grant this permission,' said Mr. Richmond, urgently.

'No, never: I won't!' rejoined the squire, red in the face from a fit of angry coughing. 'I won't; but stop, put down that boy; listen to me, you Richmond! I'll tell you what I'll do. I 'll—if you swear on a Bible, like a cadger before a bench of magistrates, you'll never show your face within a circuit o' ten miles hereabouts, and won't trouble the boy if you meet him, or my daughter or me, or any one of us-hark ye, I'll do this: let go the boy, and I'll give ye five hundred—I'll give ye a cheque on my banker for a thousand pounds; and, hark me out, you do this, you swear, as I said, on the servants' Bible, in the presence of my butler and me, "Strike you dead as Ananias and t' other one if you don't keep to it," do that now, here, on the spot, and I'll engage to see you paid fifty pounds a year into the bargain. Stop! and I'll pay your debts under two or three hundred. For God's sake, let go the boy! You shall have fifty guineas on account this minute. Let go the boy! And your son—there, I call him your son—your son, Harry Richmond, shall inherit from me; he shall have Riversley and the best part of my property, if not every bit of it. Is it a bargain? Will you swear? Don't, and the boy's a beggar, he's a stranger here as

much as you. Take him, and by the Lord, you ruin him. There now, never mind, stay, down with him. He's got a cold already; ought to be in his bed; let the boy down!'

'You offer me money,' Mr. Richmond answered.

'That is one of the indignities belonging to a connection with a man like you. You would have me sell my son. To see my afflicted wife I would forfeit my heart's yearnings for my son; your money, sir, I toss to the winds; and I am under the necessity of informing you that I despise and loathe you. I shrink from the thought of exposing my son to your besotted selfish example. The boy is mine; I have him, and he shall traverse the wilderness with me. By heaven! his destiny is brilliant. He shall be hailed for what he is, the rightful claimant of a place among the proudest in the land; and mark me, Mr. Beltham, obstinate sensual old man that you are! I take the boy, and I consecrate my life to the duty of establishing him in his proper rank and station, and there, if you live and I live, you shall behold him and bow your grovelling pig's head to the earth, and bemoan the day, by heaven! when you,—a common country squire, a man of no origin, a creature with whose blood we have mixed ours—and he is stone-blind to the honour conferred on him—when you in your besotted stupidity threatened to disinherit Harry Richmond.'

The door slammed violently on such further speech as he had in him to utter. He seemed at first astonished; but finding the terrified boy about to sob, he drew a pretty box from one of his pockets and thrust a delicious sweetmeat between the

whimpering lips. Then, after some moments of irresolution, during which he struck his chest soundingly and gazed down, talked alternately to himself and the boy, and cast his eyes along the windows of the house, he at last dropped on one knee and swaddled the boy in the folds of the shawl. Raising him in a business-like way, he settled him on an arm and stepped briskly across gravel-walk and lawn, like a horse to whose neck a smart touch of the whip has been applied.

The soft mild night had a moon behind it somewhere; and here and there a light-blue space of sky showed small rayless stars; the breeze smelt fresh of roots and heath. It was more a May-night than one of February. So strange an aspect had all these quiet hill-lines and larch and fir-tree tops in the half-dark stillness, that the boy's terrors were overlaid and almost subdued by his wonderment; he had never before been out in the night, and he must have feared to cry in it, for his sobs were not loud. On a rise of the park-road where a fir-plantation began, he heard his name called faintly from the house by a woman's voice that he knew to be his aunt Dorothy's. It came after him only once: 'Harry Richmond'; but he was soon out of hearing, beyond the park, among the hollows that run dipping for miles beside the great highroad toward London. Sometimes his father whistled to him, or held him high and nodded a salutation to him, as though they had just discovered one another; and his perpetual accessibility to the influences of spicy sugarplums, notwithstanding his grief, caused his father to prognosticate hopefully of his future wisdom.

So, when obedient to command he had given his father a kiss, the boy fell asleep on his shoulder, ceasing to know that he was a wandering infant: and, if I remember rightly, he dreamed he was in a ship of cinnamon-wood upon a sea that rolled mighty, but smooth immense broad waves, and tore thing from thing without a sound or a hurt.

CHAPTER II. AN ADVENTURE ON MY OWN ACCOUNT

That night stands up without any clear traces about it or near it, like the brazen castle of romance round which the sea-tide flows. My father must have borne me miles along the road; he must have procured food for me; I have an idea of feeling a damp forehead and drinking new milk, and by-and-by hearing a roar of voices or vehicles, and seeing a dog that went alone through crowded streets without a master, doing as he pleased, and stopping every other dog he met. He took his turning, and my father and I took ours. We were in a house that, to my senses, had the smell of dark corners, in a street where all the house-doors were painted black, and shut with a bang. Italian organ-men and milk-men paraded the street regularly, and made it sound hollow to their music. Milk, and no cows anywhere; numbers of people, and no acquaintances among them; my thoughts were occupied by the singularity of such things.

My father could soon make me forget that I was transplanted; he could act dog, tame rabbit, fox, pony, and a whole nursery collection alive, but he was sometimes absent for days, and I was not of a temper to be on friendly terms with those who were unable to captivate my imagination as he had done. When he was at home I rode him all round the room and upstairs to bed,

I lashed him with a whip till he frightened me, so real was his barking; if I said 'Menagerie' he became a caravan of wild beasts; I undid a button of his waistcoat, and it was a lion that made a spring, roaring at me; I pulled his coat-tails and off I went tugging at an old bear that swung a hind leg as he turned, in the queerest way, and then sat up and beating his breast sent out a mew-moan. Our room was richer to me than all the Grange while these performances were going forward. His monkey was almost as wonderful as his bear, only he was too big for it, and was obliged to aim at reality in his representation of this animal by means of a number of breakages; a defect that brought our landlady on the scene. The enchantment of my father's companionship caused me to suffer proportionately in his absence. During that period of solitude, my nursemaid had to order me to play, and I would stumble about and squat in the middle of the floor, struck suddenly by the marvel of the difference between my present and my other home. My father entered into arrangements with a Punch and Judy man for him to pay me regular morning visits opposite our window; yet here again his genius defeated his kind intentions; for happening once to stand by my side during the progress of the show, he made it so vivid to me by what he said and did, that I saw no fun in it without him: I used to dread the heralding crow of Punch if he was away, and cared no longer for wooden heads being knocked ever so hard.

On Sundays we walked to the cathedral, and this was a day with a delight of its own for me. He was never away on the

Sunday. Both of us attired in our best, we walked along the streets hand in hand; my father led me before the cathedral monuments, talking in a low tone of British victories, and commending the heroes to my undivided attention. I understood very early that it was my duty to imitate them. While we remained in the cathedral he talked of glory and Old England, and dropped his voice in the middle of a murmured chant to introduce Nelson's name or some other great man's and this recurred regularly. 'What are we for now?' he would ask me as we left our house. I had to decide whether we took a hero or an author, which I soon learnt to do with capricious resolution. We were one Sunday for Shakespeare; another for Nelson or Pitt. 'Nelson, papa,' was my most frequent rejoinder, and he never dissented, but turned his steps toward Nelson's cathedral dome, and uncovered his head there, and said: 'Nelson, then, to-day'; and we went straight to his monument to perform the act of homage. I chose Nelson in preference to the others because near bed-time in the evening my father told me stories of our hero of the day, and neither Pitt nor Shakespeare lost an eye, or an arm, or fought with a huge white bear on the ice to make himself interesting. I named them occasionally out of compassion, and to please my father, who said that they ought to have a turn. They were, he told me, in the habit of paying him a visit, whenever I had particularly neglected them, to learn the grounds for my disregard of their claims, and they urged him to intercede with me, and imparted many of their unpublished adventures, so that I should be tempted to give them a chance on

the following Sunday.

'Great Will,' my father called Shakespeare, and 'Slender Billy,' Pitt. The scene where Great Will killed the deer, dragging Falstaff all over the park after it by the light of Bardolph's nose, upon which they put an extinguisher if they heard any of the keepers, and so left everybody groping about and catching the wrong person, was the most wonderful mixture of fun and tears. Great Will was extremely youthful, but everybody in the park called him, 'Father William'; and when he wanted to know which way the deer had gone, King Lear (or else my memory deceives me) punned, and Lady Macbeth waved a handkerchief for it to be steeped in the blood of the deer; Shylock ordered one pound of the carcase; Hamlet (the fact was impressed on me) offered him a three-legged stool; and a number of kings and knights and ladies lit their torches from Bardolph; and away they flew, distracting the keepers and leaving Will and his troop to the deer. That poor thing died from a different weapon at each recital, though always with a flow of blood and a successful dash of his antlers into Falstaff; and to hear Falstaff bellow! But it was mournful to hear how sorry Great Will was over the animal he had slain. He spoke like music. I found it pathetic in spite of my knowing that the whole scene was lighted up by Bardolph's nose. When I was just bursting out crying—for the deer's tongue was lolling out and quick pantings were at his side; he had little ones at home—Great Will remembered his engagement to sell Shylock a pound of the carcase; determined that no Jew should eat of it,

he bethought him that Falstaff could well spare a pound, and he said the Jew would not see the difference: Falstaff only got off by hard running and roaring out that he knew his unclean life would make him taste like pork and thus let the Jew into the trick.

My father related all this with such a veritable matter-of-fact air, and such liveliness—he sounded the chase and its cries, and showed King Lear tottering, and Hamlet standing dark, and the vast substance of Falstaff—that I followed the incidents excitedly, and really saw them, which was better than understanding them. I required some help from him to see that Hamlet's offer of a three-legged stool at a feverish moment of the chase, was laughable. He taught me what to think of it by pitching Great Will's voice high, and Hamlet's very low. By degrees I got some unconscious knowledge of the characters of Shakespeare.

There never was so fascinating a father as mine for a boy anything under eight or ten years old. He could guess on Saturday whether I should name William Pitt on the Sunday; for, on those occasions, 'Slender Billy,' as I hope I am not irreverent in calling him, made up for the dulness of his high career with a raspberry-jam tart, for which, my father told me solemnly, the illustrious Minister had in his day a passion. If I named him, my father would say, 'W. P., otherwise S. B., was born in the year so-and-so; now,' and he went to the cupboard, 'in the name of Politics, take this and meditate upon him.' The shops being all shut on Sunday, he certainly bought it, anticipating me unerringly, on the Saturday, and, as soon as the tart appeared, we both shouted. I

fancy I remember his repeating a couplet,

> 'Billy Pitt took a cake and a raspberry jam,
> When he heard they had taken Seringapatam.'

At any rate, the rumour of his having done so, at periods of strong excitement, led to the inexplicable display of foresight on my father's part.

My meditations upon Pitt were, under this influence, favourable to the post of a Prime Minister, but it was merely appetite that induced me to choose him; I never could imagine a grandeur in his office, notwithstanding my father's eloquent talk of ruling a realm, shepherding a people, hurling British thunderbolts. The day's discipline was, that its selected hero should reign the undisputed monarch of it, so when I was for Pitt, I had my tart as he used to have it, and no story, for he had none, and I think my idea of the ruler of a realm presented him to me as a sort of shadow about a pastrycook's shop. But I surprised people by speaking of him. I made remarks to our landlady which caused her to throw up her hands and exclaim that I was astonishing. She would always add a mysterious word or two in the hearing of my nursemaid or any friend of hers who looked into my room to see me. After my father had got me forward with instructions on the piano, and exercises in early English history and the book of the Peerage, I became the wonder of the house. I was put up on a stool to play 'In my Cottage near

a Wood,' or 'Cherry Ripe,' and then, to show the range of my accomplishments, I was asked, 'And who married the Dowager Duchess of Dewlap?' and I answered, 'John Gregg Wetherall, Esquire, and disgraced the family.' Then they asked me how I accounted for her behaviour.

'It was because the Duke married a dairymaid,' I replied, always tossing up my chin at that. My father had concocted the questions and prepared me for the responses, but the effect was striking, both upon his visitors and the landlady's. Gradually my ear grew accustomed to her invariable whisper on these occasions. 'Blood Rile,' she said; and her friends all said 'No!' like the run of a finger down a fiddlestring.

A gentleman of his acquaintance called on him one evening to take him out for a walk. My father happened to be playing with me when this gentleman entered our room: and he jumped up from his hands and knees, and abused him for intruding on his privacy, but afterwards he introduced him to me as Shylock's great-great-great-grandson, and said that Shylock was satisfied with a pound, and his descendant wanted two hundred pounds, or else all his body: and this, he said, came of the emigration of the family from Venice to England. My father only seemed angry, for he went off with Shylock's very great grandson arm-in-arm, exclaiming, 'To the Rialto!' When I told Mrs. Waddy about the visitor, she said, 'Oh, dear! oh, dear! then I'm afraid your sweet papa won't return very soon, my pretty pet.' We waited a number of days, until Mrs. Waddy received a letter from him.

She came full-dressed into my room, requesting me to give her twenty kisses for papa, and I looked on while she arranged her blue bonnet at the glass. The bonnet would not fix in its place. At last she sank down crying in a chair, and was all brown silk, and said that how to appear before a parcel of dreadful men, and perhaps a live duke into the bargain, was more than she knew, and more than could be expected of a lone widow woman. 'Not for worlds!' she answered my petition to accompany her. She would not, she said, have me go to my papa there for anything on earth; my papa would perish at the sight of me; I was not even to wish to go. And then she exclaimed, 'Oh, the blessed child's poor papa!' and that people were cruel to him, and would never take into account his lovely temper, and that everybody was his enemy, when he ought to be sitting with the highest in the land. I had realized the extremity of my forlorn state on a Sunday that passed empty of my father, which felt like his having gone for ever. My nursemaid came in to assist in settling Mrs. Waddy's bonnet above the six crisp curls, and while they were about it I sat quiet, plucking now and then at the brown silk, partly to beg to go with it, partly in jealousy and love at the thought of its seeing him from whom I was so awfully separated. Mrs. Waddy took fresh kisses off my lips, assuring me that my father would have them in twenty minutes, and I was to sit and count the time. My nursemaid let her out. I pretended to be absorbed in counting, till I saw Mrs. Waddy pass by the window. My heart gave a leap of pain. I found the street-door open and no one in the passage,

and I ran out, thinking that Mrs. Waddy would be obliged to take me if she discovered me by her side in the street.

I was by no means disconcerted at not seeing her immediately. Running on from one street to another, I took the turnings with unhesitating boldness, as if I had a destination in view. I must have been out near an hour before I understood that Mrs. Waddy had eluded me; so I resolved to enjoy the shop-windows with the luxurious freedom of one whose speculations on those glorious things all up for show are no longer distracted by the run of time and a nursemaid. Little more than a glance was enough, now that I knew I could stay as long as I liked. If I stopped at all, it was rather to exhibit the bravado of liberty than to distinguish any particular shop with my preference: all were equally beautiful; so were the carriages; so were the people. Ladies frequently turned to look at me, perhaps because I had no covering on my head; but they did not interest me in the least. I should have been willing to ask them or any one where the Peerage lived, only my mind was quite full, and I did not care. I felt sure that a great deal of walking would ultimately bring me to St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey; to anything else I was indifferent.

Toward sunset my frame was struck as with an arrow by the sensations of hunger on passing a cook's-shop. I faltered along, hoping to reach a second one, without knowing why I had dragged my limbs from the first. There was a boy in ragged breeches, no taller than myself, standing tiptoe by the window of a very large and brilliant pastry-cook's. He persuaded me to go

into the shop and ask for a cake. I thought it perfectly natural to do so, being hungry; but when I reached the counter and felt the size of the shop, I was abashed, and had to repeat the nature of my petition twice to the young woman presiding there.

'Give you a cake, little boy?' she said. 'We don't give cakes, we sell them.'

'Because I am hungry,' said I, pursuing my request.

Another young woman came, laughing and shaking lots of ringlets.

'Don't you see he's not a common boy? he doesn't whine,' she remarked, and handed me a stale bun, saying, 'Here, Master Charles, and you needn't say thank you.'

'My name is Harry Richmond, and I thank you very much,' I replied.

I heard her say, as I went out, 'You can see he's a gentleman's son.' The ragged boy was awaiting me eagerly. 'Gemini! you're a lucky one,' he cried; 'here, come along, curly-poll.' I believe that I meant to share the bun with him, but of course he could not be aware of my beneficent intentions: so he treated me as he thought I was for treating him, and making one snatch at the bun, ran off cramming it into his mouth. I stood looking at any hand. I learnt in that instant what thieving was, and begging, and hunger, for I would have perished rather than have asked for another cake, and as I yearned for it in absolute want of food, the boy's ungenerous treatment of me came down in a cloud on my reason. I found myself being led through the crush of people, by

an old gentleman, to whom I must have related an extraordinary rigmarole. He shook his head, saying that I was unintelligible; but the questions he put to me, 'Why had I no hat on in the open street?—Where did my mother live?—What was I doing out alone in London?' were so many incitements to autobiographical composition to an infant mind, and I tumbled out my history afresh each time that he spoke. He led me into a square, stooping his head to listen all the while; but when I perceived that we had quitted the region of shops I made myself quite intelligible by stopping short and crying: 'I am so hungry.' He nodded and said, 'It 's no use cross-examining an empty stomach. You'll do me the favour to dine with me, my little man. We'll talk over your affairs by-and-by.'

My alarm at having left the savoury street of shops was not soothed until I found myself sitting at table with him, and a nice young lady, and an old one who wore a cap, and made loud remarks on my garments and everything I did. I was introduced to them as the little boy dropped from the sky. The old gentleman would not allow me to be questioned before I had eaten. It was a memorable feast. I had soup, fish, meat, and pastry, and, for the first time in my life, a glass of wine. How they laughed to see me blink and cough after I had swallowed half the glass like water. At once my tongue was unloosed. I seemed to rise right above the roofs of London, beneath which I had been but a wandering atom a few minutes ago. I talked of my wonderful father, and Great Will, and Pitt, and the Peerage. I amazed them with my

knowledge. When I finished a long recital of Great Will's chase of the deer, by saying that I did not care about politics (I meant, in my own mind, that Pitt was dull in comparison), they laughed enormously, as if I had fired them off. 'Do you know what you are, sir?' said the old gentleman; he had frowning eyebrows and a merry mouth 'you're a comical character.'

I felt interested in him, and asked him what he was. He informed me that he was a lawyer, and ready to be pantaloon to my clown, if I would engage him.

'Are you in the Peerage?' said I.

'Not yet,' he replied.

'Well, then,' said I, 'I know nothing about you.'

The young lady screamed with laughter. 'Oh, you funny little boy; you killing little creature!' she said, and coming round to me, lifted me out of my chair, and wanted to know if I knew how to kiss.

'Oh, yes; I've been taught that,' said I, giving the salute without waiting for the invitation; 'but,' I added, 'I don't care about it much.'

She was indignant, and told me she was going to be offended, so I let her understand that I liked being kissed and played with in the morning before I was up, and if she would come to my house ever so early, she would find me lying next the wall and ready for her.

'And who lies outside?' she asked.

'That's my papa,' I was beginning to say, but broke the words

with a sob, for I seemed to be separated from him now by the sea itself.

They petted me tenderly. My story was extracted by alternate leading questions from the old gentleman and timely caresses from the ladies. I could tell them everything except the name of the street where I lived. My midnight excursion from the house of my grandfather excited them chiefly; also my having a mother alive who perpetually fanned her face and wore a ball-dress and a wreath; things that I remembered of my mother. The ladies observed that it was clear I was a romantic child. I noticed that the old gentleman said 'Humph,' very often, and his eyebrows were like a rook's nest in a tree when I spoke of my father walking away with Shylock's descendant and not since returning to me. A big book was fetched out of his library, in which he read my grandfather's name. I heard him mention it aloud. I had been placed on a stool beside a tea-tray near the fire, and there I saw the old red house of Riversley, and my mother dressed in white, and my aunt Dorothy; and they all complained that I had ceased to love them, and must go to bed, to which I had no objection. Somebody carried me up and undressed me, and promised me a great game of kissing in the morning.

The next day in the strange house I heard that the old gentleman had sent one of his clerks down to my grandfather at Riversley, and communicated with the constables in London; and, by-and-by, Mrs. Waddy arrived, having likewise visited those authorities, one of whom supported her claims upon me.

But the old gentleman wished to keep me until his messenger returned from Riversley. He made all sorts of pretexts. In the end, he insisted on seeing my father, and Mrs. Waddy, after much hesitation, and even weeping, furnished the address: upon hearing which, spoken aside to him, he said, 'I thought so.' Mrs. Waddy entreated him to be respectful to my father, who was, she declared, his superior, and, begging everybody's pardon present, the superior of us all, through no sin of his own, that caused him to be so unfortunate; and a real Christian and pattern, in spite of outsides, though as true a gentleman as ever walked, and by rights should be amongst the highest. She repeated 'amongst the highest' reprovingly, with the ears of barley in her blue bonnet shaking, and her hands clasped tight in her lap. Old Mr. Bannerbridge (that was the old gentleman's name) came back very late from his visit to my father, so late that he said it would be cruel to let me go out in the street after my bed-time. Mrs. Waddy consented to my remaining, on the condition of my being surrendered to her at nine o'clock, and no later, the following morning.

I was assured by Mr. Bannerbridge that my father's health and appetite were excellent; he gave me a number of unsatisfying messages, all the rest concerning his interview he whispered to his daughter and his sister, Miss Bannerbridge, who said they hoped they would have news from Hampshire very early, so that the poor child might be taken away by the friends of his infancy. I could understand that my father was disapproved of by them, and

that I was a kind of shuttlecock flying between two battledores; but why they pitied me I could not understand. There was a great battle about me when Mrs. Waddy appeared punctual to her appointed hour. The victory was hers, and I, her prize, passed a whole day in different conveyances, the last of which landed us miles away from London, at the gates of an old drooping, mossed and streaked farmhouse, that was like a wall-flower in colour.

CHAPTER III. DIPWELL FARM

In rain or in sunshine this old farmhouse had a constant resemblance to a wall-flower; and it had the same moist earthy smell, except in the kitchen, where John and Martha Thresher lived, apart from their furniture. All the fresh eggs, and the butter stamped, with three bees, and the pots of honey, the fowls, and the hare lifted out of the hamper by his hind legs, and the country loaves smelling heavenly, which used to come to Mrs. Waddy's address in London, and appear on my father's table, were products of Dipwell farm, and presents from her sister, Martha Thresher. On receiving this information I felt at home in a moment, and asked right off, 'How long am I to stay here? —Am I going away tomorrow?—What's going to be done with me?' The women found these questions of a youthful wanderer touching. Between kissings and promises of hens to feed, and eggs that were to come of it, I settled into contentment. A strong impression was made on me by Mrs. Waddy's saying, 'Here, Master Harry, your own papa will come for you; and you may be sure he will, for I have his word he will, and he's not one to break it, unless his country's against him; and for his darling boy he'd march against cannons. So here you'll sit and wait for him, won't you?' I sat down immediately, looking up. Mrs. Waddy and Mrs. Thresher raised their hands. I had given them some extraordinary proof of my love for my father. The impression I received was,

that sitting was the thing to conjure him to me.

'Where his heart's not concerned,' Mrs. Waddy remarked of me flatteringly, 'he's shrewd as a little schoolmaster.'

'He've a bird's-nesting eye,' said Mrs. Thresher, whose face I was studying.

John Thresher wagered I would be a man before either of them reached that goal. But whenever he spoke he suffered correction on account of his English.

'More than his eating and his drinking, that child's father worrits about his learning to speak the language of a British gentleman,' Mrs. Waddy exclaimed. 'Before that child your h's must be like the panting of an engine—to please his father. He 'd stop me carrying the dinner-tray on meat-dish hot, and I'm to repeat what I said, to make sure the child haven't heard anything ungrammatical. The child's nursemaid he'd lecture so, the poor girl would come down to me ready to bend double, like a bundle of nothing, his observations so took the pride out of her. That's because he 's a father who knows his duty to the child:—"Child!" says he, "man, ma'am." It's just as you, John, when you sow your seed you think of your harvest. So don't take it ill of me, John; I beg of you be careful of your English. Turn it over as you're about to speak.'

'Change loads on the road, you mean,' said John Thresher. 'Na, na, he's come to settle nigh a weedy field, if you like, but his crop ain't nigh reaping yet. Hark you, Mary Waddy, who're a widde, which 's as much as say, an unocc'pied mind, there's

cockney, and there's country, and there 's school. Mix the three, strain, and throw away the sediment. Now, yon 's my view.

His wife and Mrs. Waddy said reflectively, in a breath, 'True!'

'Drink or no, that's the trick o' brewery,' he added.

They assented. They began praising him, too, like meek creatures.

'What John says is worth listening to, Mary. You may be over-careful. A stew's a stew, and not a boiling to shreds, and you want a steady fire, and not a furnace.'

'Oh, I quite agree with John, Martha: we must take the good and the evil in a world like this.'

'Then I'm no scholar, and you're at ease,' said John.

Mrs. Waddy put her mouth to his ear.

Up went his eyebrows, wrinkling arches over a petrified stare.

In some way she had regained her advantage. 'Art sure of it?' he inquired.

'Pray, don't offend me by expressing a doubt of it,' she replied, bowing.

John Thresher poised me in the very centre of his gaze. He declared he would never have guessed that, and was reproved, inasmuch as he might have guessed it. He then said that I could not associate with any of the children thereabout, and my dwelling in the kitchen was not to be thought of. The idea of my dwelling in the kitchen seemed to be a serious consideration with Mrs. Martha likewise. I was led into the rooms of state. The sight of them was enough. I stamped my feet for the kitchen, and rarely

in my life have been happier than there, dining and supping with John and Martha and the farm-labourers, expecting my father across the hills, and yet satisfied with the sun. To hope, and not be impatient, is really to believe, and this was my feeling in my father's absence. I knew he would come, without wishing to hurry him. He had the world beyond the hills; I this one, where a slow full river flowed from the sounding mill under our garden wall, through long meadows. In Winter the wild ducks made letters of the alphabet flying. On the other side of the copses bounding our home, there was a park containing trees old as the History of England, John Thresher said, and the thought of their venerable age enclosed me comfortably. He could not tell me whether he meant as old as the book of English History; he fancied he did, for the furrow-track follows the plough close upon; but no one exactly could swear when that (the book) was put together. At my suggestion, he fixed the trees to the date of the Heptarchy, a period of heavy ploughing. Thus begirt by Saxon times, I regarded Riversley as a place of extreme baldness, a Greenland, untrodden by my Alfred and my Harold. These heroes lived in the circle of Dipwell, confidently awaiting the arrival of my father. He sent me once a glorious letter. Mrs. Waddy took one of John Thresher's pigeons to London, and in the evening we beheld the bird cut the sky like an arrow, bringing round his neck a letter warm from him I loved. Planet communicating with planet would be not more wonderful to men than words of his to me, travelling in such a manner. I went to sleep, and awoke imagining the bird

bursting out of heaven.

Meanwhile there was an attempt to set me moving again. A strange young man was noticed in the neighbourhood of the farm, and he accosted me at Leckham fair. 'I say, don't we know one another? How about your grandfather the squire, and your aunt, and Mr. Bannerbridge? I've got news for you.'

Not unwilling to hear him, I took his hand, leaving my companion, the miller's little girl, Mabel Sweetwinter, at a toy-stand, while Bob, her brother and our guardian, was shying sticks in a fine attitude. 'Yes, and your father, too,' said the young man; 'come along and see him; you can run?' I showed him how fast. We were pursued by Bob, who fought for me, and won me, and my allegiance instantly returned to him. He carried me almost the whole of the way back to Dipwell. Women must feel for the lucky heroes who win them, something of what I felt for mine; I kissed his bloody face, refusing to let him wipe it. John Thresher said to me at night, 'Ay, now you've got a notion of boxing; and will you believe it, Master Harry, there's people fools enough to want to tread that ther' first-rate pastime under foot? I speak truth, and my word for 't, they'd better go in petticoats. Let clergymen preach as in duty bound; you and I'll uphold a manful sport, we will, and a cheer for Bob!'

He assured me, and he had my entire faith, that boxing was England's natural protection from the foe. The comfort of having one like Bob to defend our country from invasion struck me as inexpressible. Lighted by John Thresher's burning patriotism, I

entered the book of the History of England at about the pace of a carthorse, with a huge waggon at my heels in the shape of John. There was no moving on until he was filled. His process of receiving historical knowledge was to fight over again the personages who did injury to our honour as a nation, then shake hands and be proud of them. 'For where we ain't quite successful we're cunning,' he said; 'and we not being able to get rid of William the Conqueror, because he's got a will of his own and he won't budge, why, we takes and makes him one of ourselves; and no disgrace in that, I should hope! He paid us a compliment, don't you see, Master Harry? he wanted to be an Englishman. "Can you this?" says we, sparrin' up to him. "Pretty middlin'," says he, "and does it well." "Well then," says we, "then you're one of us, and we'll beat the world"; and did so.'

John Thresher had a laborious mind; it cost him beads on his forehead to mount to these heights of meditation. He told me once that he thought one's country was like one's wife: you were born in the first, and married to the second, and had to learn all about them afterwards, ay, and make the best of them. He recommended me to mix, strain, and throw away the sediment, for that was the trick o' brewery. Every puzzle that beset him in life resolved to this cheerful precept, the value of which, he said, was shown by clear brown ale, the drink of the land. Even as a child I felt that he was peculiarly an Englishman. Tales of injustice done on the Niger river would flush him in a heat of wrath till he cried out for fresh taxes to chastise the

villains. Yet at the sight of the beggars at his gates he groaned at the taxes existing, and enjoined me to have pity on the poor taxpayer when I lent a hand to patch the laws. I promised him I would unreservedly, with a laugh, but with a sincere intention to legislate in a direct manner on his behalf. He, too, though he laughed, thanked me kindly.

I was clad in black for my distant mother. Mrs. Waddy brought down a young man from London to measure me, so that my mourning attire might be in the perfect cut of fashion. 'The child's papa would strip him if he saw him in a country tailor's funeral suit,' she said, and seemed to blow a wind of changes on me that made me sure my father had begun to stir up his part of the world. He sent me a prayer in his own handwriting to say for my mother in heaven. I saw it flying up between black edges whenever I shut my eyes. Martha Thresher dosed me for liver. Mrs. Waddy found me pale by the fireside, and prescribed iron. Both agreed upon high-feeding, and the apothecary agreed with both in everything, which reconciled them, for both good women loved me so heartily they were near upon disputing over the medicines I was to consume.

Under such affectionate treatment I betrayed the alarming symptom that my imagination was set more on my mother than on my father: I could not help thinking that for any one to go to heaven was stranger than to drive to Dipwell, and I had this idea when my father was clasping me in his arms; but he melted it like snow off the fields. He came with postillions in advance of him

wearing crape rosettes, as did the horses. We were in the cricket-field, where Dipwell was playing its first match of the season, and a Dipwell lad, furious to see the elevens commit such a breach of the rules and decency as to troop away while the game was hot, and surround my father, flung the cricket-ball into the midst and hit two or three of the men hard. My father had to shield him from the consequences. He said he liked that boy; and he pleaded for him so winningly and funnily that the man who was hurt most laughed loudest.

Standing up in the carriage, and holding me by the hand, he addressed them by their names: 'Sweetwinter, I thank you for your attention to my son; and you, Thribble; and you, my man; and you, Baker; Rippengale, and you; and you, Jupp'; as if he knew them personally. It was true he nodded at random. Then he delivered a short speech, and named himself a regular subscriber to their innocent pleasures. He gave them money, and scattered silver coin among the boys and girls, and praised John Thresher, and Martha, his wife, for their care of me, and pointing to the chimneys of the farm, said that the house there was holy to him from henceforth, and he should visit it annually if possible, but always in the month of May, and in the shape of his subscription, as certain as the cowslip. The men, after their fit of cheering, appeared unwilling to recommence their play, so he alighted and delivered the first ball, and then walked away with my hand in his, saying:

'Yes, my son, we will return to them tenfold what they have

done for you. The eleventh day of May shall be a day of pleasure for Dipwell while I last, and you will keep it in memory of me when I am gone. And now to see the bed you have slept in.'

Martha Thresher showed him the bed, showed him flowers I had planted, and a Spanish chestnut tree just peeping.

'Ha!' said he, beaming at every fresh sight of my doings: 'madam, I am your life-long debtor and friend!' He kissed her on the cheek.

John Thresher cried out: 'Why, dame, you trembles like a maid.'

She spoke very faintly, and was red in the face up to the time of our departure. John stood like a soldier. We drove away from a cheering crowd of cricketers and farm-labourers, as if discharged from a great gun. 'A royal salvo!' said my father, and asked me earnestly whether I had forgotten to reward and take a particular farewell of any one of my friends. I told him I had forgotten no one, and thought it was true, until on our way up the sandy lane, which offered us a last close view of the old wall-flower farm front, I saw little Mabel Sweetwinter, often my playfellow and bedfellow, a curly-headed girl, who would have danced on Sunday for a fairing, and eaten gingerbread nuts during a ghost-story. She was sitting by a furze-bush in flower, cherishing in her lap a lamb that had been worried. She looked half up at me, and kept looking so, but would not nod. Then good-bye, thought I, and remembered her look when I had forgotten that of all the others.

CHAPTER IV. I HAVE A TASTE OF GRANDEUR

Though I had not previously seen a postillion in my life, I gazed on the pair bobbing regularly on their horses before me, without a thought upon the marvel of their sudden apparition and connection with my fortunes. I could not tire of hearing the pleasant music of the many feet at the trot, and tried to explain to my father that the men going up and down made it like a piano that played of itself. He laughed and kissed me; he remembered having once shown me the inside of a piano when the keys were knocked. My love for him as we drove into London had a recognized footing: I perceived that he was my best friend and only true companion, besides his being my hero. The wicked men who had parted us were no longer able to do harm, he said. I forgot, in my gladness at their defeat, to ask what had become of Shylock's descendant.

Mrs. Waddy welcomed us when we alighted. Do not imagine that it was at the door of her old house. It was in a wide street opening on a splendid square, and pillars were before the houses, and inside there was the enchantment of a little fountain playing thin as whipcord, among ferns, in a rock-basin under a window that glowed with kings of England, copied from boys' history books. All the servants were drawn up in the hall to do homage

to me. They seemed less real and living than the wonder of the sweet-smelling chairs, the birds, and the elegant dogs. Richest of treats, a monkey was introduced to me. 'It 's your papa's whim,' Mrs. Waddy said, resignedly; 'he says he must have his jester. Indeed it is no joke to me.'

Yet she smiled happily, though her voice was melancholy. From her I now learnt that my name was Richmond Roy, and not Harry Richmond. I said, 'Very well,' for I was used to change. Everybody in the house wore a happy expression of countenance, except the monkey, who was too busy. As we mounted the stairs I saw more kings of England painted on the back-windows. Mrs. Waddy said: 'It is considered to give a monarchical effect,'—she coughed modestly after the long word, and pursued: 'as it should.' I insisted upon going to the top floor, where I expected to find William the Conqueror, and found him; but that strong connecting link between John Thresher and me presented himself only to carry my recollections of the Dipwell of yesterday as far back into the past as the old Norman days.

'And down go all the kings, downstairs,' I said, surveying them consecutively.

'Yes,' she replied, in a tone that might lead one to think it their lamentable fate. 'And did the people look at you as you drove along through the streets, Master Richmond?'

I said 'Yes,' in turn; and then we left off answering, but questioned one another, which is a quicker way of getting at facts; I know it is with boys and women. Mrs. Waddy cared

much less to hear of Dipwell and its inhabitants than of the sensation created everywhere by our equipage. I noticed that when her voice was not melancholy her face was. She showed me a beautiful little pink bed, having a crown over it, in a room opening to my father's. Twenty thousand magnificent dreams seemed to flash their golden doors when I knew that the bed was mine. I thought it almost as nice as a place by my father's side.

'Don't you like it, Mrs. Waddy?' I said.

She smiled and sighed. 'Like it? Oh! yes, my dear, to be sure I do. I only hope it won't vanish.' She simpered and looked sad.

I had too many distractions, or I should have asked her whether my amazing and delightful new home had ever shown symptoms of vanishing; it appeared to me, judging from my experience, that nothing moved violently except myself, and my principal concern was lest any one should carry me away at a moment's notice. In the evening I was introduced to a company of gentlemen, who were drinking wine after dinner with my father. They clapped their hands and laughed immoderately on my telling them that I thought those kings of England who could not find room on the windows must have gone down to the cellars.

'They are going,' my father said. He drank off a glassful of wine and sighed prodigiously. 'They are going, gentlemen, going there, like good wine, like old Port, which they tell us is going also. Favour me by drinking to the health of Richmond Roy the younger.'

They drank to me heartily, but my father had fallen mournful

before I left the room.

Pony-riding, and lessons in boxing and wrestling, and lessons in French from a French governess, at whose appearance my father always seemed to be beginning to dance a minuet, so exuberantly courteous was he; and lessons in Latin from a tutor, whom my father invited to dinner once a fortnight, but did not distinguish otherwise than occasionally to take down Latin sentences in a notebook from his dictation, occupied my mornings. My father told the man who instructed me in the art of self-defence that our family had always patronized his profession. I wrestled ten minutes every day with this man's son, and was regularly thrown. On fine afternoons I was dressed in black velvet for a drive in the park, where my father uncovered his head to numbers of people, and was much looked at. 'It is our duty, my son, never to forget names and persons; I beg you to bear that in mind, my dearest Richie,' he said. We used to go to his opera-box; and we visited the House of Lords and the House of Commons; and my father, though he complained of the decay of British eloquence, and mourned for the days of Chatham, and William Pitt (our old friend of the cake and the raspberry jam), and Burke, and Sheridan, encouraged the orators with approving murmurs.

My father no longer laid stress on my studies of the Peerage. 'Now I have you in the very atmosphere, that will come of itself,' he said. I wished to know whether I was likely to be transported suddenly to some other place. He assured me that nothing save

a convulsion of the earth would do it, which comforted me, for I took the firmness of the earth in perfect trust. We spoke of our old Sunday walks to St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey as of a day that had its charm. Our pew among a fashionable congregation pleased him better. The pew-opener curtseyed to none as she did to him. For my part, I missed the monuments and the chants, and something besides that had gone—I knew not what. At the first indication of gloom in me, my father became alarmed, and, after making me stand with my tongue out before himself and Mrs. Waddy, like a dragon in a piece of tapestry, would resume his old playfulness, and try to be the same that he had been in Mrs. Waddy's lodgings. Then we read the Arabian Nights together, or, rather, he read them to me, often acting out the incidents as we rode or drove abroad. An omission to perform a duty was the fatal forgetfulness to sprinkle pepper on the cream-tarts; if my father subjected me to an interrogation concerning my lessons, he was the dread African magician to whom must be surrendered my acquisition of the ring and the musty old lamp. We were quite in the habit of meeting fair Persians. He would frequently ejaculate that he resembled the Three Calendars in more respects than one. To divert me during my recovery from measles, he one day hired an actor in a theatre, and put a cloth round his neck, and seated him in a chair, rubbed his chin with soap, and played the part of the Barber over him, and I have never laughed so much in my life. Poor Mrs. Waddy got her hands at her sides, and kept on gasping, 'Oh, sir! oh!' while the Barber hurried away from

the half-shaved young man to consult his pretended astrolabe in the next room, where we heard him shouting the sun's altitude, and consulting its willingness for the impatient young man to be further shaved; and back he came, seeming refreshed to have learnt the sun's favourable opinion, and gabbling at an immense rate, full of barber's business. The servants were allowed to be spectators; but as soon as the young man was shaved, my father dismissed them with the tone of a master. No wonder they loved him. Mrs. Waddy asked who could help it?

I remember a pang I had when she spoke of his exposure to the risk of marrying again; it added a curious romantic tenderness to my adoration of him, and made me feel that he and I stood against the world. To have his hand in mine was my delight. Then it was that I could think earnestly of Prince Ahmed and the kind and beautiful Peribanou, whom I would not have minded his marrying. My favourite dream was to see him shooting an arrow in a match for a prize, and losing the prize because of not finding his arrow, and wondering where the arrow had flown to, and wandering after it till he passed out of green fields to grassy rocks, and to a stony desert, where at last he found his arrow at an enormous distance from the shooting line, and there was the desert all about him, and the sweetest fairy ever imagined going to show herself to him in the ground under his feet. In his absence I really hungered for him, and was jealous.

During this Arabian life, we sat on a carpet that flew to the Continent, where I fell sick, and was cured by smelling at an

apple; and my father directed our movements through the aid of a telescope, which told us the titles of the hotels ready to receive us. As for the cities and cathedrals, the hot meadows under mountains, the rivers and the castles-they were little more to me than an animated book of geography, opening and shutting at random; and travelling from place to place must have seemed to me so much like the life I had led, that I was generally as quick to cry as to laugh, and was never at peace between any two emotions. By-and-by I lay in a gondola with a young lady. My father made friends fast on our travels: her parents were among the number, and she fell in love with me and enjoyed having the name of Peribanou, which I bestowed on her for her delicious talk of the blue and red-striped posts that would spout up fountains of pearls if they were plucked from their beds, and the palaces that had flown out of the farthest corners of the world, and the city that would some night or other vanish suddenly, leaving bare sea-ripple to say 'Where? where?' as they rolled over. I would have seen her marry my father happily. She was like rest and dreams to me, soft sea and pearls. We entered into an arrangement to correspond for life. Her name was Clara Goodwin; she requested me to go always to the Horse Guards to discover in what part of the world Colonel Goodwin might be serving when I wanted to write to her. I, in return, could give no permanent address, so I related my history from the beginning. 'To write to you would be the same as writing to a river,' she said; and insisted that I should drop the odious name of Roy

when I grew a man. My father quarrelled with Colonel Goodwin. Months after I felt as if I had only just been torn from Clara, but she stood in a mist, irrecoverably distant. I had no other friend.

Twelve dozen of splendid Burgundy were the fruit of our tour, to be laid down at Dipwell farm for my arrival at my majority, when I should be a legal man, embarked in my own ship, as my father said. I did not taste the wine. 'Porter for me that day, please God!' cried Mrs. Waddy, who did. My father eyed her with pity, and ordered her to send the wine down to Dipwell, which was done. He took me between his knees, and said impressively, 'Now, Richie, twelve dozen of the best that man can drink await you at the gates of manhood. Few fathers can say that to their sons, my boy! If we drink it together, blessings on the day! If I'm gone, Richie, shut up in the long box,' his voice shook, and he added, 'gone to Peribanou underneath, you know, remember that your dada saw that the wine was a good vintage, and bought it and had it bottled in his own presence while you were asleep in the Emperor's room in the fine old Burgundy city, and swore that, whatever came to them both, his son should drink the wine of princes on the day of his majority.' Here my father's tone was highly exalted, and he sat in a great flush.

I promised him I would bend my steps toward Dipwell to be there on my twenty-first birthday, and he pledged himself to be there in spirit at least, bodily if possible. We sealed the subject with some tears. He often talked of commissioning a poet to compose verses about that wonderful coming day at Dipwell. The

thought of the day in store for us sent me strutting as though I had been in the presence of my drill-master. Mrs. Waddy, however, grew extremely melancholy at the mention of it.

'Lord only knows where we shall all be by that time!' she sighed.

'She is a dewy woman,' said my father, disdainfully They appeared always to be at variance, notwithstanding her absolute devotion to him. My father threatened to have her married to somebody immediately if she afflicted him with what he called her Waddyism. She had got the habit of exclaiming at the end of her remarks, 'No matter; our clock strikes soon!' in a way that communicated to me an obscure idea of a door going to open unexpectedly in one of the walls, and conduct us, by subterranean passages, into a new country. My father's method of rebuking her anxious nature was to summon his cook, the funniest of Frenchmen, Monsieur Alphonse, and issue orders for a succession of six dinner-parties. 'And now, ma'am, you have occupation for your mind,' he would say.

To judge by the instantaneous composure of her whole appearance, he did produce a temporary abatement of her malady. The good soul bustled out of the room in attendance upon M. Alphonse, and never complained while the dinners lasted, but it was whispered that she had fits in the upper part of the house. No sooner did my father hear the rumour than he accused her to her face of this enormity, telling her that he was determined to effect a permanent cure, even though she should

drive him to unlimited expense. We had a Ball party and an Aladdin supper, and for a fortnight my father hired postillions; we flashed through London. My father backed a horse to run in the races on Epsom Downs named Prince Royal, only for the reason that his name was Prince Royal, and the horse won, which was, he said, a proof to me that in our country it was common prudence to stick to Royalty; and he bade me note that if he went in a carriage and two, he was comparatively unnoticed, whereas when he was beheld in a carriage and four, with postillions, at a glance from him the country people tugged their forelocks, and would like, if he would let them, to kiss his hand. 'We will try the scarlet livery on one of our drives, Richie,' said he. Mrs. Waddy heard him. 'It is unlawful, sir,' she said. 'For whom, ma'am?' asked my father. 'None but Royal…' she was explaining, but stopped, for he showed her an awful frown, and she cried so that my heart ached for her. My father went out to order the livery on the spot. He was very excited. Then it was that Mrs. Waddy, embracing me, said, 'My dear, my own Master Richmond, my little Harry, prepare your poor child's heart for evil days.' I construed her unintelligible speech as an attack upon my father, and abused her violently.

While I was in this state of wrathful championship, the hall-door was opened. I ran out and caught sight of my aunt Dorothy, in company with old Mr. Bannerbridge. I was kissed and hugged for I know not how long, until the smell of Riversley took entire possession of me, and my old home seemed nearer than the one

I lived in; but my aunt, seeing tears on my cheeks, asked me what was my cause of sorrow. In a moment I poured out a flood of complaints against Mrs. Waddy for vexing my father. When she heard of the scarlet livery, my aunt lifted her hands. 'The man is near the end of his wits and his money together,' said Mr. Bannerbridge; and she said to me, 'My darling Harry will come back to his own nice little room, and see his grandpapa soon, won't you, my pet? All is ready for him there as it used to be, except poor mama. "Kiss my boy, my Harry—Harry Richmond." Those were her last words on her death-bed, before she went to God, Harry, my own! There is Sampson the pony, and Harry's dog Prince, and his lamb Daisy, grown a sheep, and the ploughboy, Dick, with the big boots.' Much more sweet talk of the same current that made my face cloudy and bright, and filled me with desire for Riversley, to see my mother's grave and my friends.

Aunt Dorothy looked at me. 'Come now,' she said; 'come with me, Harry.' Her trembling seized on me like a fire. I said, 'Yes,' though my heart sank as if I had lost my father with the word. She caught me in her arms tight, murmuring, 'And dry our tears and make our house laugh. Oh! since the night that Harry went..... And I am now Harry's mama, he has me.'

I looked on her forehead for the wreath of white flowers my mother used to wear, and thought of my father's letter with the prayer written on the black-bordered page. I said I would go, but my joy in going was gone. We were stopped

in the doorway by Mrs. Waddy. Nothing would tempt her to surrender me. Mr. Bannerbridge tried reasoning with her, and, as he said, put the case, which seemed to have perched on his forefinger. He talked of my prospects, of my sole chance of being educated morally and virtuously as became the grandson of an English gentleman of a good old family, and of my father having spent my mother's estate, and of the danger of his doing so with mine, and of religious duty and the awfulness of the position Mrs. Waddy stood in. He certainly subdued me to very silent breathing, but did not affect me as my aunt Dorothy's picturing of Riversley had done; and when Mrs. Waddy, reduced to an apparent submissiveness, addressed me piteously, 'Master Richmond, would you leave papa?' I cried out, 'No, no, never leave my papa,' and twisted away from my aunt's keeping. My father's arrival caused me to be withdrawn, but I heard his offer of his hospitality and all that was his; and subsequently there was loud talking on his part. I was kissed by my aunt before she went. She whispered, 'Come to us when you are free; think of us when you pray.' She was full of tears. Mr. Bannerbridge patted my head.

The door closed on them and I thought it was a vision that had passed. But now my father set my heart panting with questions as to the terrible possibility of us two ever being separated. In some way he painted my grandfather so black that I declared earnestly I would rather die than go to Riversley; I would never utter the name of the place where there was evil speaking of

the one I loved dearest. 'Do not, my son,' he said solemnly, 'or it parts us two.' I repeated after him, 'I am a Roy and not a Beltham.' It was enough to hear that insult and shame had been cast on him at Riversley for me to hate the name of the place. We cried and then laughed together, and I must have delivered myself with amazing eloquence, for my father held me at arms' length and said, 'Richie, the notion of training you for a General commandership of the British army is a good one, but if you have got the winning tongue, the woolsack will do as well for a whisper in the ear of the throne. That is our aim, my son. We say, —you will not acknowledge our birth, you shall acknowledge our worth.' He complained bitterly of my aunt Dorothy bringing a lawyer to our house. The sins of Mrs. Waddy were forgiven her, owing to her noble resistance to the legal gentleman's seductive speech. So I walked up and down stairs with the kings of England looking at me out of the coloured windows quietly for a week; and then two ugly men entered the house, causing me to suffer a fearful oppression, though my father was exceedingly kind to them and had beds provided for them, saying that they were very old retainers of his.

But the next day our scarlet livery appeared. After exacting particular attention to his commands, my father quitted Mrs. Waddy, and we mounted the carriage, laughing at her deplorable eyes and prim lips, which he imitated for my amusement. 'A load is off my head,' he remarked. He asked me if splendour did not fatigue me also. I caught the answer from his face and replied

that it did, and that I should like to go right on to Dipwell 'The Burgundy sleeps safe there,' said my father, and thought over it. We had an extraordinary day. People stood fast to gaze at us; in the country some pulled off their hats and set up a cheer. The landlords of the inns where we baited remained bare-headed until we started afresh, and I, according to my father's example, bowed and lifted my cap gravely to persons saluting us along the roads. Nor did I seek to know the reason for this excess of respectfulness; I was beginning to take to it naturally. At the end of a dusty high-road, where it descends the hill into a town, we drew up close by a high red wall, behind which I heard boys shouting at play. We went among them, accompanied by their master. My father tipped the head boy for the benefit of the school, and following lunch with the master and his daughter, to whom I gave a kiss at her request, a half-holiday was granted to the boys in my name. How they cheered! The young lady saw my delight, and held me at the window while my father talked with hers; and for a long time after I beheld them in imagination talking: that is to say, my father issuing his instructions and Mr. Rippenger receiving them like a pliant hodman; for the result of it was that two days later, without seeing my kings of England, my home again, or London, I was Julia Rippenger's intimate friend and the youngest pupil of the school. My father told me subsequently that we slept at an hotel those two nights intervening. Memory transplants me from the coach and scarlet livery straight to my place of imprisonment.

CHAPTER V. I MAKE A DEAR FRIEND

Heriot was the name of the head boy of the school. Boddy was the name of one of the ushers. They were both in love with Julia Rippenger. It was my fortune to outrun them in her favour for a considerable period, during which time, though I had ceased to live in state, and was wearing out my suits of velvet, and had neither visit nor letter from my father, I was in tolerable bliss. Julia's kisses were showered on me for almost anything I said or did, but her admiration of heroism and daring was so fervent that I was in no greater danger of becoming effeminate than Achilles when he wore girl's clothes. She was seventeen, an age bewitching for boys to look up to and men to look down on. The puzzle of the school was how to account for her close relationship to old Rippenger. Such an apple on such a crab-tree seemed monstrous. Heriot said that he hoped Boddy would marry old Rippenger's real daughter, and, said he, that's birch-twigs. I related his sparkling speech to Julia, who laughed, accusing him, however, of impudence. She let me see a portrait of her dead mother, an Irish lady raising dark eyelashes, whom she resembled. I talked of the portrait to Heriot, and as I had privileges accorded to none of the other boys and could go to her at any hour of the day after lessons, he made me beg for him to

have a sight of it. She considered awhile, but refused. On hearing of the unkind refusal, Heriot stuck his hands into his pockets and gave up cricketing. We saw him leaning against a wall in full view of her window, while the boys crowded round him trying to get him to practise, a school-match of an important character coming off with a rival academy; and it was only through fear of our school being beaten if she did not relent that Julia handed me the portrait, charging me solemnly to bring it back. I promised, of course. Heriot went into his favourite corner of the playground, and there looked at it and kissed it, and then buttoned his jacket over it tight, growling when I asked him to return it. Julia grew frightened. She sent me with numbers of petitions to him.

'Look here, young un,' said Heriot; 'you're a good little fellow, and I like you, but just tell her I believe in nothing but handwriting, and if she writes to me for it humbly and nicely she shall have it back. Say I only want to get a copy taken by a first-rate painter.'

Julia shed tears at his cruelty, called him cruel, wicked, false to his word. She wrote, but the letter did not please him, and his reply was scornful. At prayers morning and evening, it was pitiful to observe her glance of entreaty and her downfallen eyelashes. I guessed that in Heriot's letters to her he wanted to make her confess something, which she would not do. 'Now I write to him no more; let him know it, my darling,' she said, and the consequence of Heriot's ungrateful obstinacy was that we all beheld her, at the ceremony of the consecration of the new

church, place her hand on Mr. Boddy's arm and allow him to lead her about. Heriot kept his eyes on them; his mouth was sharp, and his arms stiff by his sides. I was the bearer of a long letter to her that evening. She tore it to pieces without reading it. Next day Heriot walked slowly past Mr. Boddy holding the portrait in his hands. The usher called to him!

'What have you there, Heriot?'

My hero stared. 'Only a family portrait,' he answered, thrusting it safe in his pocket and fixing his gaze on Julia's window.

'Permit me to look at it,' said Mr. Boddy.

'Permit me to decline to let you,' said Heriot.

'Look at me, sir,' cried Boddy.

'I prefer to look elsewhere, sir,' replied Heriot, and there was Julia visible at her window.

'I asked you, sir, civilly,' quoth Boddy, 'for permission to look,—I used the word intentionally; I say I asked you for permission…'

'No, you didn't,' Heriot retorted, quite cool; 'inferentially you did; but you did not use the word permission.'

'And you turned upon me impudently,' pursued Boddy, whose colour was thunder: 'you quibbled, sir; you prevaricated; you concealed what you were carrying…'

'Am carrying,' Heriot corrected his tense; 'and mean to, in spite of every Boddy,' he murmured audibly.

'Like a rascal detected in an act of felony,' roared Boddy, 'you

concealed it, sir…'

'Conceal it, sir.'

'And I demand, in obedience to my duty, that you instantly exhibit it for my inspection, now, here, at once; no parleying; unbutton, or I call Mr. Rippenger to compel you.'

I was standing close by my brave Heriot, rather trembling, studious of his manfulness though I was. His left foot was firmly in advance, as he said, just in the manner to start an usher furious:

'I concealed it, I conceal it; I was carrying it, I carry it: you demand that I exhibit for your inspection what I mean no Boddy to see? I have to assure you respectfully, sir, that family portraits are sacred things with the sons of gentlemen. Here, Richie, off!'

I found the portrait in my hand, and Heriot between me and the usher, in the attitude of a fellow keeping another out of his home at prisoner's-base. He had spied Mr. Rippenger's head at the playground gate. I had just time to see Heriot and the usher in collision before I ran through the gate and into Julia's arms in her garden, whither the dreadful prospect of an approaching catastrophe had attracted her.

Heriot was merely reported guilty of insolence. He took his five hundred lines of Virgil with his usual sarcastic dignity: all he said to Mr. Rippenger was, 'Let it be about Dido, sir,' which set several of the boys upon Dido's history, but Heriot was condemned to the battles with Turnus. My share in this event secured Heriot's friendship to me without costing me the slightest inconvenience. 'Papa would never punish you,' Julia

said; and I felt my rank. Nor was it wonderful I should when Mr. Rippenger was constantly speaking of my father's magnificence in my presence before company. Allowed to draw on him largely for pocket-money, I maintained my father's princely reputation in the school. At times, especially when the holidays arrived and I was left alone with Julia, I had fits of mournfulness, and almost thought the boys happier than I was. Going home began to seem an unattainable thing to me. Having a father, too, a regular father, instead of a dazzling angel that appeared at intervals, I considered a benefaction, in its way, some recompense to the boys, for their not possessing one like mine. My anxiety was relieved by my writing letters to my father, addressed to the care of Miss Julia Rippenger, and posting them in her work-basket. She favoured me with very funny replies, signed, 'Your own ever-loving Papa,' about his being engaged killing Bengal tigers and capturing white elephants, a noble occupation that gave me exciting and consolatory dreams of him.

We had at last a real letter of his, dated from a foreign city; but he mentioned nothing of coming to me. I understood that Mr. Rippenger was disappointed with it.

Gradually a kind of cloud stole over me. I no longer liked to ask for pocket-money; I was clad in a suit of plain cloth; I was banished from the parlour, and only on Sunday was I permitted to go to Julia. I ceased to live in myself. Through the whole course of lessons, at play-time, in my bed, and round to morning bell, I was hunting my father in an unknown country, generally with the

sun setting before me: I ran out of a wood almost into a brook to see it sink as if I had again lost sight of him, and then a sense of darkness brought me back to my natural consciousness, without afflicting me much, but astonishing me. Why was I away from him? I could repeat my lessons in the midst of these dreams quite fairly; it was the awakening among the circle of the boys that made me falter during a recital and ask myself why I was there and he absent? They had given over speculating on another holiday and treat from my father; yet he had produced such an impression in the school that even when I had descended to the level of a total equality with them, they continued to have some consideration for me. I was able to talk of foreign cities and could tell stories, and I was, besides, under the immediate protection of Heriot. But now the shadow of a great calamity fell on me, for my dear Heriot announced his intention of leaving the school next half.

'I can't stand being prayed at, morning and evening, by a fellow who hasn't the pluck to strike me like a man,' he said. Mr. Rippenger had the habit of signalizing offenders, in his public prayers, as boys whose hearts he wished to be turned from callousness. He perpetually suspected plots; and to hear him allude to some deep, long-hatched school conspiracy while we knelt motionless on the forms, and fetch a big breath to bring out, 'May the heart of Walter Heriot be turned and he comprehend the multitudinous blessings,' etc., was intensely distressing. Together with Walter Heriot, Andrew Saddlebank,

our best bowler, the drollest fellow in the world, John Salter, and little Gus Temple, were oftenest cited. They declared that they invariably uttered 'Amen,' as Heriot did, but we none of us heard this defiant murmur of assent from their lips. Heriot pronounced it clearly and cheerfully, causing Julia's figure to shrink as she knelt with her face in the chair hard by her father's desk-pulpit. I received the hearty congratulations of my comrades for singing out 'Amen' louder than Heriot, like a chorister, though not in so prolonged a note, on hearing to my stupefaction Mr. Rippenger implore that the heart of 'him we know as Richmond Roy' might be turned. I did it spontaneously. Mr. Rippenger gazed at me in descending from his desk; Julia, too, looking grieved. For my part, I exulted in having done a thing that gave me a likeness to Heriot.

'Little Richmond, you're a little hero,' he said, caressing me. 'I saw old Rippenger whisper to that beast, Boddy. Never mind; they won't hurt you as long as I'm here. Grow tough, that's what you've got to do. I'd like to see you horsed, only to see whether you're game to take it without wincing—if it didn't hurt you much, little lad.'

He hugged me up to him.

'I'd take anything for you, Heriot,' said I.

'All right,' he answered, never meaning me to suffer on his account. He had an inimitable manner of sweet speaking that endeared him to younger boys capable of appreciating it, with the supernatural power of music. It endeared him, I suppose, to

young women also. Julia repeated his phrases, as for instance, 'Silly boy, silly boy,' spoken with a wave of his hand, when a little fellow thanked him for a kindness. She was angry at his approval of what she called my defiance of her father, and insisted that I was the catspaw of one of Heriot's plots to vex him. 'Tell Heriot you have my command to say you belong to me and must not be misled,' she said. His answer was that he wanted it in writing. She requested him to deliver up her previous letters. Thereupon he charged me with a lengthy epistle, which plunged us into boiling water. Mr. Boddy sat in the schoolroom while Heriot's pen was at work, on the wet Sunday afternoon. His keen little eyes were busy in his flat bird's head all the time Heriot continued writing. He saw no more than that Heriot gave me a book; but as I was marching away to Julia he called to know where I was going.

'To Miss Rippenger,' I replied.

'What have you there?'

'A book, sir.'

'Show me the book.'

I stood fast.

'It 's a book I have lent him, sir,' said Heriot, rising. 'I shall see if it's a fit book for a young boy,' said Boddy; and before Heriot could interpose, he had knocked the book on the floor, and out fell the letter. Both sprang down to seize it: their heads encountered, but Heriot had the quicker hand; he caught the letter, and cried 'Off!' to me, as on another occasion. This time, however, he was not between me and the usher. I was seized by

the collar, and shakes roughly.

'You will now understand that you are on a footing with the rest of the boys, you Roy,' said Boddy. 'Little scoundrelly spoilt urchins, upsetting the discipline of the school, won't do here. Heriot, here is your book. I regret,' he added, sneering, 'that a leaf is torn.'

'I regret, sir, that the poor boy was so savagely handled,' said Heriot.

He was warned to avoid insolence.

'Oh, as much Virgil as you like,' Heriot retorted; 'I know him by heart.'

It was past the hour of my customary visit to Julia, and she came to discover the reason of my delay. Boddy stood up to explain. Heriot went forward, saying, 'I think I'm the one who ought to speak, Miss Rippenger. The fact is, I hear from little Roy that you are fond of tales of Indian adventure, and I gave him a book for you to read, if you like it. Mr. Boddy objected, and treated the youngster rather rigorously. It must have been quite a misunderstanding on his part. Here is the book it's extremely amusing.'

Julia blushed very red. She accepted the book with a soft murmur, and the sallow usher had not a word.

'Stay,' said Heriot. 'I took the liberty to write some notes. My father is an Indian officer, you know, and some of the terms in the book are difficult without notes. Richie, hand that paper. Here they are, Miss Rippenger, if you'll be so kind as to place them

in the book.'

I was hoping with all my might that she would not deny him. She did, and my heart sank.

'Oh, I can read it without notes,' she said, cheerfully.

After that, I listened with indifference to her petition to Boddy that I might be allowed to accompany her, and was not at all chagrined by his refusal. She laid down the book, saying that I could bring it to her when I was out of disgrace.

In the evening we walked in the playground, where Heriot asked me to do a brave thing, which he would never forget. This was that I should take a sharp run right past Boddy, who was pacing up and down before the gate leading into Julia's garden, and force her to receive the letter. I went bounding like a ball. The usher, suspecting only that I hurried to speak to him, let me see how indignant he was with my behaviour by striding all the faster as I drew near, and so he passed the gate, and I rushed in. I had just time to say to Julia, 'Hide it, or I'm in such a scrape.'

The next minute she was addressing my enemy:

'Surely you would not punish him because he loves me?' and he, though he spoke of insubordination, merited chastisement; and other usher phrases, seemed to melt, and I had what I believe was a primary conception of the power of woman. She led him to talk in the gentlest way possible of how the rain had refreshed her flowers, and of this and that poor rose.

I could think of nothing but the darling letter, which had flashed out of sight as a rabbit pops into burrows. Boddy departed

with a rose.

'Ah, Richie,' she said, 'I have to pay to have you with me now.'

We walked to the summer-house, where she read Heriot's letter through. 'But he is a boy! How old is Heriot? He is not so old as I am!'

These were her words, and she read the letter anew, and read it again after she had placed it in her bosom, I meanwhile pouring out praises of Heriot.

'You speak of him as if you were in love with him, Richmond,' she said.

'And I do love him,' I answered.

'Not with me?' she asked.

'Yes, I do love you too, if you will not make him angry.'

'But do you know what it is he wants of me?'

I guessed: 'Yes; he wants you to let him sit close to you for half an hour.'

She said that he sat very near her in church.

'Ah,' said I, 'but he mustn't interrupt the sermon.'

She laughed, and mouthed me over with laughing kisses. 'There's very little he hasn't daring enough for!'

We talked of his courage.

'Is he good as well?' said Julia, more to herself than to me; but I sang out,

'Good! Oh, so kind!'

This appeared to convince her.

'Very generous to you and every one, is he not?' she said;

and from that moment was all questions concerning his kind treatment of the boys, and as to their looking up to him.

I quitted her, taking her message to Heriot: 'You may tell him —tell him that I can't write.'

Heriot frowned on hearing me repeat it.

'Humph!' he went, and was bright in a twinkling: 'that means she'll come!' He smacked his hands together, grew black, and asked, 'Did she give that beast Boddy a rose?'

I had to confess she did; and feeling a twinge of my treason to her, felt hers to Heriot.

'Humph!' he went; 'she shall suffer for that.'

All this was like music going on until the curtain should lift and reveal my father to me.

There was soon a secret to be read in Heriot's face for one who loved it as I did. Julia's betrayed nothing. I was not taken into their confidence, and luckily not; otherwise I fear I should have served them ill, I was so poor a dissembler and was so hotly plied with interrogations by the suspicious usher. I felt sure that Heriot and Julia met. His eyes were on her all through prayer-time, and hers wandered over the boys' heads till they rested on him, when they gave a short flutter and dropped, like a bird shot dead. The boys must have had some knowledge that love was busy in their midst, for they spoke of Heriot and Julia as a jolly couple, and of Boddy as one meaning to play the part of old Nick the first opportunity. She was kinder to them than ever. It was not a new thing that she should send in cakes of her

own making, but it was extraordinary that we should get these thoughtful presents as often as once a fortnight, and it became usual to hear a boy exclaim, either among a knot of fellows or to himself, 'By jingo, she is a pretty girl!' on her passing out of the room, and sometimes entirely of his own idea. I am persuaded that if she had consented to marry Boddy, the boys would have been seriously disposed to conspire to jump up in the church and forbid the banns. We should have preferred to hand her to the junior usher, Catman, of whom the rumour ran in the school that he once drank a bottle of wine and was sick after it, and he was therefore a weak creature to our minds; the truth of the rumour being confirmed by his pale complexion. That we would have handed our blooming princess to him was full proof of our abhorrence of Boddy. I might have thought with the other boys that she was growing prettier, only I never could imagine her so delicious as when she smiled at my father.

The consequence of the enlistment of the whole school in Heriot's interests was that at cricket-matches, picnics on the hills, and boating on the canal, Mr. Boddy was begirt with spies, and little Temple reported to Heriot a conversation that he, lying hidden in tall grass, had heard between Boddy and Julia. Boddy asked her to take private lessons in French from him. Heriot listened to the monstrous tale as he was on the point of entering Julia's boat, where Boddy sat beside her, and Heriot rowed stroke-oar. He dipped his blade, and said, loud enough to be heard by me in Catman's boat,

'Do you think French useful in a military education, sir?'

And Boddy said, 'Yes, of course it is.'

Says Heriot, 'Then I think I shall take lessons.'

Boddy told him he was taking lessons in the school.

'Oh!' says Heriot, 'I mean private lessons'; and here he repeated one of Temple's pieces of communication: 'so much more can be imparted in a private lesson!'

Boddy sprang half up from his seat. 'Row, sir, and don't talk,' he growled.

'Sit, sir, and don't dance in the boat, if you please, or the lady will be overset,' said Heriot.

Julia requested to be allowed to land and walk home. Boddy caught the rudder lines and leapt on the bank to hand her out; then all the boys in her boat and in Catman's shouted, 'Miss Julia! dear Miss Julia, don't leave us!' and we heard wheedling voices: 'Don't go off with him alone!' Julia bade us behave well or she would not be able to come out with us. At her entreaty Boddy stepped back to his post, and the two boats went forward like swans that have done ruffling their feathers.

The boys were exceedingly disappointed that no catastrophe followed the events of the day. Heriot, they thought, might have upset the boat, saved Julia, and drowned Boddy, and given us a feast of pleasurable excitement: instead of which Boddy lived to harass us with his tyrannical impositions and spiteful slaps, and it was to him, not to our Heriot, that Julia was most gracious. Some of us discussed her conduct.

'She's a coquette,' said little Temple. I went off to the French dictionary.

'Is Julia Rippenger a coquette, Heriot?' I asked him.

'Keep girls out of your heads, you little fellows,' said he, dealing me a smart thump.

'Is a coquette a nasty girl?' I persisted.

'No, a nice one, as it happens,' was his answer.

My only feeling was jealousy of the superior knowledge of the sex possessed by Temple, for I could not fathom the meaning of coquette; but he had sisters. Temple and I walked the grounds together, mutually declaring how much we would forfeit for Heriot's sake. By this time my Sunday visits to Julia had been interdicted: I was plunged, as it were, in the pit of the school, and my dreams of my father were losing distinctness. A series of boxes on the ears from Boddy began to astound and transform me. Mr. Rippenger, too, threatened me with carvings, though my offences were slight. 'Yes,' said Temple and I, in chorus, 'but you daren't strike Heriot!' This was our consolation, and the sentiment of the school. Fancy, then, our amazement to behold him laying the cane on Heriot's shoulders as fiercely as he could, and Boddy seconding him. The scene was terrible. We were all at our desks doing evening tasks for the morrow, a great matchday at cricket, Boddy watching over us, and bellowing, 'Silence at your work, you lazy fellows, if you want lessons to be finished at ten in the morning!' A noise came growing up to us from below, up the stairs from the wet-weather shed, and Heriot burst into

the room, old Rippenger after him, panting.

'Mr. Boddy, you were right,' he cried, 'I find him a prowler, breaking all rules of discipline. A perverted, impudent rascal! An example shall be set to my school, sir. We have been falling lax. What! I find the puppy in my garden whistling—he confesses—for one of my servants—here, Mr. Boddy, if you please. My school shall see that none insult me with impunity!' He laid on Heriot like a wind on a bulrush. Heriot bent his shoulders a trifle, not his head.

'Hit away, sir,' he said, during the storm of blows, and I, through my tears, imagined him (or I do now) a young eagle forced to bear the thunder, but with his face to it. Then we saw Boddy lay hands on him, and in a twinkling down pitched the usher, and the boys cheered—chirped, I should say, they exulted so, and merely sang out like birds, without any wilfulness of delight or defiance. After the fall of Boddy we had no sense of our hero suffering shame. Temple and I clutched fingers tight as long as the blows went on. We hoped for Boddy to make another attempt to touch Heriot; he held near the master, looking ready to spring, like a sallow panther; we kept hoping he would, in our horror of the murderous slashes of the cane; and not a syllable did Heriot utter. Temple and I started up, unaware of what we were going to do, or of anything until we had got a blow a-piece, and were in the thick of it, and Boddy had us both by the collars, and was knocking our heads together, as he dragged us back to our seats. But the boys told us we stopped the

execution. Mr. Rippenger addressed us before he left the schoolroom. Saddlebank, Salter, and a good many others, plugged their ears with their fists. That night Boddy and Catman paced in the bedchambers, to prevent plotting and conspiracy, they said. I longed to get my arms about Heriot, and thought of him, and dreamed of blood, and woke in the morning wondering what made me cry, and my arms and back very stiff. Heriot was gay as ever, but had fits of reserve; the word passed round that we were not to talk of yesterday evening. We feared he would refuse to play in the match.

'Why not?' said he, staring at us angrily. 'Has Saddlebank broken his arm, and can't bowl?'

No, Saddlebank was in excellent trim, though shamefaced, as was Salter, and most of the big boys were. They begged Heriot to let them shake his hand.

'Wait till we win our match,' said Heriot.

Julia did not appear at morning prayers.

'Ah,' said Temple, 'it'd make her sick to hear old Massacre praying.' It had nearly made him sick, he added, and I immediately felt that it had nearly made me sick.

We supposed we should not see Julia at the match. She came, however, and talked to everybody. I could not contain myself, I wanted so to tell her what had befallen Heriot overnight, while he was batting, and the whole ground cheering his hits. I on one side of her whispered:

'I say, Julia, my dear, I say, do you know…'

And Temple on the other: 'Miss Julia, I wish you'd let me tell you—'

We longed to arouse her pity for Heriot at the moment she was admiring him, but she checked us, and as she was surrounded by ladies and gentlemen of the town, and particular friends of hers, we could not speak out. Heriot brought his bat to the booth for eighty-nine runs. His sleeve happened to be unbuttoned, and there, on his arm, was a mark of the cane.

'Look!' I said to Julia. But she looked at me.

'Richie, are you ill?'

She assured me I was very pale, and I felt her trembling excessively, and her parasol was covering us.

'Here, Roy, Temple,' we heard Heriot call; 'here, come here and bowl to me.'

I went and bowled till I thought my head was flying after the ball and getting knocks, it swam and throbbed so horribly.

Temple related that I fell, and was carried all the way from the cricket-field home by Heriot, who would not give me up to the usher. I was in Julia's charge three days. Every time I spoke of her father and Heriot, she cried, 'Oh, hush!' and had tears on her eyelids. When I was quite strong again, I made her hear me out. She held me and rocked over me like a green tree in the wind and rain.

'Was any name mentioned?' she asked, with her mouth working, and to my 'No,' said 'No, she knew there was none,' and seemed to drink and choke, and was one minute calm, all

but a trembling hanging underlip, next smiling on me, and next having her face carved in grimaces by the jerking little tugs of her mouth, which I disliked to see, for she would say nothing of what she thought of Heriot, and I thought to myself, though I forbore to speak unkindly, 'It's no use your making yourself look ugly, Julia.' If she had talked of Heriot, I should have thought that crying persons' kisses were agreeable.

On my return into the school, I found it in a convulsion of excitement, owing to Heriot's sending Boddy a challenge to fight a duel with pistols. Mr. Rippenger preached a sermon to the boys concerning the unChristian spirit and hideous moral perversity of one who would even consent to fight a duel. How much more reprehensible, then, was one that could bring himself to defy a fellow-creature to mortal combat! We were not of his opinion; and as these questions are carried by majorities, we decided that Boddy was a coward, and approved the idea that Heriot would have to shoot or scourge him when the holidays came. Mr. Rippenger concluded his observations by remarking that the sharpest punishment he could inflict upon Heriot was to leave him to his own conscience; which he did for three days, and then asked him if he was in a fit state of mind to beg Mr. Boddy's pardon publicly.

'I'm quite prepared to tell him what I think of him publicly, sir,' said Heriot.

A murmur of exultation passed through the school. Mr. Rippenger seized little Temple, and flogged him. Far from

dreading the rod, now that Heriot and Temple had tasted it, I thought of punishment as a mad pleasure, not a bit more awful than the burning furze-bush plunged into by our fellows in a follow-my-leader scamper on the common; so I caught Temple's hand as he went by me, and said, eagerly, 'Shall I sing out hurrah?'

'Bother it!' was Temple's answer, for he had taken a stinging dozen, and had a tender skin.

Mr. Rippenger called me up to him, to inform me, that whoever I was, and whatever I was, and I might be a little impostor foisted on his benevolence, yet he would bring me to a knowledge of myself: he gave me warning of it; and if my father objected to his method, my father must write word to that effect, and attend punctually to business duties, for Surrey House was not an almshouse, either for the sons of gentlemen of high connection, or for the sons of vagabonds. Mr. Rippenger added a spurning shove on my shoulder to his recommendation to me to resume my seat. I did not understand him at all. I was, in fact, indebted to a boy named Drew, a known sneak, for the explanation, in itself difficult to comprehend. It was, that Mr. Rippenger was losing patience because he had received no money on account of my boarding and schooling. The intelligence filled my head like the buzz of a fly, occupying my meditations without leading them anywhere. I spoke on the subject to Heriot.

'Oh, the sordid old brute!' said he of Mr. Rippenger. 'How can he know the habits and feelings of gentlemen? Your father's travelling, and can't write, of course. My father's in India, and I

get a letter from him about once a year. We know one another, and I know he's one of the best officers in the British army. It's just the way with schoolmasters and tradesmen: they don't care whether a man is doing his duty to his country; he must attend to them, settle accounts with them—hang them! I'll send you money, dear little lad, after I've left.'

He dispersed my brooding fit. I was sure my father was a fountain of gold, and only happened to be travelling. Besides, Heriot's love for Julia, whom none of us saw now, was an incessant distraction. She did not appear at prayers. She sat up in the gallery at church, hardly to be spied. A letter that Heriot flung over the gardenwall for her was returned to him, open, enclosed by post.

'A letter for Walter Heriot,' exclaimed Mr. Boddy, lifting it high for Heriot to walk and fetch it; and his small eyes blinked when Heriot said aloud on his way, cheerfully,

'A letter from the colonel in India!'

Boddy waited a minute, and then said, 'Is your father in good health?'

Heriot's face was scarlet. At first he stuttered, 'My father!—I hope so! What have you in common with him, sir?'

'You stated that the letter was from your father,' said Boddy.

'What if it is, sir?'

'Oh, in that case, nothing whatever to me.'

They talked on, and the youngest of us could perceive Boddy was bursting with devilish glee. Heriot got a letter posted to

Julia. It was laid on his desk, with her name scratched completely out, and his put in its place. He grew pale and sad, but did his work, playing his games, and only letting his friends speak to him of lessons and play. His counsel to me was, that in spite of everything, I was always to stick to my tasks and my cricket. His sadness he could not conceal. He looked like an old lamp with a poor light in it. Not a boy in the school missed seeing how Boddy's flat head perpetually had a side-eye on him.

All this came to an end. John Salter's father lived on the other side of the downs, and invited three of us to spend a day at his house. The selection included Heriot, Saddlebank, and me. Mr. Rippenger, not liking to refuse Mr. Salter, consented to our going, but pretended that I was too young. Salter said his mother and sisters very much wished to make my acquaintance. We went in his father's carriage. A jolly wind blew clouds and dust and leaves: I could have fancied I was going to my own father. The sensation of freedom had a magical effect on me, so that I was the wildest talker of them all. Even in the middle of the family I led the conversation; and I did not leave Salter's house without receiving an assurance from his elder sisters that they were in love with me. We drove home—back to prison, we called it—full of good things, talking of Salter's father's cellar of wine and of my majority Burgundy, which I said, believing it was true, amounted to twelve hundred dozen; and an appointment was made for us to meet at Dipwell Farm, to assist in consuming it, in my honour and my father's. That matter settled, I felt myself rolling over

and over at a great rate, and clasping a juniper tree. The horses had trenched from the chalk road on to the downs. I had been shot out. Heriot and Salter had jumped out—Heriot to look after me; but Saddlebank and the coachman were driving at a great rate over the dark slope. Salter felt some anxiety concerning his father's horses, so we left him to pursue them, and walked on laughing, Heriot praising me for my pluck.

'I say good-bye to you to-night, Richie,' said he. 'We're certain to meet again. I shall go to a military school. Mind you enter a cavalry regiment when you're man enough. Look in the Army List, you'll find me there. My aunt shall make a journey and call on you while you're at Rippenger's, so you shan't be quite lonely.'

To my grief, I discovered that Heriot had resolved he would not return to school.

'You'll get thrashed,' he said; 'I can't help it: I hope you've grown tough by this time. I can't stay here. I feel more like a dog than a man in that house now. I'll see you back safe. No crying, young cornet!'

We had lost the sound of the carriage. Heriot fell to musing. He remarked that the accident took away from Mr. Salter the responsibility of delivering him at Surrey House, but that he, Heriot, was bound, for Mr. Salter's sake, to conduct me to the doors; an unintelligible refinement of reasoning, to my wits. We reached our town between two and three in the morning. There was a ladder leaning against one of the houses in repair near the school. 'You are here, are you!' said Heriot, speaking to the

ladder: 'you 'll do me a service—the last I shall want in the neighbourhood.' He managed to poise the ladder on his shoulder, and moved forward.

'Are we going in through the window?' I asked, seeing him fix the ladder against the school-house wall.

He said, 'Hush; keep a look-out.'

I saw him mount high. When he tapped at the window I remembered it was Julia's; I heard her cry out inside. The window rose slowly. Heriot spoke:

'I have come to say good-bye to you, Julia, dear girl: don't be afraid of me.' She answered inaudibly to my ears. He begged her to come to him at once, only once, and hear him and take his hand. She was timid; he had her fingers first, then her whole arm, and she leaned over him. 'Julia, my sweet, dear girl,' he said; and she:

'Heriot, Walter, don't go—don't go; you do not care for me if you go. Oh, don't go.'

'We've come to it,' said Heriot.

She asked why he was not in bed, and moaned on:

'Don't go.' I was speechless with wonder at the night and the scene. They whispered; I saw their faces close together, and Heriot's arms round her neck. 'Oh, Heriot, my darling, my Walter,' she said, crying, I knew by the sound of her voice.

'Tell me you love me,' said Heriot.

'I do, I do, only don't go,' she answered.

'Will you love me faithfully?'

'I will; I do.'

'Say, "I love you, Walter."'

'I love you, Walter.'

'For ever.'

'For ever. Oh! what a morning for me. Do you smell my honeysuckle? Oh, don't go away from me, Walter. Do you love me so?'

'I'd go through a regiment of sabres to get at you.'

'But smell the night air; how sweet! oh, how sweet! No, not kiss me, if you are going to leave me; not kiss me, if you can be so cruel!'

'Do you dream of me in your bed?'

'Yes, every night.'

'God bless the bed!'

'Every night I dream of you. Oh! brave Heriot; dear, dear Walter, you did not betray me; my father struck you, and you let him for my sake. Every night I pray heaven to make you forgive him: I thought you would hate me. I cried till I was glad you could not see me. Look at those two little stars; no, they hurt me, I can't look at them ever again. But no, you are not going; you want to frighten me. Do smell the flowers. Don't make them poison to me. Oh, what a morning for me when you're lost! And me, to look out on the night alone! No, no more kisses! Oh, yes, I will kiss you, dear.'

Heriot said, 'Your mother was Irish, Julia.'

'Yes. She would have loved you.'

'I 've Irish blood too. Give me her portrait. It 's the image of you.'

'To take away? Walter! not to take it away?'

'You darling! to keep me sure of you.'

'Part with my mother's portrait?'

'Why, yes, if you love me one bit.'

'But you are younger than me, Heriot.'

'Then good-night, good-bye, Julia.'

'Walter, I will fetch it.'

Heriot now told her I was below, and she looked down on me and called my name softly, sending kisses from her fingers while he gave the cause for our late return.

'Some one must be sitting up for you—are we safe?' she said.

Heriot laughed, and pressed for the portrait.

'It is all I have. Why should you not have it? I want to be remembered.'

She sobbed as she said this and disappeared. Heriot still talked into her room. I thought I heard a noise of the garden-door opening. A man came out rushing at the ladder. I called in terror: 'Mr. Boddy, stop, sir.' He pushed me savagely aside, pitching his whole force against the ladder. Heriot pulled down Julia's window; he fell with a heavy thump on the ground, and I heard a shriek above. He tried to spring to his feet, but dropped, supported himself on one of his hands, and cried:

'All right; no harm done; how do you do, Mr. Boddy? I thought I'd try one of the attics, as we were late, not to disturb the house.

I 'm not hurt, I tell you,' he cried as loud as he could.

The usher's words were in a confusion of rage and inquiries. He commanded Heriot to stand on his legs, abused him, asked him what he meant by it, accused him of depravity, of crime, of disgraceful conduct, and attempted to pluck him from the spot.

'Hands off me,' said Heriot; 'I can help myself. The youngster 'll help me, and we'll go round to the front door. I hope, sir, you will behave like a gentleman; make no row here, Mr. Boddy, if you've any respect for people inside. We were upset by Mr. Salter's carriage; it's damaged my leg, I believe. Have the goodness, sir, to go in by your road, and we'll go round and knock at the front door in the proper way. We shall have to disturb the house after all.'

Heriot insisted. I was astonished to see Boddy obey him and leave us, after my dear Heriot had hopped with his hand on my shoulder to the corner of the house fronting the road. While we were standing alone a light cart drove by. Heriot hailed it, and hopped up to the driver.

'Take me to London, there's a good fellow,' he said; 'I'm a gentleman; you needn't look fixed. I'll pay you well and thank you. But quick. Haul me up, up; here's my hand. By jingo! this is pain.'

The man said, 'Scamped it out of school, sir?'

Heriot replied: 'Mum. Rely on me when I tell you I'm a gentleman.'

'Well, if I pick up a gentleman, I can't be doing a bad business,'

said the man, hauling him in tenderly.

Heriot sung to me in his sweet manner, 'Good-bye, little Richie. Knock when five minutes are over. God bless you, dear little lad! Leg 'll get well by morning, never fear for me; and we'll meet somehow; we'll drink the Burgundy. No crying. Kiss your hand to me.'

I kissed my hand to him. I had no tears to shed; my chest kept heaving enormously. My friend was gone. I stood in the road straining to hear the last of the wheels after they had long been silent.

CHAPTER VI. A TALE OF A GOOSE

From that hour till the day Heriot's aunt came to see me, I lived systematically out of myself in extreme flights of imagination, locking my doors up, as it were, all the faster for the extremest strokes of Mr. Rippenger's rod. He remarked justly that I grew an impenetrably sullen boy, a constitutional rebel, a callous lump: and assured me that if my father would not pay for me, I at least should not escape my debts. The title of little impostor, transmitted from the master's mouth to the school in designation of one who had come to him as a young prince, and for whom he had not received one penny's indemnification, naturally caused me to have fights with several of the boys. Whereupon I was reported: I was prayed at to move my spirit, and flogged to exercise my flesh. The prayers I soon learnt to laugh to scorn. The floggings, after they were over, crowned me with delicious sensations of martyrdom. Even while the sting lasted I could say, it's for Heriot and Julia! and it gave me a wonderful penetration into—the mournful ecstasy of love. Julia was sent away to a relative by the sea-side, because, one of the housemaids told me, she could not bear to hear of my being beaten. Mr. Rippenger summoned me to his private room to bid me inform him whether I had other relatives besides my father,

such as grandfather, grandmother, uncles, or aunts, or a mother. I dare say Julia would have led me to break my word to my father by speaking of old Riversley, a place I half longed for since my father had grown so distant and dim to me; but confession to Mr. Rippenger seemed, as he said of Heriot's behaviour to him, a gross breach of trust to my father; so I refused steadily to answer, and suffered the consequences now on my dear father's behalf. Heriot's aunt brought me a cake, and in a letter from him an extraordinary sum of money for a boy of my age. He wrote that he knew I should want it to pay my debts for treats to the boys and keep them in good humour. He believed also that his people meant to have me for the Christmas holidays. The sum he sent me was five pounds, carefully enclosed. I felt myself a prince again. The money was like a golden gate through which freedom twinkled a finger. Forthwith I paid my debts, amounting to two pounds twelve shillings, and instructed a couple of day-boarders, commercial fellows, whose heavy and mysterious charges for commissions ran up a bill in no time, to prepare to bring us materials for a feast on Saturday. Temple abominated the trading propensities of these boys. 'They never get licked and they've always got money, at least I know they always get mine,' said he; 'but you and I and Heriot despise them.' Our position toward them was that of an encumbered aristocracy, and really they paid us great respect. The fact was that, when they had trusted us, they were compelled to continue obsequious, for Heriot had instilled the sentiment in the school, that gentlemen never failed to wipe

out debts in the long run, so it was their interest to make us feel they knew us to be gentlemen, who were at some time or other sure to pay, and thus also they operated on our consciences. From which it followed that one title of superiority among us, ranking next in the order of nobility to the dignity conferred by Mr. Rippenger's rod, was the being down in their books. Temple and I walked in the halo of unlimited credit like more than mortal twins. I gave an order for four bottles of champagne.

On the Friday evening Catman walked out with us. His studious habits endeared him to us immensely, owing to his having his head in his book on all occasions, and a walk under his superintendence was first cousin to liberty. Some boys roamed ahead, some lagged behind, while Catman turned over his pages, sounding the return only when it grew dark. The rumour of the champagne had already intoxicated the boys. There was a companion and most auspicious rumour that Boddy was going to be absent on Saturday. If so, we said, we may drink our champagne under Catman's nose and he be none the wiser. Saddlebank undertook to manage our feast for us. Coming home over the downs, just upon twilight, Temple and I saw Saddlebank carrying a long withy upright. We asked him what it was for. He shouted back: 'It's for fortune. You keep the rear guard.' Then we saw him following a man and a flock of geese, and imitating the action of the man with his green wand. As we were ready to laugh at anything Saddlebank did, we laughed at this. The man walked like one half asleep, and appeared to wake up now and then to

find that he was right in the middle of his geese, and then he waited, and Saddlebank waited behind him. Presently the geese passed a lane leading off the downs. We saw Saddlebank duck his wand in a coaxing way, like an angler dropping his fly for fish; he made all sorts of curious easy flourishes against the sky and branched up the lane. We struck after him, little suspecting that he had a goose in front, but he had; he had cut one of the loiterers off from the flock; and to see him handle his wand on either side his goose, encouraging it to go forward, and remonstrating, and addressing it in bits of Latin, and the creature pattering stiff and astonished, sent us in a dance of laughter.

'What have you done, old Saddle?' said Temple, though it was perfectly clear what Saddlebank had done.

'I've carved off a slice of Michaelmas,' said Saddlebank, and he hewed the air to flick delicately at his goose's head.

'What do you mean—a slice?' said we.

We wanted to be certain the goose was captured booty. Saddlebank would talk nothing but his fun. Temple fetched a roaring sigh:

'Oh! how good this goose 'd be with our champagne.'

The idea seized and enraptured me. 'Saddlebank, I 'll buy him off you,' I said.

'Chink won't flavour him,' said Saddlebank, still at his business: 'here, you two, cut back by the down and try all your might to get a dozen apples before Catman counts heads at the door, and you hold your tongues.'

We shot past the man with the geese—I pitied him—clipped a corner of the down, and by dint of hard running reached the main street, mad for apples, before Catman appeared there. Apples, champagne, and cakes were now provided; all that was left to think of was the goose. We glorified Saddlebank's cleverness to the boys.

'By jingo! what a treat you'll have,' Temple said among them, bursting with our secret.

Saddlebank pleaded that he had missed his way on presenting himself ten minutes after time. To me and Temple he breathed of goose, but he shunned us; he had no fun in him till Saturday afternoon, when Catman called out to hear if we were for cricket or a walk.

'A walk on the downs,' said Saddlebank.

Temple and I echoed him, and Saddlebank motioned his hand as though he were wheedling his goose along. Saddlebank spoke a word to my commissioners. I was to leave the arrangements for the feast to him, he said. John Salter was at home unwell, so Saddlebank was chief. No sooner did we stand on the downs than he gathered us all in a circle, and taking off his cap threw in it some slips of paper. We had to draw lots who should keep by Catman out of twenty-seven; fifteen blanks were marked. Temple dashed his hand into the cap first 'Like my luck,' he remarked, and pocketed both fists as he began strutting away to hide his desperation at drawing a blank. I bought a substitute for him at the price of half-a-crown,—Drew, a fellow we were

glad to get rid of; he wanted five shillings. The feast was worth fifty, but to haggle about prices showed the sneak. He begged us to put by a taste for him; he was groaned out of hearing. The fifteen looked so wretched when they saw themselves divided from us that I gave them a shilling a-piece to console them. They took their instructions from Saddlebank as to how they were to surround Catman, and make him fancy us to be all in his neighbourhood; and then we shook hands, they requesting us feebly to drink their healths, and we saying, ay, that we would.

Temple was in distress of spirits because of his having been ignominiously bought off. Saddlebank, however, put on such a pace that no one had leisure for melancholy. 'I'll get you fellows up to boiling point,' said he. There was a tremendously hot sun overhead. On a sudden he halted, exclaiming: 'Cooks and gridirons! what about sage and onions?' Only Temple and I jumped at the meaning of this. We drew lots for a messenger, and it was miserable to behold an unfortunate fellow touch Saddlebank's hand containing the notched bit of stick, and find himself condemned to go and buy sage and onions somewhere, without knowing what it was for how could he guess we were going to cook a raw goose! The lot fell to a boy named Barnshed, a big slow boy, half way up every class he was in, but utterly stupid out of school; which made Saddlebank say: 'They'll take it he's the bird that wants stuffing.' Barnshed was directed where to rejoin us. The others asked why he was trotted after sage and onions. 'Because he's an awful goose,' said Saddlebank.

Temple and I thought the word was out and hurrahed, and back came Barnshed. We had a task in persuading him to resume his expedition, as well as Saddlebank to forgive us. Saddlebank's anger was excessive. We conciliated him by calling him captain, and pretending to swear an oath of allegiance. He now led us through a wood on to some fields down to a shady dell, where we were to hold the feast in privacy. He did not descend it himself. Vexatious as it was to see a tramp's tent there, we nevertheless acknowledged the respectful greeting of the women and the man with a few questions about tentpegs, pots, and tin mugs. Saddlebank remained aloft, keeping a look-out for the day-school fellows, Chaunter, Davis, and Bystop, my commissioners. They did not keep us waiting long. They had driven to the spot in a cart, according to Saddlebank's directions. Our provisions were in three large hampers. We praised their forethought loudly at the sight of an extra bottle of champagne, with two bottles of ginger-wine, two of currant, two of raisin, four pint bottles of ale, six of ginger-beer, a Dutch cheese, a heap of tarts, three sally-lunns, and four shillingsworth of toffy. Temple and I joined our apples to the mass: a sight at which some of the boys exulted aloud. The tramp-women insisted on spreading things out for us: ten yards off their children squatted staring: the man smoked and chaffed us.

At last Saddlebank came running over the hill-side, making as if he meant to bowl down what looked a black body of a baby against the sky, and shouting, 'See, you fellows, here's a find!'

He ran through us, swinging his goose up to the hampers, saying that he had found the goose under a furze-bush. While the words were coming out of his mouth, he saw the tramps, and the male tramp's eyes and his met.

The man had one eyebrow and his lips at one corner screwed in a queer lift: he winked slowly. 'Odd! ain't it?' he said.

Saddlebank shouldered round on us, and cried, 'Confound you fellows! here's a beastly place you've pitched upon.' His face was the colour of scarlet in patches.

'Now, I call it a beautiful place,' said the man, 'and if you finds gooses hereabouts growing ready for the fire, all but plucking, why, it's a bountiful place, I call it.'

The women tried to keep him silent. But for them we should have moved our encampment. 'Why, of course, young gentlemen, if you want to eat the goose, we'll pluck it for you and cook it for you, all nice,' they said. 'How can young gentlemen do that for theirselves?'

It was clear to us we must have a fire for the goose. Certain observations current among us about the necessity to remove the goose's inside, and not to lose the giblets, which even the boy who named them confessed his inability to recognize, inclined the majority to accept the woman's proposal. Saddlebank said it was on our heads, then.

To revive his good humour, Temple uncorked a bottle of champagne. The tramp-woman lent us a tin mug, and round it went. One boy said, 'That's a commencement'; another said,

'Hang old Rippenger.' Temple snapped his fingers, and Bystop, a farmer's son, said, 'Well, now I've drunk champagne; I meant to before I died!' Most of the boys seemed puzzled by it. As for me, my heart sprang up in me like a colt turned out of stables to graze. I determined that the humblest of my retainers should feed from my table, and drink to my father's and Heriot's honour, and I poured out champagne for the women, who just sipped, and the man, who vowed he preferred beer. A spoonful of the mashed tarts I sent to each of the children. Only one, the eldest, a girl about a year older than me, or younger, with black eyebrows and rough black hair, refused to eat or drink.

'Let her bide, young gentlemen,' said a woman; 'she's a regular obstinate, once she sets in for it.'

'Ah!' said the man, 'I've seen pigs druv, and I've seen iron bent double. She's harder 'n both, once she takes 't into her head.'

'By jingo, she's pig-iron!' cried Temple, and sighed, 'Oh, dear old Heriot!'

I flung myself beside him to talk of our lost friend.

A great commotion stirred the boys. They shrieked at beholding their goose vanish in a pot for stewing. They wanted roast-goose, they exclaimed, not boiled; who cared for boiled goose! But the woman asked them how it was possible to roast a goose on the top of wood-flames, where there was nothing to hang it by, and nothing would come of it except smoked bones!

The boys groaned in consternation, and Saddlebank sowed discontent by grumbling, 'Now you see what your jolly new

acquaintances have done for you.'

So we played at catch with the Dutch cheese, and afterwards bowled it for long-stopping, when, to the disgust of Saddlebank and others, down ran the black-haired girl and caught the ball clean at wicket-distance. As soon as she had done it she was ashamed, and slunk away.

The boys called out, 'Now, then, pig-iron!'

One fellow enraged me by throwing an apple that hit her in the back. We exchanged half-a-dozen blows, whereupon he consented to apologize, and roared, 'Hulloa, pig-iron, sorry if I hurt you.'

Temple urged me to insist on the rascal's going on his knees for flinging at a girl.

'Why,' said Chaunter, 'you were the first to call her pig-iron.'

Temple declared he was a blackguard if he said that. I made the girl take a piece of toffy.

'Aha!' Saddlebank grumbled, 'this comes of the precious company you would keep in spite of my caution.'

The man told us to go it, for he liked to observe young gentlemen enjoying themselves. Temple tossed him a pint bottle of beer, with an injunction to him to shut his trap.

'Now, you talk my mother tongue,' said the man; 'you're what goes by the name of a learned gentleman. Thank ye, sir. You'll be a counsellor some day.'

'I won't get off thieves, I can tell you,' said Temple. He was the son of a barrister.

'Nor you won't help cook their gooses for them, may be,' said the man. 'Well, kindness is kindness, all over the world.'

The women stormed at him to command him not to anger the young gentlemen, for Saddlebank was swearing awfully in an undertone. He answered them that he was the mildest lamb afloat.

Despairing of the goose, we resolved to finish the cold repast awaiting us. The Dutch cheese had been bowled into bits. With a portion of the mashed tarts on it, and champagne, it tasted excellently; toffy to follow. Those boys who chose ginger-wine had it, and drank, despised. The ginger-beer and ale, apples and sallylunns, were reserved for supper. My mind became like a driving sky, with glimpses of my father and Heriot bursting through.

'If I'm not a prince, I'm a nobleman,' I said to Temple.

He replied, 'Army or Navy. I don't much care which. We're sure of a foreign war some time. Then you'll see fellows rise: lieutenant, captain, colonel, General—quick as barrels popping at a bird. I should like to be Governor of Gibraltar.'

'I'll come and see you, Temple,' said I.

'Done! old Richie,' he said, grasping my hand warmly.

'The truth is, Temple,' I confided to him, 'I've an uncle-I mean a grandfather-of enormous property; he owns half Hampshire, I believe, and hates my father like poison. I won't stand it. You've seen my father, haven't you? Gentlemen never forget their servants, Temple. Let's drink lots more champagne. I wish you

and I were knights riding across that country there, as they used to, and you saying, "I wonder whether your father's at home in the castle expecting our arrival.'"

'The Baron!' said Temple. 'He's like a Baron, too. His health. Your health, sir! It's just the wine to drink it in, Richie. He's one of the men I look up to. It 's odd he never comes to see you, because he's fond of you; the right sort of father! Big men can't be always looking after little boys. Not that we're so young, though, now. Lots of fellows of our age have done things fellows write about. I feel—' Temple sat up swelling his chest to deliver an important sentiment; 'I feel uncommonly thirsty.'

So did I. We attributed it to the air of the place, Temple going so far as to say that it came off the chalk, which somehow stuck in the throat.

'Saddleback, don't look glum,' said Temple. 'Lord, Richie, you should hear my father plead in Court with his wig on. They used to say at home I was a clever boy when I was a baby. Saddleback, you've looked glum all the afternoon.'

'Treat your superiors respectfully,' Saddlebank retorted.

The tramp was irritating him. That tramp had never left off smoking and leaning on his arm since we first saw him. Two boys named Hackman and Montague, not bad fellows, grew desirous of a whiff from his pipe. They had it, and lay down silent, back to back. Bystop was led away in a wretched plight. Two others, Paynter and Ashworth, attacked the apples, rendered desperate by thirst. Saddlebank repelled them furiously. He harangued

those who might care to listen.

'You fellows, by George! you shall eat the goose, I tell you. You've spoilt everything, and I tell you, whether you like it or not, you shall have apples with it, and sage and onions too. I don't ask for thanks. And I propose to post outposts in the wood to keep watch.'

He wanted us to draw lots again. His fun had entirely departed from him; all he thought of was seeing the goose out of the pot. I had a feeling next to hatred for one who could talk of goose. Temple must have shared it.

'We 've no real captain now dear old Heriot 's gone,' he said. 'The school's topsy-turvy: we're like a lot of things rattled in a box. Oh, dear! how I do like a good commander. On he goes, you after him, never mind what happens.'

A pair of inseparable friends, Happitt and Larkins, nicknamed Happy-go-Lucky, were rolling arm-in-arm, declaring they were perfectly sober, and, for a proof of it, trying to direct their feet upon a lump of chalk, and marching, and missing it. Up came Chaunter to them: 'Fat goose?' he said-no more. Both the boys rushed straight as far as they could go; both sung out, 'I'm done!' and they were.

Temple and I contemplated these proceedings as matters belonging to the ordinary phenomena of feasting. We agreed that gentlemen were always the last to drop, and were assured, therefore, of our living out the field; but I dreaded the moment of the goose's appearance, and I think he did also. Saddlebank's

pertinacity in withholding the cool ginger-beer and the apples offended us deeply; we should have conspired against him had we reposed confidence in our legs and our tongues.

Twilight was around us. The tramp-children lay in little bundles in one tent; another was being built by the women and the girl. Overhead I counted numbers of stars, all small; and lights in the valley-lights of palaces to my imagination. Stars and tramps seemed to me to go together. Houses imprisoned us, I thought a lost father was never to be discovered by remaining in them. Plunged among dark green leaves, smelling wood-smoke, at night; at morning waking up, and the world alight, and you standing high, and marking the hills where you will see the next morning and the next, morning after morning, and one morning the dearest person in the world surprising you just before you wake: I thought this a heavenly pleasure. But, observing the narrowness of the tents, it struck me there would be snoring companions. I felt so intensely sensitive, that the very idea of a snore gave me tremours and qualms: it was associated with the sense of fat. Saddlebank had the lid of the pot in his hand; we smelt the goose, and he cried, 'Now for supper; now for it! Halloa, you fellows!'

'Bother it, Saddlebank, you'll make Catman hear you,' said Temple, wiping his forehead.

I perspired coldly.

'Catman! He's been at it for the last hour and a half,' Saddlebank replied.

One boy ran up: he was ready, and the only one who was. Presently Chaunter rushed by.

'Barnshed 's in custody; I'm away home,' he said, passing.

We stared at the black opening of the dell.

'Oh, it's Catman; we don't mind him,' Saddlebank reassured us; but we heard ominous voices, and perceived people standing over a prostrate figure. Then we heard a voice too well known to us. It said, 'The explanation of a pupil in your charge, Mr. Catman, being sent barefaced into the town—a scholar of mine-for sage and onions…'

'Old Rippenger!' breathed Temple.

We sat paralyzed. Now we understood the folly of despatching a donkey like Barnshed for sage and onions.

'Oh, what asses we have been!' Temple continued. 'Come along-we run for it! Come along, Richie! They 're picking up the fellows like windfalls.'

I told him I would not run for it; in fact, I distrusted my legs; and he was staggering, answering Saddlebank's reproaches for having come among tramps.

'Temple, I see you, sir!' called Mr. Rippenger. Poor Temple had advanced into the firelight.

With the instinct to defeat the master, I crawled in the line of the shadows to the farther side of a tent, where I felt a hand clutch mine. 'Hide me,' said I; and the curtain of the tent was raised. After squeezing through boxes and straw, I lay flat, covered by a mat smelling of abominable cheese, and felt a head outside it on

my chest. Several times Mr. Rippenger pronounced my name in the way habitual to him in anger: 'Rye!'

Temple's answer was inaudible to me. Saddlebank spoke, and other boys, and the man and the woman. Then a light was thrust in the tent, and the man said, 'Me deceive you, sir! See for yourself, to satisfy yourself. Here's our little uns laid warm, and a girl there, head on the mat, going down to join her tribe at Lipcombe, and one of our women sleeps here, and all told. But for you to suspect me of combining—Thank ye, sir. You've got my word as a man.'

The light went away. My chest was relieved of the weight on it. I sat up, and the creature who had been kind to me laid mat and straw on the ground, and drew my head on her shoulder, where I slept fast.

CHAPTER VII. A FREE LIFE ON THE ROAD

I woke very early, though I had taken kindly to my pillow, as I found by my having an arm round my companion's neck, and her fingers intertwisted with mine. For awhile I lay looking at her eyes, which had every imaginable light and signification in them; they advised me to lie quiet, they laughed at my wonder, they said, 'Dear little fellow!' they flashed as from under a cloud, darkened, flashed out of it, seemed to dip in water and shine, and were sometimes like a view into a forest, sometimes intensely sunny, never quite still. I trusted her, and could have slept again, but the sight of the tent stupefied me; I fancied the sky had fallen, and gasped for air; my head was extremely dizzy too; not one idea in it was kept from wheeling. This confusion of my head flew to my legs when, imitating her, I rose to go forth. In a fit of horror I thought, 'I 've forgotten how to walk!'

Summoning my manful resolution, I made the attempt to step across the children swaddled in matting and straw and old gowns or petticoats. The necessity for doing it with a rush seized me after the first step. I pitched over one little bundle, right on to the figure of a sleeping woman. All she did was to turn round, murmuring, 'Naughty Jackie.' My companion pulled me along gravely, and once in the air, with a good breath of it in my chest, I

felt tall and strong, and knew what had occurred. The tent where I had slept struck me as more curious than my own circumstances. I lifted my face to the sky; it was just sunrise, beautiful; bits of long and curling cloud brushed any way close on the blue, and rosy and white, deliciously cool; the grass was all grey, our dell in shadow, and the tops of the trees burning, a few birds twittering.

I sucked a blade of grass.

'I wish it was all water here,' I said.

'Come and have a drink and a bathe,' said my companion.

We went down the dell and over a juniper slope, reminding me of my day at John Salter's house and the last of dear Heriot. Rather to my shame, my companion beat me at running; she was very swift, and my legs were stiff.

'Can you swim?' she asked me.

'I can row, and swim, and fence, and ride, and fire a pistol,' I said.

'Oh, dear,' said she, after eyeing me enviously. I could see that I had checked a recital of her accomplishments.

We arrived at a clear stream in a gentleman's park, where grass rolled smooth as sea-water on a fine day, and cows and horses were feeding.

'I can catch that horse and mount him,' she said.

I was astonished.

'Straddle?'

She nodded down for 'Yes.'

'No saddle?'

She nodded level for 'No.'

My respect for her returned. But she could not swim.

'Only up to my knees,' she confessed.

'Have a look at me,' said I; and I stripped and shot into the water, happy as a fish, and thinking how much nicer it was than champagne. My enjoyment made her so envious that she plucked off her stockings, and came in as far as she dared. I called to her. 'You're like a cow,' and she showed her teeth, bidding me not say that.

'A cow! a cow!' I repeated, in my superior pleasure.

She spun out in a breath, 'If you say that, I 'll run away with every bit of your clothes, and you'll come out and run about naked, you will.'

'Now I float,' was my answer, 'now I dive'; and when I came up she welcomed me with a big bright grin.

A smart run in the heat dried me. I dressed, finding half my money on the grass. She asked me to give her one of those bits-a shilling. I gave her two, upon which she asked me, invitingly, if ever I tossed. I replied that I never tossed for money; but she had caught a shilling, and I could not resist guessing 'heads,' and won; the same with her second shilling. She handed them to me sullenly, sobbing, yet she would not take them back.

'By-and-by you give me another two,' she said, growing lively again. We agreed that it would be a good thing if we entered the village and bought something. None of the shops were open. We walked through the churchyard. I said, 'Here's where dead

people are buried.'

'I'll dance if you talk about dead people,' said she, and began whooping at the pitch of her voice. On my wishing to know why she did it, her reply was that it was to make the dead people hear. My feelings were strange: the shops not open, and no living people to be seen. We climbed trees, and sat on a branch talking of birds' eggs till hunger drove us to the village street, where, near the public-house, we met the man-tramp, who whistled.

He was rather amusing. He remarked that he put no questions to me, because he put no question to anybody, because answers excited him about subjects that had no particular interest to him, and did not benefit him to the extent of a pipe of 'tobacco; and all through not being inquisitive, yesterday afternoon he had obtained, as if it had been chucked into his lap, a fine-flavoured fat goose honourably for his supper, besides bottles of ale, bottles of ginger-pop, and a fair-earned half-crown. That was through his not being inquisitive, and he was not going to be inquisitive now, knowing me for a gentleman: my master had tipped him half-a-crown.

Fortunately for him, and perhaps for my liberty, he employed a verb marvellously enlightening to a schoolboy. I tipped him another half-crown. He thanked me, observing that there were days when you lay on your back and the sky rained apples; while there were other days when you wore your fingers down to the first joint to catch a flea. Such was Fortune!

In a friendly manner he advised me to go to school; if not

there, then to go home. My idea, which I had only partly conceived, was to have a look at Riversley over a hedge, kiss my aunt Dorothy unaware, and fly subsequently in search of my father. Breakfast, however, was my immediate thought. He and the girl sat down to breakfast at the inn as my guests. We ate muttonchops and eggs, and drank coffee. After it, though I had no suspicions, I noticed that the man grew thoughtful. He proposed to me, supposing I had no objection against slow travelling, to join company for a couple of days, if I was for Hampshire, which I stated was the county I meant to visit.

'Well then, here now, come along, d 'ye see, look,' said he, 'I mustn't be pounced on, and no missing young gentleman in my society, and me took half-a-crown for his absence; that won't do. You get on pretty well with the gal, and that 's a screaming farce: none of us do. Lord! she looks down on such scum as us. She's gipsy blood, true sort; everything's sausages that gets into their pockets, no matter what it was when it was out. Well then, now, here, you and the gal go t' other side o' Bed'lming, and you wait for us on the heath, and we 'll be there to comfort ye 'fore dark. Is it a fister?'

He held out his hand; I agreed; and he remarked that he now counted a breakfast in the list of his gains from never asking questions.

I was glad enough to quit the village in a hurry, for the driver of the geese, or a man dreadfully resembling him, passed me near the public-house, and attacked my conscience on the cowardly

side, which is, I fear, the first to awaken, and always the liveliest half while we are undisciplined. I would have paid him money, but the idea of a conversation with him indicated the road back to school. My companion related her history. She belonged to a Hampshire gipsy tribe, and had been on a visit to a relative down in the East counties, who died on the road, leaving her to be brought home by these tramps: she called them mumpers, and made faces when she spoke of them. Gipsies, she said, were a different sort: gipsies camped in gentlemen's parks; gipsies, horses, fiddles, and the wide world—that was what she liked. The wide world she described as a heath, where you looked and never saw the end of it I let her talk on. For me to talk of my affairs to a girl without bonnet and boots would have been absurd. Otherwise, her society pleased me: she was so like a boy, and unlike any boy I knew.

My mental occupation on the road was to calculate how many hill-tops I should climb before I beheld Riversley. The Sunday bells sounded homely from village to village as soon as I was convinced that I heard no bells summoning boarders to Rippenger's school. The shops in the villages continued shut; however, I told the girl they should pay me for it next day, and we had an interesting topic in discussing as to the various things we would buy. She was for bright ribands and draper's stuff, I for pastry and letter-paper. The smell of people's dinners united our appetites. Going through a village I saw a man carrying a great baked pie, smelling overpoweringly, so that to ask him his

price for it was a natural impulse with me. 'What! sell my Sunday dinner?' he said, and appeared ready to drop the dish. Nothing stopped his staring until we had finished a plateful a-piece and some beer in his cottage among his family. He wanted to take me in alone. 'She's a common tramp,' he said of the girl.

'That's a lie,' she answered.

Of course I would not leave her hungry outside, so in the end he reluctantly invited us both, and introduced us to his wife.

'Here's a young gentleman asks a bit o' dinner, and a young I-d'n-know-what 's after the same; I leaves it to you, missus.'

His wife took it off his shoulders in good humour, saying it was lucky she made the pie big enough for her family and strays. They would not accept more than a shilling for our joint repast. The man said that was the account to a farthing, if I was too proud to be a poor man's guest, and insisted on treating him like a public. Perhaps I would shake hands at parting? I did cordially, and remembered him when people were not so civil. They wanted to know whether we had made a runaway match of it. The fun of passing a boys'-school and hearing the usher threaten to punish one fellow for straying from ranks, entertained me immensely. I laughed at them just as the stupid people we met laughed at me, which was unpleasant for the time; but I knew there was not a single boy who would not have changed places with me, only give him the chance, though my companion was a gipsy girl, and she certainly did look odd company for a gentleman's son in a tea-garden and public-house parlour. At

nightfall, however, I was glad of her and she of me, and we walked hand in hand. I narrated tales of Roman history. It was very well for her so say, 'I'll mother you,' as we lay down to sleep; I discovered that she would never have hooted over churchyard graves in the night. She confessed she believed the devil went about in the night. Our bed was a cart under a shed, our bed-clothes fern-leaves and armfuls of straw. The shafts of the cart were down, so we lay between upright and level, and awakening in the early light I found our four legs hanging over the seat in front. 'How you have been kicking!' said I. She accused me of the same. Next minute she pointed over the side of the cart, and I saw the tramp's horse and his tents beneath a broad roadside oak-tree. Her face was comical, just like a boy's who thinks he has escaped and is caught. 'Let's run,' she said. Preferring positive independence, I followed her, and then she told me that she had overheard the tramp last night swearing I was as good as a fistful of half-crowns lost to him if he missed me. The image of Rippenger's school overshadowed me at this communication. With some melancholy I said: 'You'll join your friends, won't you?'

She snapped her fingers: 'Mumpers!' and walked on carelessly.

We were now on the great heaths. They brought the memory of my father vividly; the smell of the air half inclined me to turn my steps toward London, I grew so full of longing for him. Nevertheless I resolved to have one gaze at Riversley, my aunt

Dorothy, and Sewis, the old grey-brown butler, and the lamb that had grown a sheep; wonderful contrasts to my grand kings of England career. My first clear recollection of Riversley was here, like an outline of a hill seen miles away. I might have shed a tear or two out of love for my father, had not the thought that I was a very queer boy displaced his image. I could not but be a very queer boy, such a lot of things happened to me. Suppose I joined the gipsies? My companion wished me to. She had brothers, horse-dealers, beautiful fiddlers. Suppose I learnt the fiddle? Suppose I learnt their language and went about with them and became king of the gipsies? My companion shook her head; she could not encourage this ambitious idea because she had never heard of a king of the gipsies or a queen either. 'We fool people,' she said, and offended me, for our school believed in a gipsy king, and one fellow, Hackman, used to sing a song of a gipsy king; and it was as much as to say that my schoolfellows were fools, every one of them. I accused her of telling lies. She grinned angrily. 'I don't tell 'em to friends,' she said. We had a quarrel. The truth was, I was enraged at the sweeping out of my prospects of rising to distinction among the gipsies. After breakfast at an inn, where a waiter laughed at us to our faces, and we fed scowling, shy, and hungry, we had another quarrel. I informed her of my opinion that gipsies could not tell fortunes.

'They can, and you come to my mother and my aunt, and see if they can't tell your fortune,' said she, in a fury.

'Yes, and that's how they fool people,' said I. I enjoyed seeing

the flash of her teeth. But my daring of her to look me in the eyes and swear on her oath she believed the fortunes true ones, sent her into a fit of sullenness.

'Go along, you nasty little fellow, your shadow isn't half a yard,' she said, and I could smile at that; my shadow stretched half across the road. We had a quarrelsome day wherever we went; rarely walking close together till nightfall, when she edged up to my hand, with, 'I say, I'll keep you warm to-night, I will.' She hugged me almost too tight, but it was warm and social, and helped to the triumph of a feeling I had that nothing made me regret running away from Rippenger's school.

An adventure befell us in the night. A farmer's wife, whom we asked for a drink of water after dark, lent us an old blanket to cover us in a dry ditch on receiving our promise not to rob the orchard. An old beggar came limping by us, and wanted to share our covering. My companion sank right under the blanket to peer at him through one of its holes. He stood enormous above me in the moonlight, like an apparition touching earth and sky.

'Cold, cold,' he whined: 'there's ne'er a worse off but there's a better off. Young un!' His words dispersed the fancy that he was something horrible, or else my father in disguise going to throw off his rags, and shine, and say he had found me. 'Are ye one, or are ye two?' he asked.

I replied that we were two.

'Then I'll come and lie in the middle,' said he.

'You can't; there's no room,' I sang out.

'Lord,' said he, 'there's room for any reckoning o' empty stomachs in a ditch.'

'No, I prefer to be alone: good-night,' said I.

'Why!' he exclaimed, 'where ha' you been t' learn language? Halloa!'

'Please, leave me alone; it's my intention to go to sleep,' I said, vexed at having to conciliate him; he had a big stick.

'Oho!' went the beggar. Then he recommenced:

'Tell me you've stole nothing in your life! You've stole a gentleman's tongue, I knows the ring o' that. How comes you out here? Who's your mate there down below? Now, see, I'm going to lift my stick.'

At these menacing words the girl jumped out of the blanket, and I called to him that I would rouse the farmer.

'Why… because I'm goin' to knock down a apple or two on your head?' he inquired, in a tone of reproach. 'It's a young woman you've got there, eh? Well, odd grows odder, like the man who turned three shillings into five. Now, you gi' me a lie under your blanket, I 'll knock down a apple apiece. If ever you've tasted gin, you 'll say a apple at night's a cordial, though it don't intoxicate.'

The girl whispered in my ear, 'He's lame as ducks.' Her meaning seized me at once; we both sprang out of the ditch and ran, dragging our blanket behind us. He pursued, but we eluded him, and dropped on a quiet sleeping-place among furzes. Next morning, when we took the blanket to the farm-house, we

heard that the old wretch had traduced our characters, and got a breakfast through charging us with the robbery of the apple-tree. I proved our innocence to the farmer's wife by putting down a shilling. The sight of it satisfied her. She combed my hair, brought me a bowl of water and a towel, and then gave us a bowl of milk and bread, and dismissed us, telling me I had a fair face and dare-devil written on it: as for the girl, she said of her that she knew gipsies at a glance, and what God Almighty made them for there was no guessing. This set me thinking all through the day, 'What can they have been made for?' I bought a red scarf for the girl, and other things she fixed her eyes on, but I lost a great deal of my feeling of fellowship with her. 'I dare say they were made for fun,' I thought, when people laughed at us now, and I laughed also.

I had a day of rollicking laughter, puzzling the girl, who could only grin two or three seconds at a time, and then stared like a dog that waits for his master to send him off again running, the corners of her mouth twitching for me to laugh or speak, exactly as a dog might wag his tail. I studied her in the light of a harmless sort of unaccountable creature; witness at any rate for the fact that I had escaped from school.

We loitered half the morning round a cricketers' booth in a field, where there was moderately good cricketing. The people thought it of first-rate quality. I told them I knew a fellow who could bowl out either eleven in an hour and a half. One of the men frightened me by saying, 'By Gearge! I'll in with you into a

gig, and off with you after that ther' faller.' He pretended to mean it, and started up. I watched him without flinching. He remarked that if I 'had not cut my lucky from school, and tossed my cap for a free life, he was –' whatever may be expressed by a slap on the thigh. We played a single-wicket side game, he giving me six runs, and crestfallen he was to find himself beaten; but, as I let him know, one who had bowled to Heriot for hours and stood against Saddlebank's bowling, was a tough customer, never mind his age.

This man offered me his friendship. He made me sit and eat beside him at the afternoon dinner of the elevens, and sent platefuls of food to the girl, where she was allowed to squat; and said he, 'You and I'll tie a knot, and be friends for life.'

I replied, 'With pleasure.'

We nodded over a glass of ale. In answer to his questions, I stated that I liked farms, I would come and see his farm, I would stay with him two or three days, I would give him my address if I had one, I was on my way to have a look at Riversley Grange.

'Hey!' says he, 'Riversley Grange! Well, to be sure now! I'm a tenant of Squire Beltham's, and a right sort of landlord, too.'

'Oh!' says I, 'he's my grandfather, but I don't care much about him.'

'Lord!' says he. 'What! be you the little boy, why, Master Harry Richmond that was carried off in the night, and the old squire shut up doors for a fortnight, and made out you was gone in a hearse! Why, I know all about you, you see. And back you

are, hurrah! The squire 'll be hearty, that he will. We've noticed a change in him ever since you left. Gout's been at his leg, off and on, a deal shrewder. But he rides to hounds, and dines his tenants still, that he does; he's one o' th' old style. Everything you eat and drink's off his estate, the day he dines his tenants. No humbug 'bout old Squire Beltham.

I asked him if Sewis was alive.

'Why, old Sewis,' says he, 'you're acquainted with old Sewis? Why, of course you are. Yes, old Sewis 's alive, Master Harry. And you bet me at single-wicket! That 'll be something to relate to 'em all. By Gearge, if I didn't think I'd got a nettle in my fist when I saw you pitch into my stumps. Dash it! thinks I. But th' old squire 'll be proud of you, that he will. My farm lies three miles away. You look at a crow flying due South-east five minutes from Riversley, and he's over Throckham farm, and there I 'll drive ye to-night, and to-morrow, clean and tidy out o' my wife's soap and water, straight to Riversley. Done, eh? My name's Eckerthy. No matter where you comes from, here you are, eh, Master Harry? And I see you last time in a donkey-basket, and here you come in breeches and defy me to singlewicket, and you bet me too!'

He laughed for jollity. An extraordinary number of emotions had possession of me: the most intelligible one being a restless vexation at myself, as the principal person concerned, for not experiencing anything like the farmer's happiness. I preferred a gipsy life to Riversley. Gipsies were on the road, and that road led to my father. I endeavoured to explain to Farmer Eckerthy

that I was travelling in this direction merely to have a short look at Riversley; but it was impossible; he could not understand me. The more I tried, the more he pressed me to finish my glass of ale, which had nothing to do with it. I drank, nevertheless, and I suppose said many funny things in my anxiety that the farmer should know what I meant; he laughed enough.

While he was fielding against the opposite eleven, the tramp came into the booth, and we had a match of cunning.

'Schoolmaster's out after you, young gentleman,' said he, advising me to hurry along the road if I sought to baffle pursuit.

I pretended alarm, and then said, 'Oh, you'll stand by me,' and treated him to ale.

He assured me I left as many tracks behind me as if I went spilling a box of lucifer-matches. He was always for my hastening on until I ordered fresh ale for him. The girl and he grimaced at one another in contempt. So we remained seeing the game out. By the time the game ended, the tramp had drunk numbers of glasses of ale.

'A fine-flavoured fat goose,' he counted his gains since the commencement of our acquaintance, 'bottles of ale and ginger-pop, two half-crowns, more ale, and more to follow, let's hope. You only stick to your friends, young gentleman, won't you, sir? It's a hard case for a poor man like me if you don't. We ain't got such chances every morning of our lives. Do you perceive, sir? I request you to inform me, do you perceive, sir? I'm muddled a bit, sir, but a man must look after his interests.'

I perceived he was so muddled as to be unable to conceal that his interests were involved in my capture; but I was merry too. Farmer Eckerthy dealt the tramp a scattering slap on the back when he returned to the booth, elated at having beaten the enemy by a single run.

'Master Harry Richmond go to Riversley to his grandfather in your company, you scoundrel!' he cried in a rage, after listening to him. 'I mean to drive him over. It 's a comfortable ten-mile, and no more. But I say, Master Harry, what do you say to a peck o' supper?'

He communicated to me confidentially that he did not like to seem to slink away from the others, who had made up their minds to stop and sup; so we would drive home by moonlight, singing songs. And so we did. I sat beside the farmer, the girl scrambled into the hinder part of the cart, and the tramp stood moaning, 'Oh dear! oh dear! you goes away to Riversley without your best friend.'

I tossed him a shilling. We sang beginnings and ends of songs. The farmer looked at the moon, and said, 'Lord! she stares at us!' Then he sang:

> 'The moon is shining on Latworth lea,
> And where'll she see such a jovial three
> As we, boys, we? And why is she pale?
> It's because she drinks water instead of ale.'

'Where 's the remainder? There's the song—!

"Oh! handsome Miss Gammon
Has married Lord Mammon,
And jilted her suitors,
All Cupid's sharpshooters,
And gone in a carriage
And six to her marriage,
Singing hey! for I've landed my salmon, my salmon!"

Where's the remainder? I heard it th' only time I ever was in London town, never rested till I'd learnt it, and now it's clean gone. What's come to me?'

He sang to 'Mary of Ellingmere' and another maid of some place, and a loud song of Britons.

It was startling to me to wake up to twilight in the open air and silence, for I was unaware that I had fallen asleep. The girl had roused me, and we crept down from the cart. Horse and farmer were quite motionless in a green hollow beside the roadway. Looking across fields and fir plantations, I beheld a house in the strange light of the hour, and my heart began beating; but I was overcome with shyness, and said to myself, 'No, no, that's not Riversley; I'm sure it isn't'; though the certainty of it was, in my teeth, refuting me. I ran down the fields to the park and the bright little river, and gazed. When I could say, 'Yes, it is Riversley!' I turned away, hurt even to a sense of smarting pain, without knowing the cause. I dare say it is true, as the girl declared subsequently, that I behaved like one in a fit. I dropped, and I

may have rolled my body and cried. An indefinite resentment at Riversley was the feeling I grew conscious of after very fast walking. I would not have accepted breakfast there.

About mid-day, crossing a stubble-field, the girl met a couple of her people-men. Near evening we entered one of their tents. The women set up a cry, 'Kiomi! Kiomi!' like a rising rookery. Their eyes and teeth made such a flashing as when you dabble a hand in a dark waterpool. The strange tongue they talked, with a kind of peck of the voice at a word, rapid, never high or low, and then a slide of similar tones all round,—not musical, but catching and incessant,—gave me an idea that I had fallen upon a society of birds, exceedingly curious ones. They welcomed me kindly, each of them looking me in the face a bright second or so. I had two helps from a splendid pot of broth that hung over a fire in the middle of the tent.

Kiomi was my companion's name. She had sisters Adeline and Eveleen, and brothers Osric and William, and she had a cousin a prizefighter. 'That's what I'll be,' said I. Fiddling for money was not a prospect that charmed me, though it was pleasant lying in Kiomi's arms to hear Osric play us off to sleep; it was like floating down one of a number of visible rivers; I could see them converging and breaking away while I floated smoothly, and a wonderful fair country nodded drowsy. From that to cock-crow at a stride. Sleep was no more than the passage through the arch of a canal. Kiomi and I were on the heath before sunrise, jumping gravel-pits, chasing sandpipers, mimicking pewits; it

seemed to me I had only just heard the last of Osric's fiddle when yellow colour filled in along the sky over Riversley. The curious dark thrill of the fiddle in the tent by night seemed close up behind the sun, and my quiet fancies as I lay dropping to sleep, followed me like unobtrusive shadows during daylight, or, to speak truthfully, till about dinner-time, when I thought of nothing but the great stew-pot. We fed on plenty; nicer food than Rippenger's, minus puddings. After dinner I was ready for mischief. My sensations on seeing Kiomi beg of a gentleman were remarkable. I reproached her. She showed me sixpence shining in the palm of her hand. I gave her a shilling to keep her from it. She had now got one and sixpence, she said: meaning, I supposed upon reflection, that her begging had produced that sum, and therefore it was a good thing. The money remaining in my pocket amounted to five shillings and a penny. I offered it to Kiomi's mother, who refused to accept it; so did the father, and Osric also. I might think of them, they observed, on my return to my own house: they pointed at Riversley. 'No,' said I, 'I shan't go there, you may be sure.' The women grinned, and the men yawned. The business of the men appeared to be to set to work about everything as if they had a fire inside them, and then to stretch out their legs and lie on their backs, exactly as if the fire had gone out. Excepting Osric's practice on the fiddle, and the father's bringing in and leading away of horses, they did little work in my sight but brown themselves in the sun. One morning Osric's brother came to our camp with their cousin the

prizefighter—a young man of lighter complexion, upon whom I gazed, remembering John Thresher's reverence for the heroical profession. Kiomi whispered some story concerning her brother having met the tramp. I did not listen; I was full of a tempest, owing to two causes: a studious admiration of the smart young prizefighter's person, and wrathful disgust at him for calling Kiomi his wife, and telling her he was prepared to marry her as soon as she played her harp like King David. The intense folly of his asking a girl to play like David made me despise him, but he was splendidly handsome and strong, and to see him put on the gloves for a spar with big William, Kiomi's brother, and evade and ward the huge blows, would have been a treat to others besides old John of Dipwell Farm. He had the agile grace of a leopard; his waistcoat reminded me of one; he was like a piece of machinery in free action. Pleased by my enthusiasm, he gave me a lesson, promising me more.

'He'll be champion some day,' said Kiomi, at gnaw upon an apple he had given her.

I knocked the apple on the ground, and stamped on it. She slapped my cheek. In a minute we stood in a ring. I beheld the girl actually squaring at me.

'Fight away,' I said, to conceal my shame, and imagining I could slip from her hits as easily as the prizefighter did from big William's. I was mistaken.

'Oh! you think I can't defend myself,' said Kiomi; and rushed in with one, two, quick as a cat, and cool as a statue.

‘Fight, my merry one; she takes punishment,’ the prizefighter sang out. ‘First blood to you, Kiomi; uncork his claret, my duck; straight at the nozzle, he sees more lamps than shine in London, I warrant. Make him lively, cook him; tell him who taught you; a downer to him, and I’ll marry you to-morrow!’

I conceived a fury against her as though she had injured me by appearing the man’s property—and I was getting the worst of it; her little fists shot straight and hard as bars of iron; she liked fighting; she was at least my match. To avoid the disgrace of seriously striking her, or of being beaten at an open exchange of blows, I made a feint, and caught her by the waist and threw her, not very neatly, for I fell myself in her grip. They had to pluck her from me by force.

‘And you’ve gone a course of tuition in wrestling, squire?’ the prizefighter said to me rather savagely.

The others were cordial, and did not snarl at me for going to the ropes, as he called it. Kiomi desired to renew the conflict. I said aloud:

‘I never fight girls, and I tell you I don’t like their licking me.’

‘Then you come down to the river and wash your face,’ said she, and pulled me by the fingers, and when she had washed my face clear of blood, kissed me. I thought she tasted of the prizefighter.

Late in the afternoon Osric proposed that he and I and the prizefighter should take a walk. I stipulated for Kiomi to be of the party, which was allowed, and the gipsy-women shook my hand

as though I had been departing on a long expedition, entreating me not to forget them, and never to think evil of poor gipsy-folk.

'Why, I mean to stay with you,' said I.

They grinned delightedly, and said I must be back to see them break up camp in the evening. Every two or three minutes Kiomi nudged my elbow and pointed behind, where I saw the women waving their coloured neckerchiefs. Out of sight of our tents we came in view of the tramp. Kiomi said, 'Hide!' I dived into a furze dell. The tramp approached, calling out for news of me. Now at Rippenger's school, thanks to Heriot, lying was not the fashion; still I had heard boys lie, and they can let it out of their mouths like a fish, so lively, simple, and solid, that you could fancy a master had asked them for it and they answered, 'There it is.' But boys cannot lie in one key spontaneously, a number of them to the same effect, as my friends here did. I was off, they said; all swung round to signify the direction of my steps; my plans were hinted at; particulars were not stated on the plea that there should be no tellings; it was remarked that I ought to have fair play and 'law.' Kiomi said she hoped he would not catch me. The tramp winced with vexation, and the gipsies chaffed him. I thanked them in my heart for their loyal conduct. Creeping under cover of the dell I passed round to the road over a knoll of firs as quick as my feet could carry me, and had just cried, 'Now I'm safe'; when a lady stepping from a carriage on the road, caught me in her arms and hugged me blind. It was my aunt Dorothy.

CHAPTER VIII.
JANET ILCHESTER

I was a prisoner, captured by fraud, and with five shillings and a penny still remaining to me for an assurance of my power to enjoy freedom. Osric and Kiomi did not show themselves on the road, they answered none of my shouts.

'She is afraid to look me in the face,' I said, keeping my anger on Kiomi.

'Harry, Harry,' said my aunt, 'they must have seen me here; do you grieve, and you have me, dear?'

Her eager brown eyes devoured me while I stood panting to be happy, if only I might fling my money at Kiomi's feet, and tell her, 'There, take all I have; I hate you!' One minute I was curiously perusing the soft shade of a moustache on my aunt's upper lip; the next, we jumped into the carriage, and she was my dear aunt Dorothy again, and the world began rolling another way.

The gipsies had made an appointment to deliver me over to my aunt; Farmer Eckerthy had spoken of me to my grandfather; the tramp had fetched Mr. Rippenger on the scene. Rippenger paid the tramp, I dare say; my grandfather paid Rippenger's bill and for Saddlebank's goose; my aunt paid the gipsies, and I think it doubtful that they handed the tramp a share, so he came to the

end of his list of benefits from not asking questions.

I returned to Riversley more of a man than most boys of my age, and more of a child. A small child would not have sulked as I did at Kiomi's behaviour; but I met my grandfather's ridiculous politeness with a man's indifference.

'So you're back, sir, are you!'

'I am, sir.'

'Ran like a hare, 'stead of a fox, eh?'

'I didn't run like either, sir.'

'Do you ride?'

'Yes, sir; a horse.'

That was his greeting and how I took it. I had not run away from him, so I had a quiet conscience.

He said, shortly after, 'Look here; your name is Harry Richmond in my house—do you understand? My servants have orders to call you Master Harry Richmond, according to your christening. You were born here, sir, you will please to recollect. I'll have no vagabond names here'—he puffed himself hot, muttering, 'Nor vagabond airs neither.'

I knew very well what it meant. A sore spirit on my father's behalf kept me alive to any insult of him; and feeling that we were immeasurably superior to the Beltham blood, I merely said, apart to old Sewis, shrugging my shoulders, 'The squire expects me to recollect where I was born. I'm not likely to forget his nonsense.'

Sewis, in reply, counselled me to direct a great deal of my attention to the stables, and drink claret with the squire in

the evening, things so little difficult to do that I moralized reflectively, 'Here 's a way of gaining a relative's affection!' The squire's punctilious regard for payments impressed me, it is true. He had saved me from the disgrace of owing money to my detested schoolmaster; and, besides, I was under his roof, eating of his bread. My late adventurous life taught me that I incurred an obligation by it. Kiomi was the sole victim of my anger that really seemed to lie down to be trampled on, as she deserved for her unpardonable treachery.

By degrees my grandfather got used to me, and commenced saying in approval of certain of my performances, 'There's Beltham in that—Beltham in that!' Once out hunting, I took a nasty hedge and ditch in front of him; he bawled proudly, 'Beltham all over!' and praised me. At night, drinking claret, he said on a sudden, 'And, egad, Harry, you must jump your head across hedges and ditches, my little fellow. It won't do, in these confounded days, to have you clever all at the wrong end. In my time, good in the saddle was good for everything; but now you must get your brains where you can—pick here, pick there—and sell 'em like a huckster; some do. Nature's gone—it's damned artifice rules, I tell ye; and a squire of our country must be three parts lawyer to keep his own. You must learn; by God, sir, you must cogitate; you must stew at books and maps, or you'll have some infernal upstart taking the lead of you, and leaving you nothing but the whiff of his tail.' He concluded, 'I'm glad to see you toss down your claret, my boy.'

Thus I grew in his favour, till I heard from him that I was to be the heir of Riversley and his estates, but on one condition, which he did not then mention. If I might have spoken to him of my father, I should have loved him. As it was, I liked old Sewis better, for he would talk to me of the night when my father carried me away, and though he never uttered the flattering words I longed to hear, he repeated the story often, and made the red hall glow with beams of my father's image. My walks and rides were divided between the road he must have followed toward London, bearing me in his arms, and the vacant place of Kiomi's camp. Kiomi stood for freedom, pointing into the darkness I wished to penetrate that I might find him. If I spoke of him to my aunt she trembled. She said, 'Yes, Harry, tell me all you are thinking about, whatever you want to know'; but her excessive trembling checked me, and I kept my feelings to myself—a boy with a puzzle in his head and hunger in his heart. At times I rode out to the utmost limit of the hour giving me the proper number of minutes to race back and dress for dinner at the squire's table, and a great wrestling I had with myself to turn my little horse's head from hills and valleys lying East; they seemed to have the secret of my father. Blank enough they looked if ever I despaired of their knowing more than I. My Winter and Summer were the moods of my mind constantly shifting. I would have a week of the belief that he was near Riversley, calling for me; a week of the fear that he was dead; long dreams of him, as travelling through foreign countries, patting the foreheads of boys and girls on his

way; or driving radiantly, and people bowing. Radiantly, I say: had there been touches of colour in these visions, I should have been lured off in pursuit of him. The dreams passed colourlessly; I put colouring touches to the figures seen in them afterward, when I was cooler, and could say, 'What is the use of fancying things?' yet knew that fancying things was a consolation. By such means I came to paint the mystery surrounding my father in tender colours. I built up a fretted cathedral from what I imagined of him, and could pass entirely away out of the world by entering the doors.

Want of boys' society as well as hard head-work produced this mischief. My lessons were intermittent Resident tutors arrived to instruct me, one after another. They were clergymen, and they soon proposed to marry my aunt Dorothy, or they rebuked the squire for swearing. The devil was in the parsons, he said: in his time they were modest creatures and stuck to the bottle and heaven. My aunt was of the opinion of our neighbours, who sent their boys to school and thought I should be sent likewise.

'No, no,' said the squire; 'my life's short when the gout's marching up to my middle, and I'll see as much of my heir as I can. Why, the lad's my daughter's son: He shall grow up among his tenantry. We'll beat the country and start a man at last to drive his yard of learning into him without rolling sheep's eyes right and left.'

Unfortunately the squire's description of man was not started. My aunt was handsome, an heiress (that is, she had money of

her own coming from her mother's side of the family), and the tenderest woman alive, with a voice sweeter than flutes. There was a saying in the county that to marry a Beltham you must po'chay her.

A great-aunt of mine, the squire's sister, had been carried off. She died childless. A favourite young cousin of his likewise had run away with a poor baronet, Sir Roderick Ilchester, whose son Charles was now and then our playmate, and was a scapegrace. But for me he would have been selected by the squire for his heir, he said; and he often 'confounded' me to my face on that account as he shook my hand, breaking out: 'I'd as lief fetch you a cuff o' the head, Harry Richmond, upon my honour!' and cursing at his luck for having to study for his living, and be what he called a sloppy curate now that I had come to Riversley for good.

He informed me that I should have to marry his sister Janet; for that they could not allow the money to go out of the family. Janet Ilchester was a quaint girl, a favourite of my aunt Dorothy, and the squire's especial pet; red-cheeked, with a good upright figure in walking and riding, and willing to be friendly, but we always quarrelled: she detested hearing of Kiomi.

'Don't talk of creatures you met when you were a beggar, Harry Richmond,' she said.

'I never was a beggar,' I replied.

'Then she was a beggar,' said Janet; and I could not deny it; though the only difference I saw between Janet and Kiomi was, that Janet continually begged favours and gifts of people she

knew, and Kiomi of people who were strangers.

My allowance of pocket-money from the squire was fifty pounds a year. I might have spent it all in satisfying Janet's wishes for riding-whips, knives, pencil-cases, cairngorm buttons, and dogs. A large part of the money went that way. She was always getting notice of fine dogs for sale. I bought a mastiff for her, a brown retriever, and a little terrier. She was permitted to keep the terrier at home, but I had to take care of the mastiff and retriever. When Janet came to look at them she called them by their names; of course they followed me in preference to her; she cried with jealousy. We had a downright quarrel. Lady Ilchester invited me to spend a day at her house, Charley being home for his Midsummer holidays. Charley, Janet, and I fished the river for trout, and Janet, to flatter me (of which I was quite aware), while I dressed her rod as if she was likely to catch something, talked of Heriot, and then said:

'Oh! dear, we are good friends, aren't we? Charley says we shall marry one another some day, but mama's such a proud woman she won't much like your having such a father as you 've got unless he 's dead by that time and I needn't go up to him to be kissed.'

I stared at the girl in wonderment, but not too angrily, for I guessed that she was merely repeating her brother's candid speculations upon the future. I said: 'Now mind what I tell you, Janet: I forgive you this once, for you are an ignorant little girl and know no better. Speak respectfully of my father or you never

see me again.'

Here Charley sang out: 'Hulloa! you don't mean to say you're talking of your father.'

Janet whimpered that I had called her an ignorant little girl. If she had been silent I should have pardoned her. The meanness of the girl in turning on me when the glaring offence was hers, struck me as contemptible beyond words. Charley and I met half way. He advised me not to talk to his sister of my father. They all knew, he said, that it was no fault of mine, and for his part, had he a rascal for a father, he should pension him and cut him; to tell the truth, no objection against me existed in his family except on the score of the sort of father I owned to, and I had better make up my mind to shake him off before I grew a man; he spoke as a friend. I might frown at him and clench my fists, but he did speak as a friend.

Janet all the while was nibbling a biscuit, glancing over it at me with mouse-eyes. Her short frock and her greediness, contrasting with the talk of my marrying her, filled me with renewed scorn, though my heart was sick at the mention of my father. I asked her what she knew of him. She nibbled her biscuit, mumbling, 'He went to Riversley, pretending he was a singing-master. I know that's true, and more.'

'Oh, and a drawing-master, and a professor of legerdemain,' added her brother. 'Expunge him, old fellow; he's no good.'

'No, I'm sure he's no good,' said Janet.

I took her hand, and told her, 'You don't know how you hurt

me; but you're a child: you don't know anything about the world. I love my father, remember that, and what you want me to do is mean and disgraceful; but you don't know better. I would forfeit everything in the world for him. And when you're of age to marry, marry anybody you like—you won't marry me. And good-bye, Janet. Think of learning your lessons, and not of marrying. I can't help laughing.' So I said, but without the laughter. Her brother tried hard to get me to notice him.

Janet betook herself to the squire. Her prattle of our marriage in days to come was excuseable. It was the squire's notion. He used to remark generally that he liked to see things look safe and fast, and he had, as my aunt confided to me, arranged with Lady Ilchester, in the girl's hearing, that we should make a match. My grandfather pledged his word to Janet that he would restore us to an amicable footing. He thought it a light task. Invitations were sent out to a large party at Riversley, and Janet came with all my gifts on her dress or in her pockets. The squire led the company to the gates of his stables; the gates opened, and a beautiful pony, with a side-saddle on, was trotted forth, amid cries of admiration. Then the squire put the bridle-reins in my hands, bidding me present it myself. I asked the name of the person. He pointed at Janet. I presented the pony to Janet, and said, 'It's from the squire.'

She forgot, in her delight, our being at variance.

'No, no, you stupid Harry, I'm to thank you. He's a darling pony. I want to kiss you.'

I retired promptly, but the squire had heard her.

'Back, sir!' he shouted, swearing by this and that. 'You slink from a kiss, and you're Beltham blood?

Back to her, lad. Take it. Up with her in your arms or down on your knees. Take it manfully, somehow. See there, she 's got it ready for you.'

'I've got a letter ready for you, Harry, to say—oh! so sorry for offending you,' Janet whispered, when I reached the pony's head; 'and if you'd rather not be kissed before people, then by-and-by, but do shake hands.'

'Pull the pony's mane,' said I; 'that will do as well. Observe—I pull, and now you pull.'

Janet mechanically followed my actions. She grimaced, and whimpered, 'I could pull the pony's mane right out.'

'Don't treat animals like your dolls,' said I.

She ran to the squire, and refused the pony. The squire's face changed from merry to black.

'Young man,' he addressed me, 'don't show that worse half of yours in genteel society, or, by the Lord! you won't carry Beltham buttons for long. This young lady, mind you, is a lady by birth both sides.'

'She thinks she is marriageable,' said I; and walked away, leaving loud laughter behind me.

But laughter did not console me for the public aspersion of him I loved. I walked off the grounds, and thought to myself it was quite time I should be moving. Wherever I stayed for any

length of time I was certain to hear abuse of my father. Why not wander over the country with Kiomi, go to sea, mount the Andes, enlist in a Prussian regiment, and hear the soldiers tell tales of Frederick the Great? I walked over Kiomi's heath till dark, when one of our grooms on horseback overtook me, saying that the squire begged me to jump on the horse and ride home as quick as possible. Two other lads and the coachman were out scouring the country to find me, and the squire was anxious, it appeared. I rode home like a wounded man made to feel proud by victory, but with no one to stop the bleeding of his wounds: and the more my pride rose, the more I suffered pain. There at home sat my grandfather, dejected, telling me that the loss of me a second time would kill him, begging me to overlook his roughness, calling me his little Harry and his heir, his brave-spirited boy; yet I was too sure that a word of my father to him would have brought him very near another ejaculation concerning Beltham buttons.

'You're a fiery young fellow, I suspect,' he said, when he had recovered his natural temper. 'I like you for it; pluck's Beltham. Have a will of your own. Sweat out the bad blood. Here, drink my health, Harry. You're three parts Beltham, at least, and it'll go hard if you're not all Beltham before I die. Old blood always wins that race, I swear. We 're the oldest in the county.

Damn the mixing. My father never let any of his daughters marry, if he could help it, nor'll I, bar rascals.

Here's to you, young Squire Beltham. Harry Lepel Beltham —does that suit ye? Anon, anon, as they say in the play. Take

my name, and drop the Richmond no, drop the subject: we'll talk of it by-and-by.'

So he wrestled to express his hatred of my father without offending me; and I studied him coldly, thinking that the sight of my father in beggar's clothes, raising a hand for me to follow his steps, would draw me forth, though Riversley should beseech me to remain clad in wealth.

CHAPTER IX. AN EVENING WITH CAPTAIN BULSTED

A dream that my father lay like a wax figure in a bed gave me thoughts of dying. I was ill and did not know it, and imagined that my despair at the foot of the stairs of ever reaching my room to lie down peacefully was the sign of death. My aunt Dorothy nursed me for a week: none but she and my dogs entered the room. I had only two faint wishes left in me: one that the squire should be kept out of my sight, the other that she would speak to me of my mother's love for my father. She happened to say, musing, 'Harry, you have your mother's heart.'

I said, 'No, my father's.'

From that we opened a conversation, the sweetest I had ever had away from him, though she spoke shyly and told me very little. It was enough for me in the narrow world of my dogs' faces, and the red-leaved creeper at the window, the fir-trees on the distant heath, and her hand clasping mine. My father had many faults, she said, but he had been cruelly used, or deceived, and he bore a grievous burden; and then she said, 'Yes,' and 'Yes,' and 'Yes,' in the voice one supposes of a ghost retiring, to my questions of his merits. I was refreshed and satisfied, like the parched earth with dews when it gets no rain, and I was soon well.

When I walked among the household again, I found that my

week of seclusion had endowed me with a singular gift; I found that I could see through everybody. Looking at the squire, I thought to myself, 'My father has faults, but he has been cruelly used,' and immediately I forgave the old man; his antipathy to my father seemed a craze, and to account for it I lay in wait for his numerous illogical acts and words, and smiled visibly in contemplation of his rough unreasonable nature, and of my magnanimity. He caught the smile, and interpreted it.

'Grinning at me, Harry; have I made a slip in my grammar, eh?'

Who could feel any further sensitiveness at his fits of irritation, reading him as I did? I saw through my aunt: she was always in dread of a renewal of our conversation. I could see her ideas flutter like birds to escape me. And I penetrated the others who came in my way just as unerringly. Farmer Eckerthy would acknowledge, astonished, his mind was running on cricket when I taxed him with it.

'Crops was the cart-load of my thoughts, Master Harry, but there was a bit o' cricket in it, too, ne'er a doubt.'

My aunt's maid, Davis, was shocked by my discernment of the fact that she was in love, and it was useless for her to pretend the contrary, for I had seen her granting tender liberties to Lady Ilchester's footman.

Old Sewis said gravely, 'You've been to the witches, Master Harry'; and others were sure 'I had got it from the gipsies off the common.'

The maids were partly incredulous, but I perceived that they disbelieved as readily as they believed. With my latest tutor, the Rev. Simon Hart, I was not sufficiently familiar to offer him proofs of my extraordinary power; so I begged favours of him, and laid hot-house flowers on his table in the name of my aunt, and had the gratification of seeing him blush. His approval of my Latin exercise was verbal, and weak praise in comparison; besides I cared nothing for praises not referring to my grand natural accomplishment. 'And my father now is thinking of me!' That was easy to imagine, but the certainty of it confirmed me in my conceit.

'How can you tell?—how is it possible for you to know people's thoughts?' said Janet Ilchester, whose head was as open to me as a hat. She pretended to be rather more frightened of me than she was.

'And now you think you are flattering me!' I said.

She looked nervous.

'And now you're asking yourself what you can do better than I can!'

She said, 'Go on.'

I stopped.

She charged me with being pulled up short.

I denied it.

'Guess, guess!' said she. 'You can't.'

My reply petrified her. 'You were thinking that you are a lady by birth on both sides.'

At first she refused to admit it. 'No, it wasn't that, Harry, it wasn't really. I was thinking how clever you are.'

'Yes, after, not before.'

'No, Harry, but you are clever. I wish I was half as clever. Fancy reading people's ideas! I can read my pony's, but that's different; I know by his ears. And as for my being a lady, of course I am, and so are you—I mean, a gentleman. I was thinking—now this is really what I was thinking—I wished your father lived near, that we might all be friends. I can't bear the squire when he talks.... And you quite as good as me, and better. Don't shake me off, Harry.'

I shook her in the gentlest manner, not suspecting that she had read my feelings fully as well as I her thoughts. Janet and I fell to talking of my father incessantly, and were constantly together. The squire caught one of my smiles rising, when he applauded himself lustily for the original idea of matching us; but the idea was no longer distasteful to me. It appeared to me that if I must some day be married, a wife who would enjoy my narratives, and travel over the four quarters of the globe, as Janet promised to do, in search of him I loved, would be the preferable person. I swore her to secresy; she was not to tell her brother Charley the subject we conversed on.

'Oh dear, no!' said she, and told him straightway.

Charley, home for his winter holidays, blurted out at the squire's table: 'So, Harry Richmond, you're the cleverest fellow in the world, are you? There's Janet telling everybody your father's

the cleverest next to you, and she's never seen him!'

'How? hulloa, what 's that?' sang out the squire.

'Charley was speaking of my father, sir,' I said, preparing for thunder.

We all rose. The squire looked as though an apoplectic seizure were coming on.

'Don't sit at my table again,' he said, after a terrible struggle to be articulate.

His hand was stretched at me. I swung round to depart. 'No, no, not you; that fellow,' he called, getting his arm level toward Charley.

I tried to intercede—the last who should have done it.

'You like to hear him, eh?' said the squire.

I was ready to say that I did, but my aunt, whose courage was up when occasion summoned it, hushed the scene by passing the decanter to the squire, and speaking to him in a low voice.

'Biter's bit. I've dished myself, that's clear,' said Charley; and he spoke the truth, and such was his frankness that I forgave him.

He and Janet were staying at Riversley. They left next morning, for the squire would not speak to him, nor I to Janet.

'I 'll tell you what; there 's no doubt about one thing,' said Charley; 'Janet's right—some of those girls are tremendously deep: you're about the cleverest fellow I've ever met in my life. I thought of working into the squire in a sort of collateral manner, you know. A cornetcy in the Dragoon Guards in a year or two. I thought the squire might do that for me without much

damaging you;—perhaps a couple of hundred a year, just to reconcile me to a nose out of joint. For, upon my honour, the squire spoke of making me his heir—or words to that effect neatly conjugated—before you came back; and rather than be a curate like that Reverend Hart of yours, who hands raisins and almonds, and orange-flower biscuits to your aunt the way of all the Reverends who drop down on Riversley—I 'd betray my bosom friend. I'm regularly "hoist on my own petard," as they say in the newspapers. I'm a curate and no mistake. You did it with a turn of the wrist, without striking out: and I like neat boxing. I bear no malice when I'm floored neatly.'

Five minutes after he had spoken it would have been impossible for me to tell him that my simplicity and not my cleverness had caused his overthrow. From this I learnt that simplicity is the keenest weapon and a beautiful refinement of cleverness; and I affected it extremely. I pushed it so far that I could make the squire dance in his seat with suppressed fury and jealousy at my way of talking of Venice, and other Continental cities, which he knew I must have visited in my father's society; and though he raged at me and pshawed the Continent to the deuce, he was ready, out of sheer rivalry, to grant anything I pleased to covet. At every stage of my growth one or another of my passions was alert to twist me awry, and now I was getting a false self about me and becoming liker to the creature people supposed me to be, despising them for blockheads in my heart, as boys may who preserve a last trace of the ingenuousness denied

to seasoned men.

Happily my aunt wrote to Mr. Rippenger for the address of little Gus Temple's father, to invite my schoolfellow to stay a month at Riversley. Temple came, everybody liked him; as for me my delight was unbounded, and in spite of a feeling of superiority due to my penetrative capacity, and the suspicion it originated, that Temple might be acting the plain well-bred schoolboy he was, I soon preferred his pattern to my own. He confessed he had found me changed at first. His father, it appeared, was working him as hard at Latin as Mr. Hart worked me, and he sat down beside me under my tutor and stumbled at Tacitus after his fluent Cicero. I offered excuses for him to Mr. Hart, saying he would soon prove himself the better scholar. 'There's my old Richie!' said Temple, fondling me on the shoulder, and my nonsensical airs fell away from me at once.

We roamed the neighbourhood talking old school-days over, visiting houses, hunting and dancing, declaring every day we would write for Heriot to join us, instead of which we wrote a valentine to Julia Rippenger, and despatched a companion one composed in a very different spirit to her father. Lady Ilchester did us the favour to draw a sea-monster, an Andromeda, and a Perseus in the shape of a flying British hussar, for Julia's valentine. It seemed to us so successful that we scattered half-a-dozen over the neighbourhood, and rode round it on the morning of St. Valentine's Day to see the effect of them, meeting the postman on the road. He gave me two for myself. One was

transparently from Janet, a provoking counterstroke of mine to her; but when I opened the other my heart began beating. The standard of Great Britain was painted in colours at the top; down each side, encricled in laurels, were kings and queens of England with their sceptres, and in the middle I read the initials, A. F-G. R. R., embedded in blue forget-me-hots. I could not doubt it was from my father. Riding out in the open air as I received it, I could fancy in my hot joy that it had dropped out of heaven.

'He's alive; I shall have him with me; I shall have him with me soon!' I cried to Temple. 'Oh! why can't I answer him? where is he? what address? Let's ride to London. Don't you understand, Temple? This letter's from my father. He knows I'm here. I'll find him, never mind what happens.'

'Yes, but,' said Temple, 'if he knows where you are, and you don't know where he is, there's no good in your going off adventuring. If a fellow wants to be hit, the best thing he can do is to stop still.'

Struck by the perspicacity of his views, I turned homeward. Temple had been previously warned by me to avoid speaking of my father at Riversley; but I was now in such a boiling state of happiness, believing that my father would certainly appear as he had done at Dipwell farm, brilliant and cheerful, to bear me away to new scenes and his own dear society, that I tossed the valentine to my aunt across the breakfast-table, laughing and telling her to guess the name of the sender. My aunt flushed.

'Miss Bannerbridge?' she said.

A stranger was present. The squire introduced us.

'My grandson, Harry Richmond, Captain William Bulsted, frigate Polyphemus; Captain Bulsted, Master Augustus Temple.'

For the sake of conversation, Temple asked him if his ship was fully manned.

'All but a mate,' said the captain.

I knew him by reputation as the brother of Squire Gregory Bulsted of Bulsted, notorious for his attachment to my aunt, and laughing-stock of the county.

'So you've got a valentine,' the captain addressed me. 'I went on shore at Rio last year on this very day of the month, just as lively as you youngsters for one. Saltwater keeps a man's youth in pickle. No valentine for me! Paid off my ship yesterday at Spithead, and here I am again on Valentine's Day.'

Temple and I stared hard at a big man with a bronzed skin and a rubicund laugh who expected to receive valentines.

My aunt thrust the letter back to me secretly. 'It must be from a lady,' said she.

'Why, who'd have a valentine from any but a lady?' exclaimed the captain.

The squire winked at me to watch his guest. Captain Bulsted fed heartily; he was thoroughly a sailor-gentleman, between the old school and the new, and, as I perceived, as far gone in love with my aunt as his brother was. Presently Sewis entered carrying a foaming tankard of old ale, and he and the captain exchanged a word or two upon Jamaica.

‘Now, when you’ve finished that washy tea of yours, take a draught of our October, brewed here long before you were a lieutenant, captain,’ said the squire.

‘Thank you, sir,’ the captain replied; ‘I know that ale; a moment, and I will gladly. I wish to preserve my faculties; I don’t wish to have it supposed that I speak under fermenting influences. Sewis, hold by, if you please.’

My aunt made an effort to retire.

‘No, no, fair play; stay,’ said the squire, trying to frown, but twinkling; my aunt tried to smile, and sat as if on springs.

‘Miss Beltham,’ the captain bowed to her, and to each one as he spoke, ‘Squire Beltham, Mr. Harry Richmond; Mr. Temple; my ship was paid off yesterday, and till a captain’s ship is paid off, he ‘s not his own master, you are aware. If you think my behaviour calls for comment, reflect, I beseech you, on the nature of a sailor’s life. A three-years’ cruise in a cabin is pretty much equivalent to the same amount of time spent in a coffin, I can assure you; with the difference that you’re hard at work thinking all the time like the—hum.’

‘Ay, he thinks hard enough,’ the squire struck in.

‘Pardon me, sir; like the—hum—plumb-line on a leeshore, I meant to observe. This is now the third—the fourth occasion on which I have practised the observance of paying my first visit to Riversley to know my fate, that I might not have it on my conscience that I had missed a day, a minute, as soon as I was a free man on English terra firma. My brother Greg and

I were brought up in close association with Riversley. One of the Beauties of Riversley we lost! One was left, and we both tried our luck with her; honourably, in turn, each of us, nothing underhand; above-board, on the quarter-deck, before all the company. I 'll say it of my brother, I can say it of myself. Greg's chances, I need not remark, are superior to mine; he is always in port. If he wins, then I tell him—"God bless you, my boy; you've won the finest woman, the handsomest, and the best, in or out of Christendom!" But my chance is my property, though it may be value only one farthing coin of the realm, and there is always pity for poor sinners in the female bosom. Miss Beltham, I trespass on your kind attention. If I am to remain a bachelor and you a maiden lady, why, the will of heaven be done! If you marry another, never mind who the man, there's my stock to the fruit of the union, never mind what the sex. But, if you will have one so unworthy of you as me, my hand and heart are at your feet, ma'am, as I have lost no time in coming to tell you.' So Captain Bulsted concluded. Our eyes were directed on my aunt. The squire bade her to speak out, for she had his sanction to act according to her judgement and liking.

She said, with a gracefulness that gave me a little aching of pity for the poor captain: 'I am deeply honoured by you, Captain Bulsted, but it is not my intention to marry.'

The captain stood up, and bowing humbly, replied 'I am ever your servant, ma'am.'

My aunt quitted the room.

'Now for the tankard, Sewis,' said the captain.

Gradually the bottom of the great tankard turned up to the ceiling. He drank to the last drop in it.

The squire asked him whether he found consolation in that.

The captain sighed prodigiously and said: 'It 's a commencement, sir.'

'Egad, it's a commencement 'd be something like a final end to any dozen of our fellows round about here. I'll tell you what: if stout stomachs gained the day in love-affairs, I suspect you'd run a good race against the male half of our county, William. And a damned good test of a man's metal, I say it is! What are you going to do to-day?'

'I am going to get drunk, sir.'

'Well, you might do worse. Then, stop here, William, and give my old Port the preference. No tongue in the morning, I promise you, and pleasant dreams at night.' The captain thanked him cordially, but declined, saying that he would rather make a beast of himself in another place.

The squire vainly pressed his hospitality by assuring him of perfect secresy on our part, as regarded my aunt, and offering him Sewis and one of the footmen to lift him to bed. 'You are very good, squire,' said the captain; 'nothing but a sense of duty restrains me. I am bound to convey the information to my brother that the coast is clear for him.'

'Well, then, fall light, and for'ard,' said the squire, shaking him by the hand. Forty years ago a gentleman, a baronet, had fallen

on the back of his head and never recovered.

'Ay, ay, launch stern foremost, if you like!' said the captain, nodding; 'no, no, I don't go into port pulled by the tail, my word for it, squire; and good day to you, sir.'

'No ill will about this bothering love-business of yours, William?'

'On my soul, sir, I cherish none.'

Temple and I followed him out of the house, fascinated by his manners and oddness. He invited us to jump into the chariot beside him. We were witnesses of the meeting between him and his brother, a little sniffling man, as like the captain as a withered nut is like a milky one.

'Same luck, William?' said Squire Gregory.

'Not a point of change in the wind, Greg,' said the captain.

They wrenched hands thereupon, like two carpet-shakers, with a report, and much in a similar attitude.

'These young gentlemen will testify to you solemnly, Greg, that I took no unfair advantage,' said the captain; 'no whispering in passages, no appointments in gardens, no letters. I spoke out. Bravely, man! And now, Greg, referring to the state of your cellar, our young friends here mean to float with us to-night. It is now half-past eleven A.M. Your dinner-hour the same as usual, of course? Therefore at four P.M. the hour of execution. And come, Greg, you and I will visit the cellar. A dozen and half of light and half-a-dozen of the old family—that will be about the number of bottles to give me my quietus, and you yours—all of

us! And you, young gentlemen, take your guns or your rods, and back and be dressed by the four bell, or you 'll not find the same man in Billy Bulsted.'

Temple was enraptured with him. He declared he had been thinking seriously for a long time of entering the Navy, and his admiration of the captain must have given him an intuition of his character, for he persuaded me to send to Riversley for our evening-dress clothes, appearing in which at the dinner-table, we received the captain's compliments, as being gentlemen who knew how to attire ourselves to suit an occasion. The occasion, Squire Gregory said, happened to him too often for him to distinguish it by the cut of his coat.

'I observe, nevertheless, Greg, that you have a black tie round your neck instead of a red one,' said the captain.

'Then it came there by accident,' said Squire Gregory.

'Accident! There's no such thing as accident. If I wander out of the house with a half dozen or so in me, and topple into the brook, am I accidentally drowned? If a squall upsets my ship, is she an accidental residue of spars and timber and old iron? If a woman refuses me, is that an accident? There's a cause for every disaster: too much cargo, want of foresight, want of pluck. Pooh! when I'm hauled prisoner into a foreign port in time of war, you may talk of accidents. Mr. Harry Richmond, Mr. Temple, I have the accidental happiness of drinking to your healths in a tumbler of hock wine. Nominative, hic, haec, hoc.'

Squire Gregory carried on the declension, not without pride.

The Vocative confused him.

'Claret will do for the Vocative,' said the captain, gravely; 'the more so as there is plenty of it at your table, Greg. Ablative hoc, hac, hoc, which sounds as if the gentleman had become incapable of speech beyond the name of his wine. So we will abandon the declension of the article for a dash of champagne, which there's no declining, I hope. Wonderful men, those Romans! They fought their ships well, too. A question to you, Greg. Those heathen Pagan dogs had a religion that encouraged them to swear. Now, my experience of life pronounces it to be a human necessity to rap out an oath here and there. What do you say?'

Squire Gregory said: 'Drinking, and no thinking, at dinner, William.' The captain pledged him.

'I 'll take the opportunity, as we're not on board ship, of drinking to you, sir, now,' Temple addressed the captain, whose face was resplendent; and he bowed, and drank, and said,

'As we are not on board ship? I like you!'

Temple thanked him for the compliment.

'No compliment, my lad. You see me in my weakness, and you have the discernment to know me for something better than I seem. You promise to respect me on my own quarter-deck. You are of the right stuff. Do I speak correctly, Mr. Harry?'

'Temple is my dear friend,' I replied.

'And he would not be so if not of the right stuff! Good! That 's a way of putting much in little. By Jove! a royal style.'

'And Harry's a royal fellow!' said Temple.

We all drank to one another. The captain's eyes scrutinized me speculatingly.

'This boy might have been yours or mine, Greg,' I heard him say in a faltering rough tone.

They forgot the presence of Temple and me, but spoke as if they thought they were whispering. The captain assured his brother that Squire Beltham had given him as much fair play as one who holds a balance. Squire Gregory doubted it, and sipped and kept his nose at his wineglass, crabbedly repeating his doubts of it. The captain then remarked, that doubting it, his conscience permitted him to use stratagems, though he, the captain, not doubting it, had no such permission.

'I count I run away with her every night of my life,' said Squire Gregory. 'Nothing comes of it but empty bottles.'

'Court her, serenade her,' said the captain; 'blockade the port, lay siege to the citadel. I'd give a year of service for your chances, Greg. Half a word from her, and you have your horses ready.'

'She's past po'chaises,' Squire Gregory sighed.

'She's to be won by a bold stroke, brother Greg.'

'Oh, Lord, no! She's past po'chaises.'

'Humph! it's come to be half-bottle, half-beauty, with your worship, Greg, I suspect.'

'No. I tell you, William, she's got her mind on that fellow. You can't po'chay her.'

'After he jilted her for her sister? Wrong, Greg, wrong. You are muddled. She has a fright about matrimony—a common

thing at her age, I am told. Where's the man?'

'In the Bench, of course. Where'd you have him?'

'I, sir? If I knew my worst enemy to be there, I'd send him six dozen of the best in my cellar.'

Temple shot a walnut at me. I pretended to be meditating carelessly, and I had the heat and roar of a conflagration round my head.

Presently the captain said, 'Are you sure the man's in the Bench?'

'Cock,' Squire Gregory replied.

'He had money from his wife.'

'And he had the wheels to make it go.' Here they whispered in earnest.

'Oh, the Billings were as rich as the Belthams,' said the captain, aloud.

'Pretty nigh, William.'

'That's our curse, Greg. Money settled on their male issue, and money in hand; by the Lord! we've always had the look of a pair of highwaymen lurking for purses, when it was the woman, the woman, penniless, naked, mean, destitute; nothing but the woman we wanted. And there was one apiece for us. Greg, old boy, when will the old county show such another couple of Beauties! Greg, sir, you're not half a man, or you'd have carried her, with your opportunities. The fellow's in the Bench, you say? How are you cocksure of that, Mr. Greg?'

'Company,' was the answer; and the captain turned to Temple

and me, apologizing profusely for talking over family matters with his brother after a separation of three years. I had guessed but hastily at the subject of their conversation until they mentioned the Billings, the family of my maternal grandmother. The name was like a tongue of fire shooting up in a cloud of smoke: I saw at once that the man in the Bench must be my father, though what the Bench was exactly, and where it was, I had no idea, and as I was left to imagination I became, as usual, childish in my notions, and brooded upon thoughts of the Man in the Iron Mask; things I dared not breathe to Temple, of whose manly sense I stood in awe when under these distracting influences.

'Remember our feast in the combe?' I sang across the table to him.

'Never forget it!' said he; and we repeated the tale of the goose at Rippenger's school to our entertainers, making them laugh.

'And next morning Richie ran off with a gipsy girl,' said Temple; and I composed a narrative of my wanderings with Kiomi, much more amusing than the real one. The captain vowed he would like to have us both on board his ship, but that times were too bad for him to offer us a prospect of promotion. 'Spin round the decanters,' said he; 'now's the hour for them to go like a humming-top, and each man lend a hand: whip hard, my lads. It's once in three years, hurrah! and the cause is a cruel woman. Toast her; but no name. Here's to the nameless Fair! For it's not my intention to marry, says she, and, ma'am, I'm a man of honour or I'd catch you tight, my nut-brown maid, and clap you into a

cage, fal-lal, like a squirrel; to trot the wheel of mat-trimony. Shame to the first man down!'

'That won't be I,' said Temple.

'Be me, sir, me,' the captain corrected his grammar.

'Pardon me, Captain Bulsted; the verb "To be" governs the nominative case in our climate,' said Temple.

'Then I'm nominative hic… I say, sir, I'm in the tropics, Mr. Tem … Mr. Tempus. Point of honour, not forget a man's name. Rippenger, your schoolmaster? Mr. Rippenger, you've knocked some knowledge into this young gentleman.' Temple and I took counsel together hastily; we cried in a breath: 'Here 's to Julia Rippenger, the prettiest, nicest girl living!' and we drank to her.

'Julia!' the captain echoed us. 'I join your toast, gentlemen. Mr. Richmond, Mr. Tempus-Julia! By all that's holy, she floats a sinking ship! Julia consoles me for the fairest, cruellest woman alive. A rough sailor, Julia! at your feet.'

The captain fell commendably forward. Squire Gregory had already dropped. Temple and I tried to meet, but did not accomplish it till next morning at breakfast. A couple of footmen carried us each upstairs in turn, as if they were removing furniture.

Out of this strange evening came my discovery of my father, and the captain's winning of a wife.

CHAPTER X. AN EXPEDITION

I wondered audibly where the Bench was when Temple and I sat together alone at Squire Gregory's breakfast-table next morning, very thirsty for tea. He said it was a place in London, but did not add the sort of place, only that I should soon be coming to London with him; and I remarked, 'Shall I?' and smiled at him, as if in a fit of careless affection. Then he talked runningly of the theatres and pantomimes and London's charms.

The fear I had of this Bench made me passingly conscious of Temple's delicacy in not repeating its name, though why I feared it there was nothing to tell me. I must have dreamed of it just before waking, and I burned for reasonable information concerning it. Temple respected my father too much to speak out the extent of his knowledge on the subject, so we drank our tea with the grandeur of London for our theme, where, Temple assured me, you never had a headache after a carouse overnight: a communication that led me to think the country a far less favourable place of abode for gentlemen. We quitted the house without seeing our host or the captain, and greatly admired by the footmen, the maids, and the grooms for having drunk their masters under the table, which it could not be doubted that we had done, as Temple modestly observed while we sauntered off the grounds under the eyes of the establishment. We had done it fairly, too, with none of those Jack the Giant-Killer tricks my

grandfather accused us of.

The squire would not, and he could not, believe our story until he heard the confession from the mouth of the captain. After that he said we were men and heroes, and he tipped us both, much to Janet Ilchester's advantage, for the squire was a royal giver, and Temple's money had already begun to take the same road as mine.

Temple, in fact, was falling desperately in love; for this reason he shrank from quitting Riversley. I perceived it as clearly as a thing seen through a windowpane. He was always meditating upon dogs, and what might be the price of this dog or that, and whether lapdogs were good travellers. The fashionable value of pugs filled him with a sort of despair. 'My goodness!' he used an exclamation more suitable to women, 'forty or fifty pounds you say one costs, Richie?'

I pretended to estimate the probable cost of one. 'Yes, about that; but I'll buy you one, one day or other, Temple.'

The dear little fellow coloured hot; he was too much in earnest to laugh at the absurdity of his being supposed to want a pug for himself, and walked round me, throwing himself into attitudes with shrugs and loud breathings. 'I don't… don't think that I… I care for nothing but Newfoundlands and mastiffs,' said he. He went on shrugging and kicking up his heels.

'Girls like pugs,' I remarked.

'I fancy they do,' said Temple, with a snort of indifference.

Then I suggested, 'A pocket-knife for the hunting-field is a

very good thing.'

'Do you think so?' was Temple's rejoinder, and I saw he was dreadfully afraid of my speaking the person's name for whom it would be such a very good thing.

'You can get one for thirty shillings. We'll get one when we're in London. They're just as useful for women as they are for us, you know.'

'Why, of course they are, if they hunt,' said Temple.

'And we mustn't lose time,' I drew him to the point I had at heart, 'for hunting 'll soon be over. It 's February, mind!'

'Oh, lots of time!' Temple cried out, and on every occasion when I tried to make him understand that I was bursting to visit London, he kept evading me, simply because he hated saying good-bye to Janet Ilchester. His dulness of apprehension in not perceiving that I could not commit a breach of hospitality by begging him downright to start, struck me as extraordinary. And I was so acute. I saw every single idea in his head, every shift of, his mind, and how he half knew that he profited by my shunning to say flatly I desired to set out upon the discovery of the Bench. He took the benefit of my shamefacedness, for which I daily punished his. I really felt that I was justified in giving my irritability an airing by curious allusions to Janet; yet, though I made him wince, it was impossible to touch his conscience. He admitted to having repeatedly spoken of London's charms, and 'Oh, yes! you and I'll go back together, Richie,' and saying that satisfied him: he doubled our engagements with Janet that

afternoon, and it was a riding party, a dancing-party, and a drawing of a pond for carp, and we over to Janet, and Janet over to us, until I grew so sick of her I was incapable of summoning a spark of jealousy in order the better to torture Temple.

Now, he was a quick-witted boy. Well, I one day heard Janet address my big dog, Ajax, in the style she usually employed to inform her hearers, and especially the proprietor, that she coveted a thing: 'Oh, you own dear precious pet darling beauty! if I might only feed you every day of my life I should be happy! I curtsey to him every time I see him. If I were his master, the men should all off hats, and the women all curtsey, to Emperor Ajax, my dog! my own! my great, dear irresistible love! Then she nodded at me, 'I would make them, though.' And then at Temple, 'You see if I wouldn't.'

Ajax was a source of pride to me. However, I heard Temple murmur, in a tone totally unlike himself, 'He would be a great protection to you'; and I said to him, 'You know, Temple, I shall be going to London to-morrow or the next day, not later: I don't know when I shall be back. I wish you would dispose of the dog just as you like: get him a kind master or mistress, that's all.'

I sacrificed my dog to bring Temple to his senses. I thought it would touch him to see how much I could sacrifice just to get an excuse for begging him to start. He did not even thank me. Ajax soon wore one of Janet's collars, like two or three other of the Riversley dogs, and I had the satisfaction of hearing Temple accept my grandfather's invitation for a further fortnight. And,

meanwhile, I was the one who was charged with going about looking lovelorn! I smothered my feelings and my reflections on the wisdom of people.

At last my aunt Dorothy found the means of setting me at liberty on the road to London. We had related to her how Captain Bulsted toasted Julia Rippenger, and we had both declared in joke that we were sure the captain wished to be introduced to her. My aunt reserved her ideas on the subject, but by-and-by she proposed to us to ride over to Julia, and engage her to come and stay at Riversley for some days. Kissing me, my aunt said, 'She was my Harry's friend when he was an outcast.'

The words revived my affection for Julia. Strong in the sacred sense of gratitude, I turned on Temple, reproaching him with selfish forgetfulness of her good heart and pretty face. Without defending himself, as he might have done, he entreated me to postpone our journey for a day; he and Janet had some appointment. Here was given me a noble cause and matter I need not shrink from speaking of. I lashed Temple in my aunt's presence with a rod of real eloquence that astonished her, and him, and myself too; and as he had a sense of guilt not quite explicable in his mind, he consented to bear what was in reality my burden; for Julia had distinguished me and not him with all the signs of affection, and of the two I had the more thoroughly forgotten her; I believe Temple was first in toasting her at Squire Gregory's table. There is nothing like a pent-up secret of the heart for accumulating powers of speech; I mean in youth. The

mental distilling process sets in later, and then you have irony instead of eloquence. From brooding on my father, and not daring to mention his name lest I should hear evil of it, my thoughts were a proud family, proud of their origin, proud of their isolation,—and not to be able to divine them was for the world to confess itself basely beneath their level. But, when they did pour out, they were tremendous, as Temple found. This oratorical display of mine gave me an ascendancy over him. He adored eloquence, not to say grandiloquence: he was the son of a barrister. 'Let 's go and see her at once, Richie,' he said of Julia. 'I 'm ready to be off as soon as you like; I'm ready to do anything that will please you'; which was untrue, but it was useless to tell him so. I sighed at my sad gift of penetration, and tossed the fresh example of it into the treasury of vanity.

'Temple,' said I, dissembling a little; 'I tell you candidly: you won't please me by doing anything disagreeable to you. A dog pulled by the collar is not much of a companion. I start for Julia to-morrow before daylight. If you like your bed best, stop there; and mind you amuse Janet for me duing my absence.'

'I'm not going to let any one make comparisons between us,' Temple muttered.

He dropped dozens of similar remarks, and sometimes talked downright flattery, I had so deeply impressed him.

We breakfasted by candle-light, and rode away on a frosty foggy morning, keeping our groom fifty yards to the rear, a laughable sight, with both his coat-pockets bulging, a couple of

Riversley turnover pasties in one, and a bottle of champagne in the other, for our lunch on the road. Now and then, when near him, we galloped for the fun of seeing him nurse the bottle-pocket. He was generally invisible. Temple did not think it strange that we should be riding out in an unknown world with only a little ring, half a stone's-throw clear around us, and blots of copse, and queer vanishing cottages, and hard grey meadows, fir-trees wonderfully magnified, and larches and birches rigged like fairy ships, all starting up to us as we passed, and melting instantly. One could have fancied the fir-trees black torches. And here the shoulder of a hill invited us to race up to the ridge: some way on we came to crossroads, careless of our luck in hitting the right one: yonder hung a village church in the air, and church-steeple piercing ever so high; and out of the heart of the mist leaped a brook, and to hear it at one moment, and then to have the sharp freezing silence in one's ear, was piercingly weird. It all tossed the mind in my head like hay on a pitchfork. I forgot the existence of everything but what I loved passionately,—and that had no shape, was like a wind.

Up on a knoll of firs in the middle of a heath, glowing rosy in the frost, we dismounted to lunch, leaning against the warm saddles, Temple and I, and Uberly, our groom, who reminded me of a certain tramp of my acquaintance in his decided preference of beer to champagne; he drank, though, and sparkled after his draught. No sooner were we on horseback again—ere the flanks of the dear friendly brutes were in any way cool—than Temple

shouted enthusiastically, 'Richie, we shall do it yet! I've been funking, but now I'm sure we shall do it. Janet said, "What's the use of my coming over to dine at Riversley if Harry Richmond and you don't come home before ten or eleven o'clock?" I told her we'd do it by dinner-time: Don't you like Janet, Richie?—That is, if our horses' hic-haec-hocks didn't get strained on this hard nominative-plural-masculine of the article road. Don't you fancy yourself dining with the captain, Richie? Dative huic, says old Squire Gregory. I like to see him at dinner, because he loves the smell of his wine. Oh! it's nothing to boast of, but we did drink them under the table, it can't be denied. Janet heard of it. Hulloa! you talk of a hunting-knife. What do you say to a pair of skates? Here we are in for a frost of six weeks. It strikes me, a pair of skates…'

This was the champagne in Temple. In me it did not bubble to speech, and I soon drew him on at a pace that rendered conversation impossible. Uberly shouted after us to spare the horses' legs. We heard him twice out of the deepening fog. I called to Temple that he was right, we should do it. Temple hurrahed rather breathlessly. At the end of an hour I pulled up at an inn, where I left the horses to be groomed and fed, and walked away rapidly as if I knew the town, Temple following me with perfect confidence, and, indeed, I had no intention to deceive him. We entered a new station of a railway.

'Oh!' said Temple, 'the rest of the way by rail.'

When the railway clerk asked me what place I wanted tickets

for, London sprang to my mouth promptly in a murmur, and taking the tickets I replied to Temple,

'The rest of the way by rail. Uberly's sure to stop at that inn'; but my heart beat as the carriages slid away with us; an affectionate commiseration for Temple touched me when I heard him count on our being back at Riversley in time to dress for dinner.

He laughed aloud at the idea of our plumping down on Rippenger's school, getting a holiday for the boys, tipping them, and then off with Julia, exactly like two Gods of the Mythology, Apollo and Mercury.

'I often used to think they had the jolliest lives that ever were lived,' he said, and trying to catch glimpses of the country, and musing, and singing, he continued to feel like one of those blissful Gods until wonder at the passage of time supervened. Amazement, when he looked at my watch, struck him dumb. Ten minutes later we were in yellow fog, then in brown. Temple stared at both windows and at me; he jumped from his seat and fell on it, muttering, 'No; nonsense! I say!' but he had accurately recognized London's fog. I left him unanswered to bring up all his senses, which the railway had outstripped, for the contemplation of this fact, that we two were in the city of London.

CHAPTER XI. THE GREAT FOG AND THE FIRE AT MIDNIGHT

It was London city, and the Bench was the kernel of it to me. I throbbed with excitement, though I sat looking out of the windows into the subterranean atmosphere quite still and firm. When you think long undividedly of a single object it gathers light, and when you draw near it in person the strange thing to your mind is the absence of that light; but I, approaching it in this dense fog, seemed to myself to be only thinking of it a little more warmly than usual, and instead of fading it reversed the process, and became, from light, luminous. Not being able, however, to imagine the Bench a happy place, I corrected the excess of brightness and gave its walls a pine-torch glow; I set them in the middle of a great square, and hung the standard of England drooping over them in a sort of mournful family pride. Then, because I next conceived it a foreign kind of place, different altogether from that home growth of ours, the Tower of London, I topped it with a multitude of domes of pumpkin or turban shape, resembling the Kremlin of Moscow, which had once leapt up in the eye of Winter, glowing like a million pine-torches, and flung shadows of stretching red horses on the black smoke-drift. But what was the Kremlin, that had seen a city perish, to this Bench where my father languished! There was no

comparing them for tragic horror. And the Kremlin had snow-fields around it; this Bench was caught out of sight, hemmed in by an atmosphere thick as Charon breathed; it might as well be underground.

'Oh! it's London,' Temple went on, correcting his incorrigible doubts about it. He jumped on the platform; we had to call out not to lose one another. 'I say, Richie, this is London,' he said, linking his arm in mine: 'you know by the size of the station; and besides, there's the fog. Oh! it's London. We've overshot it, we're positively in London.'

I could spare no sympathy for his feelings, and I did not respond to his inquiring looks. Now that we were here I certainly wished myself away, though I would not have retreated, and for awhile I was glad of the discomforts besetting me; my step was hearty as I led on, meditating upon asking some one the direction to the Bench presently. We had to walk, and it was nothing but traversing on a slippery pavement atmospheric circles of black brown and brown red, and sometimes a larger circle of pale yellow; the colours of old bruised fruits, medlars, melons, and the smell of them; nothing is more desolate. Neither of us knew where we were, nor where we were going. We struggled through an interminable succession of squalid streets, from the one lamp visible to its neighbour in the darkness: you might have fancied yourself peering at the head of an old saint on a smoky canvas; it was like the painting of light rather than light. Figures rushed by; we saw no faces.

Temple spoke solemnly: 'Our dinner-hour at home is half-past six.' A street-boy overheard him and chaffed him. Temple got the worst of it, and it did him good, for he had the sweetest nature in the world. We declined to be attended by link-boys; they would have hurt our sense of independence. Possessed of a sovereign faith that, by dint of resolution, I should ultimately penetrate to the great square enclosing the Bench, I walked with the air of one who had the map of London in his eye and could thread it blindfold. Temple was thereby deceived into thinking that I must somehow have learnt the direction I meant to take, and knew my way, though at the slightest indication of my halting and glancing round his suspicions began to boil, and he was for asking some one the name of the ground we stood on: he murmured, 'Fellows get lost in London.' By this time he clearly understood that I had come to London on purpose: he could not but be aware of the object of my coming, and I was too proud, and he still too delicate, to allude to it.

The fog choked us. Perhaps it took away the sense of hunger by filling us as if we had eaten a dinner of soot. We had no craving to eat until long past the dinner-hour in Temple's house, and then I would rather have plunged into a bath and a bed than have been requested to sit at a feast; Temple too, I fancy. We knew we were astray without speaking of it. Temple said, 'I wish we hadn't drunk that champagne.' It seemed to me years since I had tasted the delicious crushing of the sweet bubbles in my mouth. But I did not blame them; I was after my father: he, dear

little fellow, had no light ahead except his devotion to me: he must have had a touch of conscious guilt regarding his recent behaviour, enough to hold him from complaining formally. He complained of a London without shops and lights, wondered how any one could like to come to it in a fog, and so forth; and again regretted our having drunk champagne in the morning; a sort of involuntary whimpering easily forgiven to him, for I knew he had a gallant heart. I determined, as an act of signal condescension, to accost the first person we met, male or female, for Temple's sake. Having come to this resolve, which was to be an open confession that I had misled him, wounding to my pride, I hoped eagerly for the hearing of a footfall. We were in a labyrinth of dark streets where no one was astir. A wretched dog trotted up to us, followed at our heels a short distance, and left us as if he smelt no luck about us; our cajoleries were unavailing to keep that miserable companion.

'Sinbad escaped from the pit by tracking a lynx,' I happened to remark. Temple would not hear of Sinbad.

'Oh, come, we're not Mussulmen,' said he; 'I declare, Richie, if I saw a church open, I'd go in and sleep there. Were you thinking of tracking the dog, then? Beer may be had somewhere. We shall have to find an hotel. What can the time be?'

I owed it to him to tell him, so I climbed a lamppost and spelt out the hour by my watch. When I descended we were three. A man had his hands on Temple's shoulders, examining his features.

'Now speak,' the man said, roughly.

I was interposing, but Temple cried, 'All right, Richie, we are two to one.'

The man groaned. I asked him what he wanted.

'My son! I've lost my son,' the man replied, and walked away; and he would give no answer to our questions.

I caught hold of the lamp-post, overcome. I meant to tell Temple, in response to the consoling touch of his hand, that I hoped the poor, man would discover his son, but said instead, 'I wish we could see the Bench to-night.' Temple exclaimed, 'Ah!' pretending by his tone of voice that we had recently discussed our chance of it, and then he ventured to inform me that he imagined he had heard of the place being shut up after a certain hour of the night.

My heart felt released, and gushed with love for him. 'Very well, Temple,' I said: 'then we'll wait till tomorrow, and strike out for some hotel now.'

Off we went at a furious pace. Saddlebank's goose was reverted to by both of us with an exchange of assurances that we should meet a dish the fellow to it before we slept.

'As for life,' said I, as soon as the sharp pace had fetched my breathing to a regular measure, 'adventures are what I call life.'

Temple assented. 'They're capital, if you only see the end of them.'

We talked of Ulysses and Penelope. Temple blamed him for leaving Calypso. I thought Ulysses was right, otherwise we should

have had no slaying of the Suitors but Temple shyly urged that to have a Goddess caring for you (and she was handsomer than Penelope, who must have been an oldish woman) was something to make you feel as you do on a hunting morning, when there are half-a-dozen riding-habits speckling the field—a whole glorious day your own among them! This view appeared to me very captivating, save for an obstruction in my mind, which was, that Goddesses were always conceived by me as statues. They talked and they moved, it was true, but the touch of them was marble; and they smiled and frowned, but they had no variety they were never warm.

'If I thought that!' muttered Temple, puffing at the raw fog. He admitted he had thought just the contrary, and that the cold had suggested to him the absurdity of leaving a Goddess.

'Look here, Temple,' said I, 'has it never struck you? I won't say I'm like him. It's true I've always admired Ulysses; he could fight best, talk best, and plough, and box, and how clever he was! Take him all round, who wouldn't rather have had him for a father than Achilles? And there were just as many women in love with him.'

'More,' said Temple.

'Well, then,' I continued, thanking him in my heart, for it must have cost him something to let Ulysses be set above Achilles, 'Telemachus is the one I mean. He was in search of his father. He found him at last. Upon my honour, Temple, when I think of it, I 'm ashamed to have waited so long. I call that luxury I've

lived in senseless. Yes! while I was uncertain whether my father had enough to eat or not.'

'I say! hush!' Temple breathed, in pain at such allusions. 'Richie, the squire has finished his bottle by about now; bottle number two. He won't miss us till the morning, but Miss Beltham will. She'll be at your bedroom door three or four times in the night, I know. It's getting darker and darker, we must be in some dreadful part of London.'

The contrast he presented to my sensations between our pleasant home and this foggy solitude gave me a pang of dismay. I diverged from my favourite straight line, which seemed to pierce into the bowels of the earth, sharp to the right. Soon or late after, I cannot tell, we were in the midst of a thin stream of people, mostly composed of boys and young women, going at double time, hooting and screaming with the delight of loosened animals, not quite so agreeably; but animals never hunted on a better scent. A dozen turnings in their company brought us in front of a fire. There we saw two houses preyed on by the flames, just as if a lion had his paws on a couple of human creatures, devouring them; we heard his jaws, the cracking of bones, shrieks, and the voracious in-and-out of his breath edged with anger. A girl by my side exclaimed, 'It's not the Bench, after all! Would I have run to see a paltry two-story washerwoman's mangling-shed flare up, when six penn'orth of squibs and shavings and a cracker make twice the fun!'

I turned to her, hardly able to speak. 'Where 's the Bench, if

you please?' She pointed. I looked on an immense high wall. The blunt flames of the fire opposite threw a sombre glow on it.

The girl said, 'And don't you go hopping into debt, my young cock-sparrow, or you'll know one side o' the turnkey better than t' other.' She had a friend with her who chid her for speaking so freely.

'Is it too late to go in to-night?' I asked.

She answered that it was, and that she and her friend were the persons to show me the way in there. Her friend answered more sensibly: 'Yes, you can't go in there before some time—in the morning.'

I learnt from her that the Bench was a debtors' prison.

The saucy girl of the pair asked me for money. I handed her a crown-piece.

'Now won't you give another big bit to my friend?' said she.

I had no change, and the well-mannered girl bade me never mind, the saucy one pressed for it, and for a treat. She was amusing in her talk of the quantity of different fires she had seen; she had also seen accidental-death corpses, but never a suicide in the act; and here she regretted the failure of her experiences. This conversation of a good-looking girl amazed me. Presently Temple cried, 'A third house caught, and no engines yet! Richie, there's an old woman in her night-dress; we can't stand by.'

The saucy girl joked at the poor half-naked old woman. Temple stood humping and agitating his shoulders like a cat before it springs. Both the girls tried to stop us. The one I liked

best seized my watch, and said, 'Leave this to me to take care of,' and I had no time to wrestle for it. I had a glimpse of her face that let me think she was not fooling me, the watch-chain flew off my neck, Temple and I clove through the crowd of gapers. We got into the heat, which was in a minute scorching. Three men were under the window; they had sung out to the old woman above to drop a blanket—she tossed them a water-jug. She was saved by the blanket of a neighbour. Temple and I strained at one corner of it to catch her.

She came down, the men said, like a singed turkey. The flames illuminated her as she descended. There was a great deal of laughter in the crowd, but I was shocked. Temple shared the painful impression produced on me. I cannot express my relief when the old woman was wrapped in the blanket which had broken her descent, and stood like a blot instead of a figure. I handed a sovereign to the three men, complimenting them on the humanity of their dispositions. They cheered us, and the crowd echoed the cheer, and Temple and I made our way back to the two girls: both of us lost our pocket-handkerchiefs, and Temple a penknife as well. Then the engines arrived and soused the burning houses. We were all in a crimson mist, boys smoking, girls laughing and staring, men hallooing, hats and caps flying about, fights going on, people throwing their furniture out of the windows. The great wall of the Bench was awful in its reflection of the labouring flames—it rose out of sight like the flame-tops till the columns of water brought them down. I thought of

my father, and of my watch. The two girls were not visible. 'A glorious life a fireman's!' said Temple.

The firemen were on the roofs of the houses, handsome as Greek heroes, and it really did look as if they were engaged in slaying an enormous dragon, that hissed and tongued at them, and writhed its tail, paddling its broken big red wings in the pit of wreck and smoke, twisting and darkening-something fine to conquer, I felt with Temple.

A mutual disgust at the inconvenience created by the appropriation of our pocket-handkerchiefs by members of the crowd, induced us to disentangle ourselves from it without confiding to any one our perplexity for supper and a bed. We were now extremely thirsty. I had visions of my majority bottles of Burgundy, lying under John Thresher's care at Dipwell, and would have abandoned them all for one on the spot. After ranging about the outskirts of the crowd, seeking the two girls, we walked away, not so melancholy but that a draught of porter would have cheered us. Temple punned on the loss of my watch, and excused himself for a joke neither of us had spirit to laugh at. Just as I was saying, with a last glance at the fire, 'Anyhow, it would have gone in that crowd,' the nice good girl ran up behind us, crying, 'There!' as she put the watch-chain over my head.

'There, Temple,' said I, 'didn't I tell you so?' and Temple kindly supposed so.

The girl said, 'I was afraid I'd missed you, little fellow, and you'd take me for a thief, and thank God, I'm no thief yet. I

rushed into the crowd to meet you after you caught that old creature, and I could have kissed you both, you're so brave.'

'We always go in for it together,' said Temple.

I made an offer to the girl of a piece of gold. 'Oh, I'm poor,' she cried, yet kept her hand off it like a bird alighting on ground, not on prey. When I compelled her to feel the money tight, she sighed, 'If I wasn't so poor! I don't want your gold. Why are you out so late?'

We informed her of our arrival from the country, and wanderings in the fog.

'And you'll say you're not tired, I know,' the girl remarked, and laughed to hear how correctly she had judged of our temper. Our thirst and hunger, however, filled her with concern, because of our not being used to it as she was, and no place was open to supply our wants. Her friend, the saucy one, accompanied by a man evidently a sailor, joined us, and the three had a consultation away from Temple and me, at the end of which the sailor, whose name was Joe, raised his leg dancingly, and smacked it. We gave him our hands to shake, and understood, without astonishment, that we were invited on, board his ship to partake of refreshment. We should not have been astonished had he said on board his balloon. Down through thick fog of a lighter colour, we made our way to a narrow lane leading to the river-side, where two men stood thumping their arms across their breasts, smoking pipes, and swearing. We entered a boat and were rowed to a ship. I was not aware how frozen and befogged my mind and

senses had become until I had taken a desperate and long gulp of smoking rum-and-water, and then the whole of our adventures from morning to midnight, with the fir-trees in the country fog, and the lamps in the London fog, and the man who had lost his son, the fire, the Bench, the old woman with her fowl-like cry and limbs in the air, and the row over the misty river, swam flashing before my eyes, and I cried out to the two girls, who were drinking out of one glass with the sailor Joe, my entertainer, 'Well, I'm awake now!' and slept straight off the next instant.

CHAPTER XII. WE FIND OURSELVES BOUND ON A VOYAGE

It seemed to me that I had but taken a turn from right to left, or gone round a wheel, when I repeated the same words, and I heard Temple somewhere near me mumble something like them. He drew a long breath, so did I: we cleared our throats with a sort of whinny simultaneously. The enjoyment of lying perfectly still, refreshed, incurious, unexcited, yet having our minds animated, excursive, reaping all the incidents of our lives at leisure, and making a dream of our latest experiences, kept us tranquil and incommunicative. Occasionally we let fall a sigh fathoms deep, then by-and-by began blowing a bit of a wanton laugh at the end of it. I raised my foot and saw the boot on it, which accounted for an uneasy sensation setting in through my frame.

I said softly, 'What a pleasure it must be for horses to be groomed!'

'Just what I was thinking!' said Temple.

We started up on our elbows, and one or the other cried:

'There's a chart! These are bunks! Hark at the row overhead! We're in a ship! The ship's moving! Is it foggy this morning? It's time to get up! I've slept in my clothes! Oh, for a dip! How I smell of smoke! What a noise of a steamer! And the squire at

Riversley! Fancy Uberly's tale!'

Temple, with averted face, asked me whether I meant to return to Riversley that day. I assured him I would, on my honour, if possible; and of course he also would have to return there. 'Why, you've an appointment with Janet Ilchester,' said I, 'and we may find a pug; we'll buy the hunting-knife and the skates. And she shall know you saved an old woman's life.'

'No, don't talk about that,' Temple entreated me, biting his lip. 'Richie, we're going fast through the water. It reminds me of breakfast. I should guess the hour to be nine A.M.'

My watch was unable to assist us; the hands pointed to half-past four, and were fixed. We ran up on deck. Looking over the stern of the vessel, across a line of rippling eddying red gold, we saw the sun low upon cushions of beautiful cloud; no trace of fog anywhere; blue sky overhead, and a mild breeze blowing.

'Sunrise,' I said.

Temple answered, 'Yes,' most uncertainly.

We looked round. A steam-tug was towing our ship out toward banks of red-reflecting cloud, and a smell of sea air.

'Why, that's the East there!' cried Temple. We faced about to the sun, and behold, he was actually sinking!

'Nonsense!' we exclaimed in a breath. From seaward to this stupefying sunset we stood staring. The river stretched to broad lengths; gulls were on the grey water, knots of seaweed, and the sea-foam curled in advance of us.

'By jingo!' Temple spoke out, musing, 'here's a whole day

struck out of our existence.'

'It can't be!' said I, for that any sensible being could be tricked of a piece of his life in that manner I thought a preposterous notion.

But the sight of a lessening windmill in the West, shadows eastward, the wide water, and the air now full salt, convinced me we two had slept through an entire day, and were passing rapidly out of hail of our native land.

'We must get these fellows to put us on shore at once,' said Temple: 'we won't stop to eat. There's a town; a boat will row us there in half-an-hour. Then we can wash, too. I've got an idea nothing's clean here. And confound these fellows for not having the civility to tell us they were going to start!'

We were rather angry, a little amused, not in the least alarmed at our position. A sailor, to whom we applied for an introduction to the captain, said he was busy. Another gave us a similar reply, with a monstrous grimace which was beyond our comprehension. The sailor Joe was nowhere to be seen. None of the sailors appeared willing to listen to us, though they stopped as they were running by to lend half an ear to what we had to say. Some particular movement was going on in the ship. Temple was the first to observe that the steamtug was casting us loose, and cried he, 'She'll take us on board and back to London Bridge. Let's hail her.' He sang out, 'Whoop! ahoy!' I meanwhile had caught sight of Joe.

'Well, young gentleman!' he accosted me, and he hoped I had

slept well. My courteous request to him to bid the tug stand by to take us on board, only caused him to wear a look of awful gravity. 'You're such a deuce of a sleeper,' he said. 'You see, we had to be off early to make up for forty hours lost by that there fog. I tried to wake you both; no good; so I let you snore away. We took up our captain mid-way down the river, and now you're in his hands, and he'll do what he likes with you, and that 's a fact, and my opinion is you 'll see a foreign shore before you're in the arms of your family again.'

At these words I had the horrible sensation of being caged, and worse, transported into the bargain.

I insisted on seeing the captain. A big bright round moon was dancing over the vessel's bowsprit, and this, together with the tug thumping into the distance, and the land receding, gave me—coming on my wrath—suffocating emotions.

No difficulties were presented in my way. I was led up to a broad man in a pilot-coat, who stood square, and looked by the bend of his eyebrows as if he were always making head against a gale. He nodded to my respectful salute. 'Cabin,' he said, and turned his back to me.

I addressed him, 'Excuse me, I want to go on shore, captain. I must and will go! I am here by some accident; you have accidentally overlooked me here. I wish to treat you like a gentleman, but I won't be detained.'

Joe spoke a word to the captain, who kept his back as broad to me as a school-slate for geography and Euclid's propositions.

'Cabin, cabin,' the captain repeated.

I tried to get round him to dash a furious sentence or so in his face, since there was no producing any impression on his back; but he occupied the whole of a way blocked with wire-coil, and rope, and boxes, and it would have been ridiculous to climb this barricade when by another right-about-face he could in a minute leave me volleying at the blank space between his shoulders.

Joe touched my arm, which, in as friendly a way as I could assume, I bade him not do a second time; for I could ill contain myself as it was, and beginning to think I had been duped and tricked, I was ready for hostilities. I could hardly bear meeting Temple on my passage to the cabin. 'Captain Jasper Welsh,' he was reiterating, as if sounding it to discover whether it had an ominous ring: it was the captain's name, that he had learnt from one of the seamen.

Irritated by his repetition of it, I said, I know not why, or how the words came: 'A highwayman notorious for his depredations in the vicinity of the city of Bristol.'

This set Temple off laughing: 'And so he bought a ship and had traps laid down to catch young fellows for ransom.'

I was obliged to request Temple not to joke, but the next moment I had launched Captain Jasper Welsh on a piratical exploit; Temple lifted the veil from his history, revealing him amid the excesses of a cannibal feast. I dragged him before a British jury; Temple hanged him in view of an excited multitude. As he boasted that there was the end of Captain Welsh, I broke

the rope. But Temple spoiled my triumph by depriving him of the use of his lower limbs after the fall, for he was a heavy man. I could not contradict it, and therefore pitched all his ship's crew upon the gallows in a rescue. Temple allowed him to be carried off by his faithful ruffians, only stipulating that the captain was never after able to release his neck from the hangman's slip knot. The consequence was that he wore a shirt-collar up to his eyebrows for concealment by day, and a pillow-case over his head at night, and his wife said she was a deceived unhappy woman, and died of curiosity.

The talking of even such nonsense as this was a relief to us in our impatience and helplessness, with the lights of land heaving far distant to our fretful sight through the cabin windows.

When we had to talk reasonably we were not so successful. Captain Welsh was one of those men who show you, whether you care to see them or not, all the processes by which they arrive at an idea of you, upon which they forthwith shape their course. Thus, when he came to us in the cabin, he took the oil-lamp in his hand and examined our faces by its light; he had no reply to our remonstrances and petitions: all he said was, 'Humph! well, I suppose you're both gentlemen born'; and he insisted on prosecuting his scrutiny without any reference to the tenour of our observations.

We entreated him half imperiously to bring his ship to and put us on shore in a boat. He bunched up his mouth, remarking, 'Know their grammar: habit o' speaking to grooms, eh? humph.'

We offered to pay largely. 'Loose o' their cash,' was his comment, and so on; and he was the more exasperating to us because he did not look an evil-minded man; only he appeared to be cursed with an evil opinion of us. I tried to remove it; I spoke forbearingly. Temple, imitating me, was sugar-sweet. We exonerated the captain from blame, excused him for his error, named the case a mistake on both sides. That long sleep of ours, we said, was really something laughable; we laughed at the recollection of it, a lamentable piece of merriment.

Our artfulness and patience becoming exhausted, for the captain had vouchsafed us no direct answer, I said at last, 'Captain Welsh, here we are on board your ship will you tell us what you mean to do with us?'

He now said bluntly, 'I will.'

'You'll behave like a man of honour,' said I, and to that he cried vehemently, 'I will.'

'Well, then,' said I, 'call out the boat, if you please; we're anxious to be home.'

'So you shall!' the captain shouted, 'and per ship—my barque Priscilla; and better men than you left, or I 'm no Christian.'

Temple said briskly, 'Thank you, captain.'

'You may wait awhile with that, my lad,' he answered; and, to our astonishment, recommended us to go and clean our faces and prepare to drink some tea at his table.

'Thank you very much, captain, we'll do that when we 're on shore,' said we.

'You'll have black figure-heads and empty gizzards, then, by that time,' he remarked. We beheld him turning over the leaves of a Bible.

Now, this sight of the Bible gave me a sense of personal security, and a notion of hypocrisy in his conduct as well; and perceiving that we had conjectured falsely as to his meaning to cast us on shore per ship, his barque Priscilla, I burst out in great heat, 'What! we are prisoners? You dare to detain us?'

Temple chimed in, in a similar strain. Fairly enraged, we flung at him without anything of what I thought eloquence.

The captain ruminated up and down the columns of his Bible.

I was stung to feel that we were like two small terriers baiting a huge mild bull. At last he said, 'The story of the Prodigal Son.'

'Oh!' groaned Temple, at the mention of this worn-out old fellow, who has gone in harness to tracts ever since he ate the fatted calf.

But the captain never heeded his interruption.

'Young gentlemen, I've finished it while you 've been barking at me. If I 'd had him early in life on board my vessel, I hope I'm not presumptuous in saying—the Lord forgive me if I be so!—I'd have stopped his downward career—ay, so!—with a trip in the right direction. The Lord, young gentlemen, has not thrown you into my hands for no purpose whatsoever. Thank him on your knees to-night, and thank Joseph Double, my mate, when you rise, for he was the instrument of saving you from bad company. If this was a vessel where you 'd hear an oath or smell the smell

of liquor, I 'd have let you run when there was terra firma within stone's throw. I came on board, I found you both asleep, with those marks of dissipation round your eyes, and I swore—in the Lord's name, mind you—I'd help pluck you out of the pit while you had none but one leg in. It's said! It's no use barking. I am not to be roused. The devil in me is chained by the waist, and a twenty-pound weight on his tongue. With your assistance I'll do the same for the devil in you. Since you've had plenty of sleep, I 'll trouble you to commit to memory the whole story of the Prodigal Son 'twixt now and morrow's sunrise. We 'll have our commentary on it after labour done. Labour you will in my vessel, for your soul's health. And let me advise you not to talk; in your situation talking's temptation to lying. You'll do me the obligation to feed at my table. And when I hand you back to your parents, why, they'll thank me, if you won't. But it's not thanks I look for: it's my bounden Christian duty I look to. I reckon a couple o' stray lambs equal to one lost sheep.'

The captain uplifted his arm, ejaculating solemnly, 'By!' and faltered. 'You were going to swear!' said Temple, with savage disdain.

'By the blessing of Omnipotence! I'll save a pair o' pups from turning wolves. And I'm a weak mortal man, that 's too true.'

'He was going to swear,' Temple muttered to me.

I considered the detection of Captain Welsh's hypocrisy unnecessary, almost a condescension toward familiarity; but the ire in my bosom was boiling so that I found it impossible to roll

out the flood of eloquence with which I was big. Soon after, I was trying to bribe the man with all my money and my watch.

'Who gave you that watch?' said he.

'Downright Church catechism!' muttered Temple.

'My grandfather,' said I.

The captain's head went like a mechanical hammer, to express something indescribable.

'My grandfather,' I continued, 'will pay you handsomely for any service you do to me and my friend.'

'Now, that's not far off forgoing,' said the captain, in a tone as much as to say we were bad all over.

I saw the waters slide by his cabin-windows. My desolation, my humiliation, my chained fury, tumbled together. Out it came —

'Captain, do behave to us like a gentleman, and you shall never repent it. Our relatives will be miserable about us. They —captain!—they don't know where we are. We haven't even a change of clothes. Of course we know we're at your mercy, but do behave like an honest man. You shall be paid or not, just as you please, for putting us on shore, but we shall be eternally grateful to you. Of course you mean kindly to us; we see that—'

'I thank the Lord for it!' he interposed.

'Only you really are under a delusion. It 's extraordinary. You can't be quite in your right senses about us; you must be—I don't mean to speak disrespectfully-what we call on shore, cracked about us....

'Doddered, don't they say in one of the shires?' he remarked.

Half-encouraged, and in the belief that I might be getting eloquent, I appealed to his manliness. Why should he take advantage of a couple of boys? I struck the key of his possible fatherly feelings: What misery were not our friends suffering now. ('Ay, a bucketful now saves an ocean in time to come!' he flung in his word.) I bade him, with more pathetic dignity reflect on the dreadful hiatus in our studies.

'Is that Latin or Greek?' he asked.

I would not reply to the cold-blooded question. He said the New Testament was written in Greek, he knew, and happy were those who could read it in the original.

'Well, and how can we be learning to read it on board ship?' said Temple, an observation that exasperated me because it seemed more to the point than my lengthy speech, and betrayed that he thought so; however, I took it up:—

'How can we be graduating for our sphere in life, Captain Welsh, on board your vessel? Tell us that.'

He played thumb and knuckles on his table. Just when I was hoping that good would come of the senseless tune, Temple cried,

'Tell us what your exact intentions are, Captain Welsh. What do you mean to do with us?'

'Mean to take you the voyage out and the voyage home, Providence willing,' said the captain, and he rose.

We declined his offer of tea, though I fancy we could have

gnawed at a bone.

'There's no compulsion in that matter,' he said. 'You share my cabin while you're my guests, shipmates, and apprentices in the path of living; my cabin and my substance, the same as if you were what the North-countrymen call bairns o' mine: I've none o' my own. My wife was a barren woman. I've none but my old mother at home. Have your sulks out, lads; you'll come round like the Priscilla on a tack, and discover you've made way by it.'

We quitted his cabin, bowing stiffly.

Temple declared old Rippenger was better than this canting rascal.

The sea was around us, a distant yellow twinkle telling of land.

'His wife a barren woman! what's that to us!' Temple went on, exploding at intervals. 'So was Sarah. His cabin and his substance! He talks more like a preacher than a sailor. I should like to see him in a storm! He's no sailor at all. His men hate him. It wouldn't be difficult to get up a mutiny on board this ship. Richie, I understand the whole plot: he's in want of cabin-boys. The fellow has impressed us. We shall have to serve till we touch land. Thank God, there's a British consul everywhere; I say that seriously. I love my country; may she always be powerful! My life is always at her—Did you feel that pitch of the ship? Of all the names ever given to a vessel, I do think Priscilla is without exception the most utterly detestable. Oh! there again. No, it'll be too bad, Richie, if we 're beaten in this way.'

'If YOU are beaten,' said I, scarcely venturing to speak lest I

should cry or be sick.

We both felt that the vessel was conspiring to ruin our self-respect. I set my head to think as hard as possible on Latin verses (my instinct must have drawn me to them as to a species of intellectual biscuit steeped in spirit, tough, and comforting, and fundamentally opposed to existing circumstances, otherwise I cannot account for the attraction). They helped me for a time; they kept off self-pity, and kept the machinery of the mind at work. They lifted me, as it were, to an upper floor removed from the treacherously sighing Priscilla. But I came down quickly with a crash; no dexterous management of my mental resources could save me from the hemp-like smell of the ship, nor would leaning over the taffrail, nor lying curled under a tarpaulin. The sailors heaped pilot-coats upon us. It was a bad ship, they said, to be sick on board of, for no such thing as brandy was allowed in the old Priscilla. Still I am sure I tasted some before I fell into a state of semi-insensibility. As in a trance I heard Temple's moans, and the captain's voice across the gusty wind, and the forlorn crunching of the ship down great waves. The captain's figure was sometimes stooping over us, more great-coats were piled on us; sometimes the wind whistled thinner than one fancies the shrieks of creatures dead of starvation and restless, that spend their souls in a shriek as long as they can hold it on, say nursery-maids; the ship made a truce with the waters and grunted; we took two or three playful blows, we were drenched with spray, uphill we laboured, we caught the moon in a net of rigging, away we

plunged; we mounted to plunge again and again. I reproached the vessel in argument for some imaginary inconsistency. Memory was like a heavy barrel on my breast, rolling with the sea.

CHAPTER XIII. WE CONDUCT SEVERAL LEARNED ARGUMENTS WITH THE CAPTAIN OF THE PRISCILLA

Captain Welsh soon conquered us. The latest meal we had eaten was on the frosty common under the fir-trees. After a tremendous fast, with sea-sickness supervening, the eggs and bacon, and pleasant benevolent-smelling tea on the captain's table were things not to be resisted by two healthy boys who had previously stripped and faced buckets of maddening ice-cold salt-water, dashed at us by a jolly sailor. An open mind for new impressions came with the warmth of our clothes. We ate, bearing within us the souls of injured innocents; nevertheless, we were thankful, and, to the captain's grace, a long one, we bowed heads decently. It was a glorious breakfast, for which land and sea had prepared us in about equal degrees: I confess, my feelings when I jumped out of the cabin were almost those of one born afresh to life and understanding. Temple and I took counsel. We agreed that sulking would be ridiculous, unmanly, ungentlemanly. The captain had us fast, as if we were under a lion's paw; he was evidently a well-meaning man, a fanatic deluded concerning our characters: the barque Priscilla was

bound for a German port, and should arrive there in a few days,—why not run the voyage merrily since we were treated with kindness? Neither the squire nor Temple's father could complain of our conduct; we were simply victims of an error that was assisting us to a knowledge of the world, a youth's proper ambition. 'And we're not going to be starved,' said Temple.

I smiled, thinking I perceived the reason why I had failed in my oration over-night; so I determined that on no future occasion would I let pride stand in the way of provender. Breakfast had completely transformed us We held it due to ourselves that we should demand explanations from Joseph Double, the mate, and then, after hearing him, furnish them with a cordial alacrity to which we might have attached unlimited credence had he not protested against our dreaming him to have supplied hot rum-and-water on board, we wrote our names and addresses in the captain's log-book, and immediately asked permission to go to the mast-head.

He laughed. Out of his cabin there was no smack of the preacher in him. His men said he was a stout seaman, mad on the subject of grog and girls. Why, it was on account of grog and girls that he was giving us this dish of salt-water to purify us! Grog and girls! cried we. We vowed upon our honour as gentlemen we had tasted grog for the first time in our lives on board the Priscilla. How about the girls? they asked. We informed them we knew none but girls who were ladies. Thereupon one sailor nodded, one sent up a crow, one said the misfortune of the case lay in all

girls being such precious fine ladies; and one spoke in dreadfully blank language, he accused us of treating the Priscilla as a tavern for the entertainment of bad company, stating that he had helped to row me and my associates from the shore to the ship.

'Poor Mr. Double!' says he; 'there was only one way for him to jump you two young gentlemen out o' that snapdragon bowl you was in—or quashmire, call it; so he 'ticed you on board wi' the bait you was swallowing, which was making the devil serve the Lord's turn. And I'll remember that night, for I yielded to swearing, and drank too!' The other sailors roared with laughter.

I tipped them, not to appear offended by their suspicions. We thought them all hypocrites, and were as much in error as if we had thought them all honest.

Things went fairly well with the exception of the lessons in Scripture. Our work was mere playing at sailoring, helping furl sails, haul ropes, study charts, carry messages, and such like. Temple made his voice shrewdly emphatic to explain to the captain that we liked the work, but that such lessons as these out of Scripture were what the eeriest youngsters were crammed with.

'Such lessons as these, maybe, don't have the meaning on land they get to have on the high seas,' replied the captain: 'and those youngsters you talk of were not called in to throw a light on passages: for I may teach you ship's business aboard my barque, but we're all children inside the Book.'

He groaned heartily to hear that our learning lay in the

direction of Pagan Gods and Goddesses, and heathen historians and poets; adding, it was not new to him, and perhaps that was why the world was as it was. Nor did he wonder, he said, at our running from studies of those filthy writings loose upon London; it was as natural as dunghill steam. Temple pretended he was forced by the captain's undue severity to defend Venus; he said, I thought rather wittily, 'Sailors ought to have a respect for her, for she was born in the middle of the sea, and she steered straight for land, so she must have had a pretty good idea of navigation.'

But the captain answered none the less keenly, 'She had her idea of navigating, as the devil of mischief always has, in the direction where there's most to corrupt; and, my lad, she teaches the navigation that leads to the bottom beneath us.'

He might be right, still our mien was evil in reciting the lessons from Scripture; and though Captain Welsh had intelligence we could not draw into it the how and the why of the indignity we experienced. We had rather he had been a savage captain, to have braced our spirits to sturdy resistance, instead of a mild, good-humoured man of kind intentions, who lent us his linen to wear, fed us at his table, and taxed our most gentlemanly feelings to find excuses for him. Our way of revenging ourselves becomingly was to laud the heroes of antiquity, as if they had possession of our souls and touched the fountain of worship. Whenever Captain Welsh exclaimed, 'Well done,' or the equivalent, 'That 's an idea,' we referred him to Plutarch for our great exemplar. It was Alcibiades gracefully consuming his black broth that

won the captain's thanks for theological acuteness, or the young Telemachus suiting his temper to the dolphin's moods, since he must somehow get on shore on the dolphin's back. Captain Welsh could not perceive in Temple the personifier of Alcibiades, nor Telemachus in me; but he was aware of an obstinate obstruction behind our compliance. This he called the devil coiled like a snake in its winter sleep. He hurled texts at it openly, or slyly dropped a particularly heavy one, in the hope of surprising it with a death-blow. We beheld him poring over his Bible for texts that should be sovereign medicines for us, deadly for the devil within us. Consequently, we were on the defensive: bits of Cicero, bits of Seneca, soundly and nobly moral, did service on behalf of Paganism; we remembered them certainly almost as if an imp had brought them from afar. Nor had we any desire to be in opposition to the cause he supported. What we were opposed to was the dogmatic arrogance of a just but ignorant man, who had his one specific for everything, and saw mortal sickness in all other remedies or recreations. Temple said to him,

'If the Archbishop of Canterbury were to tell me Greek and Latin authors are bad for me, I should listen to his remarks, because he 's a scholar: he knows the languages and knows what they contain.'

Captain Welsh replied,

'If the Archbishop o' Canterbury sailed the sea, and lived in Foul Alley, Waterside, when on shore, and so felt what it is to toss on top of the waves o' perdition, he'd understand the value

of a big, clean, well-manned, well-provisioned ship, instead o' your galliots wi' gaudy sails, your barges that can't rise to a sea, your yachts that run to port like mother's pets at first pipe o' the storm, your trim-built wherries.'

'So you'd have only one sort of vessel afloat!' said I. 'There's the difference of a man who's a scholar.'

'I'd have,' said the captain, 'every lad like you, my lad, trained in the big ship, and he wouldn't capsize, and be found betrayed by his light timbers as I found you. Serve your apprenticeship in the Lord's three-decker; then to command what you may.'

'No, no, Captain Welsh,' says Temple: 'you must grind at Latin and Greek when you 're a chick, or you won't ever master the rudiments. Upon my honour, I declare it 's the truth, you must. If you'd like to try, and are of a mind for a go at Greek, we'll do our best to help you through the aorists. It looks harder than Latin, but after a start it 's easier. Only, I'm afraid your three-decker's apprenticeship 'll stand in your way.'

'Greek 's to be done for me; I can pay clever gentlemen for doing Greek for me,' said the captain. 'The knowledge and the love of virtue I must do for myself; and not to be wrecked, I must do it early.'

'Well, that's neither learning nor human nature,' said I.

'It's the knowledge o' the right rules for human nature, my lad.'

'Would you kidnap youngsters to serve in your ship, captain?'

'I'd bless the wind that blew them there, foul or not, my lad.'

'And there they'd stick when you had them, captain?'

'I'd think it was the Lord's will they should stick there awhile, my lad—yes.'

'And what of their parents?'

'Youngsters out like gossamers on a wind, their parents are where they sow themselves, my lad.'

'I call that hard on the real parents, Captain Welsh,' said Temple.

'It's harder on Providence when parents breed that kind o' light creature, my lad.'

We were all getting excited, talking our best, such as it was; the captain leaning over his side of the table, clasping his hands unintentionally preacher-like; we on our side supporting our chins on our fists, quick to be at him. Temple was brilliant; he wanted to convert the captain, and avowed it.

'For,' said he, 'you're not like one of those tract-fellows. You're a man we can respect, a good seaman, master of your ship, and hearty, and no mewing sanctimoniousness, and we can see and excuse your mistake as to us two; but now, there's my father at home—he's a good man, but he 's a man of the world, and reads his classics and his Bible. He's none the worse for it, I assure you.'

'Where was his son the night of the fog?' said the captain.

'Well, he happened to be out in it.'

'Where'd he be now but for one o' my men?'

'Who can answer that, Captain Welsh?'

'I can, my lad-stewing in an ante-room of hell-gates, I verily believe.'

Temple sighed at the captain's infatuation, and said, 'I'll tell you of a fellow at our school named Drew; he was old Rippenger's best theological scholar—always got the prize for theology. Well, he was a confirmed sneak. I've taken him into a corner and described the torments of dying to him, and his look was disgusting—he broke out in a clammy sweat. "Don't, don't!" he'd cry. "You're just the fellow to suffer intensely," I told him. And what was his idea of escaping it? Why, by learning the whole of Deuteronomy and the Acts of the Apostles by heart! His idea of Judgement Day was old Rippenger's half-yearly examination. These are facts, you know, Captain Welsh.'

I testified to them briefly.

The captain said a curious thing: 'I'll make an appointment with you in leviathan's jaws the night of a storm, my lad.'

'With pleasure,' said Temple.

'The Lord send it!' exclaimed the captain.

His head was bent forward, and he was gazing up into his eyebrows.

Before we knew that anything was coming, he was out on a narrative of a scholar of one of the Universities. Our ears were indifferent to the young man's career from the heights of fortune to delirium tremens down the cataract of brandy, until the captain spoke of a dark night on the Pool of the Thames; and here his voice struggled, and we tried hard to catch the thread of the tale. Two men and a girl were in the boat. The men fought, the girl shrieked, the boat was upset, the three were drowned.

All this came so suddenly that nothing but the captain's heavy thump of his fist on the table kept us from laughing.

He was quite unable to relate the tale, and we had to gather it from his exclamations. One of the men was mate of a vessel lying in the Pool, having only cast anchor that evening; the girl was his sweetheart; the other man had once been a fine young University gentleman, and had become an outfitter's drunken agent. The brave sailor had nourished him often when on shore, and he, with the fluent tongue which his college had trimmed for him, had led the girl to sin during her lover's absence. Howsoever, they put off together to welcome him on his arrival, never suspecting that their secret had been whispered to Robert Welsh beforehand. Howsoever, Robert gave them hearty greeting, and down to the cabin they went, and there sat drinking up to midnight.

'Three lost souls!' said the captain.

'See how they run,' Temple sang, half audibly, and flushed hot, ashamed of himself.

"Twas I had to bear the news to his mother,' the captain pursued; 'and it was a task, my lads, for I was then little more than your age, and the glass was Robert's only fault, and he was my only brother.'

I offered my hand to the captain. He grasped it powerfully. 'That crew in a boat, and wouldn't you know the devil'd be coxswain?' he called loudly, and buried his face.

'No,' he said, looking up at us, 'I pray for no storm, but, by the Lord's mercy, for a way to your hearts through fire or water.

And now on deck, my lads, while your beds are made up. Three blind things we verily are.'

Captain Welsh showed he was sharp of hearing. His allusion to the humming of the tune of the mice gave Temple a fit of remorse, and he apologized.

'Ay,' said the captain, 'it is so; own it: frivolity's the fruit of that training that's all for the flesh. But dip you into some o' my books on my shelves here, and learn to see living man half skeleton, like life and shadow, and never to living man need you pray forgiveness, my lad.'

By sheer force of character he gained the command of our respect. Though we agreed on deck that he had bungled his story, it impressed us; we felt less able to cope with him, and less willing to encounter a storm.

'We shall have one, of course,' Temple said, affecting resignation, with a glance aloft.

I was superstitiously of the same opinion, and praised the vessel.

'Oh, Priscilla's the very name of a ship that founders with all hands and sends a bottle on shore,' said Temple.

'There isn't a bottle on board,' said I; and this piece of nonsense helped us to sleep off our gloom.

CHAPTER XIV. I MEET OLD FRIENDS

Notwithstanding the prognostications it pleased us to indulge, we had a tolerably smooth voyage. On a clear cold Sunday morning we were sailing between a foreign river's banks, and Temple and I were alternately reading a chapter out of the Bible to the assembled ship's crew, in advance of the captain's short exhortation. We had ceased to look at ourselves inwardly, and we hardly thought it strange. But our hearts beat for a view of the great merchant city, which was called a free city, and therefore, Temple suggested, must bear certain portions of resemblance to old England; so we made up our minds to like it.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.