

TOBIAS SMOLLETT

THE ADVENTURES OF
SIR LAUNCELOT
GREAVES

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Launcelot Greaves**

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INTRODUCTION

It was on the great northern road from York to London, about the beginning of the month of October, and the hour of eight in the evening, that four travellers were, by a violent shower of rain, driven for shelter into a little public-house on the side of the highway, distinguished by a sign which was said to exhibit the figure of a black lion. The kitchen, in which they assembled, was the only room for entertainment in the house, paved with red bricks, remarkably clean, furnished with three or four Windsor chairs, adorned with shining plates of pewter, and copper saucepans, nicely scoured, that even dazzled the eyes of the beholder; while a cheerful fire of sea-coal blazed in the chimney.

It would be hard to find a better beginning for a wholesome novel of English life, than these first two sentences in *The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves*. They are full of comfort and promise. They promise that we shall get rapidly into the story; and so we do. They give us the hope, in which we are not to be disappointed, that we shall see a good deal of those English inns which to this day are delightful in reality, and which to generations of readers, have been delightful in fancy. Truly, English fiction, without its inns, were as much poorer as the English country, without these same hostelries, were less comfortable. For few things in the world has the so-called “Anglo-Saxon” race more reason to be grateful than for good old English inns. Finally there is a third promise in these opening sentences of *Sir Launcelot Greaves*. “The great northern road!” It was that over which the youthful Smollett made his way to London in 1739; it was that over which, less than nine years later, he sent us travelling in company with Random and Strap and the queer people whom they met on their way. And so there is the promise that Smollett, after his departure in *Count Fathom* from the field of personal experience which erstwhile he cultivated so successfully, has returned to see if the ground will yield him another rich harvest. Though it must be admitted that in *Sir Launcelot Greaves* his labours were but partially successful, yet the story possesses a good deal of the lively verisimilitude which *Fathom* lacked. The very first page, as we have seen, shows that its inns are going to be real. So, too, are most of its highway adventures, and also its portion of those prison scenes of which Smollett seems to have been so fond. As for the description of the parliamentary election, it is by no means the least graphic of its kind in the fiction of the last two centuries. The speech of Sir Valentine Quickset, the fox-hunting Tory candidate, is excellent, both for its brevity and for its simplicity. Any of his bumpkin audience could understand perfectly his principal points: that he spends his estate of “vive thousand clear” at home in old English hospitality; that he comes of pure old English stock; that he hates all foreigners, not excepting those from Hanover; and that if he is elected, he “will cross the ministry in everything, as in duty bound.”

In the characters, likewise, though less than in the scenes just spoken of, we recognise something of the old Smollett touch. True, it is not high praise to say of Miss Aurelia Darnel that she is more alive, or rather less lifeless, than Smollett’s heroines have been heretofore. Nor can we give great praise to the characterisation of Sir Launcelot. Yet if less substantial than Smollett’s roystering heroes, he is more distinct than de Melvil in *Fathom*, the only one of our author’s earlier young men, by the way, (with the possible exception of Godfrey Gauntlet) who can stand beside Greaves in never failing to be a gentleman. It is a pity, when Greaves’s character is so lovable, and save for his knight-errantry, so well conceived, that the image is not more distinct. Crowe is distinct enough, however, though not quite consistently drawn. There is justice in Scott’s objection [*Tobias Smollett in Biographical and Critical Notices of Eminent Novelists*] that nothing in the seaman’s “life . . . renders it at all possible that he should have caught” the baronet’s Quixotism. Otherwise, so far from finding

fault with the old sailor, we are pleased to see Smollett returning in him to a favourite type. It might be thought that he would have exhausted the possibilities of this type in *Bowling and Trunnion* and *Pipes and Hatchway*. In point of fact, Crowe is by no means the equal of the first two of these. And yet, with his heart in the right place, and his application of sea terms to land objects, Captain Samuel Crowe has a good deal of the rough charm of his prototypes. Still more distinct, and among Smollett's personages a more novel figure, is the Captain's nephew, the dapper, verbose, tender-hearted lawyer, Tom Clarke. Apart from the inevitable Smollett exaggeration, a better portrait of a softish young attorney could hardly be painted. Nor, in enumerating the characters of *Sir Launcelot Greaves* who fix themselves in a reader's memory, should Tom's innamorata, Dolly, be forgotten, or the malicious Ferret, or that precious pair, Justice and Mrs. Gobble, or the Knight's squire, Timothy Crabshaw, or that very individual horse, Gilbert, whose lot is to be one moment caressed, and the next, cursed for a "hard-hearted, unchristian tuoad."

Barring the Gobbles, all these characters are important in the book from first to last. *Sir Launcelot Greaves*, then, is significant among Smollett's novels, as indicating a reliance upon the personages for interest quite as much as upon the adventures. If the author failed in a similar intention in *Fathom*, it was not through lack of clearly conceived characters, but through failure to make them flesh and blood. In that book, however, he put the adventures together more skilfully than in *Sir Launcelot Greaves*, the plot of which is not only rather meagre but also far-fetched. There seems to be no adequate reason for the baronet's whim of becoming an English Don Quixote of the eighteenth century, except the chance it gave Smollett for imitating Cervantes. He was evidently hampered from the start by the consciousness that at best the success of such imitation would be doubtful. Probably he expresses his own misgivings when he makes Ferret exclaim to the hero: "What! . . . you set up for a modern Don Quixote? The scheme is rather too stale and extravagant. What was a . . . well-timed satire in Spain near two hundred years ago, will . . . appear . . . insipid and absurd . . . at this time of day, in a country like England." Whether from the author's half-heartedness or from some other cause, there is no denying that the Quixotism in *Sir Launcelot Greaves* is flat. It is a drawback to the book rather than an aid. The plot could have developed itself just as well, the high-minded young baronet might have had just as entertaining adventures, without his imitation of the fine old Spanish Don.

I have remarked on the old Smollett touch in *Sir Launcelot Greaves*,—the individual touch of which we are continually sensible in *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle*, but seldom in *Count Fathom*. With it is a new Smollett touch, indicative of a kindlier feeling towards the world. It is commonly said that the only one of the writer's novels which contains a sufficient amount of charity and sweetness is *Humphry Clinker*. The statement is not quite true. *Greaves* is not so strikingly amiable as Smollett's masterpiece only because it is not so striking in any of its excellences; their lines are always a little blurred. Still, it shows that ten years before *Clinker*, Smollett had learned to combine the contradictory elements of life in something like their right proportions. If obscenity and ferocity are found in his fourth novel, they are no longer found in a disproportionate degree.

There is little more to say of *Sir Launcelot Greaves*, except in the way of literary history. The given name of the hero may or may not be significant. It is safe to say that if a *Sir Launcelot* had appeared in fiction one or two generations earlier, had the fact been recognised (which is not indubitable) that he bore the name of the most celebrated knight of later Arthurian romance, he would have been nothing but a burlesque figure. But in 1760, literary taste was changing. Romanticism in literature had begun to come to the front again, as Smollett had already shown by his romantic leanings in *Count Fathom*. With it there came interest in the Middle Ages and in the most popular fiction of the Middle Ages, the "greatest of all poetic subjects," according to Tennyson, the stories of Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, which, for the better part of a century, had been deposed from their old-time place of honour. These stories, however, were as yet so imperfectly known—and

only to a few—that the most to be said is that some connection between their reviving popularity and the name of Smollett's knight-errant hero is not impossible.

Apart from this, *Sir Launcelot Greaves* is interesting historically as ending Smollett's comparatively long silence in novel-writing after the publication of *Fathom* in 1753. His next work was the translation of *Don Quixote*, which he completed in 1755, and which may first have suggested the idea of an English knight, somewhat after the pattern of the Spanish. Be that as it may, before developing the idea, Smollett busied himself with his *Complete History of England*, and with the comedy, *The Reprisal: or the Tars of Old England*, a successful play which at last brought about a reconciliation with his old enemy, Garrick. Two years later, in 1759, as editor of the *Critical Review*, Smollett was led into a criticism of Admiral Knowles's conduct that was judged libellous enough to give its author three months in the King's Bench prison, during which time, it has been conjectured, he began to mature his plans for the *English Quixote*. The result was that, in 1760 and 1761, *Sir Launcelot Greaves* came out in various numbers of the *British Magazine*. Scott has given his authority to the statement that Smollett wrote many of the instalments in great haste, sometimes, during a visit in Berwickshire, dashing off the necessary amount of manuscript in an hour or so just before the departure of the post. If the story is true, it adds its testimony to that of his works to the author's extraordinarily facile pen. Finally, in 1762, the novel thus hurried off in instalments appeared as a whole. This method of its introduction to the public gives *Sir Launcelot Greaves* still another claim to interest. It is one of the earliest English novels, indeed the earliest from the pen of a great writer, published in serial form.

G. H. MAYNADIER.

CHAPTER ONE

IN WHICH CERTAIN PERSONAGES OF THIS DELIGHTFUL HISTORY ARE INTRODUCED TO THE READER'S ACQUAINTANCE

It was on the great northern road from York to London, about the beginning of the month of October, and the hour of eight in the evening, that four travellers were, by a violent shower of rain, driven for shelter into a little public-house on the side of the highway, distinguished by a sign which was said to exhibit the figure of a black lion. The kitchen, in which they assembled, was the only room for entertainment in the house, paved with red bricks, remarkably clean, furnished with three or four Windsor chairs, adorned with shining plates of pewter, and copper saucepans, nicely scoured, that even dazzled the eyes of the beholder; while a cheerful fire of sea-coal blazed in the chimney. Three of the travellers, who arrived on horseback, having seen their cattle properly accommodated in the stable, agreed to pass the time, until the weather should clear up, over a bowl of rumbo, which was accordingly prepared. But the fourth, refusing to join their company, took his station at the opposite side of the chimney, and called for a pint of twopenny, with which he indulged himself apart. At a little distance, on his left hand, there was another group, consisting of the landlady, a decent widow, her two daughters, the elder of whom seemed to be about the age of fifteen, and a country lad, who served both as waiter and ostler.

The social triumvirate was composed of Mr. Fillet, a country practitioner in surgery and midwifery, Captain Crowe, and his nephew Mr. Thomas Clarke, an attorney. Fillet was a man of some education, and a great deal of experience, shrewd, sly, and sensible. Captain Crowe had commanded a merchant ship in the Mediterranean trade for many years, and saved some money by dint of frugality and traffic. He was an excellent seaman, brave, active, friendly in his way, and scrupulously honest; but as little acquainted with the world as a sucking child; whimsical, impatient, and so impetuous, that he could not help breaking in upon the conversation, whatever it might be, with repeated interruptions, that seemed to burst from him by involuntary impulse. When he himself attempted to speak he never finished his period; but made such a number of abrupt transitions, that his discourse seemed to be an unconnected series of unfinished sentences, the meaning of which it was not easy to decipher.

His nephew, Tom Clarke, was a young fellow, whose goodness of heart even the exercise of his profession had not been able to corrupt. Before strangers he never owned himself an attorney without blushing, though he had no reason to blush for his own practice, for he constantly refused to engage in the cause of any client whose character was equivocal, and was never known to act with such industry as when concerned for the widow and orphan, or any other object that sued in forma pauperis. Indeed, he was so replete with human kindness, that as often as an affecting story or circumstance was told in his hearing, it overflowed at his eyes. Being of a warm complexion, he was very susceptible of passion, and somewhat libertine in his amours. In other respects, he piqued himself on understanding the practice of the courts, and in private company he took pleasure in laying down the law; but he was an indifferent orator, and tediously circumstantial in his explanations. His stature was rather diminutive; but, upon the whole, he had some title to the character of a pretty, dapper, little fellow.

The solitary guest had something very forbidding in his aspect, which was contracted by an habitual frown. His eyes were small and red, and so deep set in the sockets, that each appeared like the unextinguished snuff of a farthing candle, gleaming through the horn of a dark lanthorn. His nostrils were elevated in scorn, as if his sense of smelling had been perpetually offended by some unsavoury odour; and he looked as if he wanted to shrink within himself from the impertinence of society. He wore a black periwig as straight as the pinions of a raven, and this was covered with a hat

flapped, and fastened to his head by a speckled handkerchief tied under his chin. He was wrapped in a greatcoat of brown frieze, under which he seemed to conceal a small bundle. His name was Ferret, and his character distinguished by three peculiarities. He was never seen to smile; he was never heard to speak in praise of any person whatsoever; and he was never known to give a direct answer to any question that was asked; but seemed, on all occasions, to be actuated by the most perverse spirit of contradiction.

Captain Crowe, having remarked that it was squally weather, asked how far it was to the next market town; and understanding that the distance was not less than six miles, said he had a good mind to come to an anchor for the night, if so be as he could have a tolerable berth in this here harbour. Mr. Fillet, perceiving by his style that he was a seafaring gentleman, observed that their landlady was not used to lodge such company; and expressed some surprise that he, who had no doubt endured so many storms and hardships at sea, should think much of travelling five or six miles a-horseback by moonlight. “For my part,” said he, “I ride in all weathers, and at all hours, without minding cold, wet, wind, or darkness. My constitution is so case-hardened that I believe I could live all the year at Spitzbergen. With respect to this road, I know every foot of it so exactly, that I’ll engage to travel forty miles upon it blindfold, without making one false step; and if you have faith enough to put yourselves under my auspices, I will conduct you safe to an elegant inn, where you will meet with the best accommodation.” “Thank you, brother,” replied the captain, “we are much beholden to you for your courteous offer; but, howsoever, you must not think I mind foul weather more than my neighbours. I have worked hard aloft and alow in many a taut gale; but this here is the case, d’ye see; we have run down a long day’s reckoning; our beasts have had a hard spell; and as for my own hap, brother, I doubt my bottom-planks have lost some of their sheathing, being as how I a’n’t used to that kind of scrubbing.”

The doctor, who had practised aboard a man-of-war in his youth, and was perfectly well acquainted with the captain’s dialect, assured him that if his bottom was damaged he would new pay it with an excellent salve, which he always carried about him to guard against such accidents on the road. But Tom Clarke, who seemed to have cast the eyes of affection upon the landlady’s eldest daughter, Dolly, objected to their proceeding farther without rest and refreshment, as they had already travelled fifty miles since morning; and he was sure his uncle must be fatigued both in mind and body, from vexation, as well as from hard exercise, to which he had not been accustomed. Fillet then desisted, saying, he was sorry to find the captain had any cause of vexation; but he hoped it was not an incurable evil. This expression was accompanied with a look of curiosity, which Mr. Clarke was glad of an occasion to gratify; for, as we have hinted above, he was a very communicative gentleman, and the affair which now lay upon his stomach interested him nearly.

“I’ll assure you, sir,” said he, “this here gentleman, Captain Crowe, who is my mother’s own brother, has been cruelly used by some of his relations. He bears as good a character as any captain of a ship on the Royal Exchange, and has undergone a variety of hardships at sea. What d’ye think, now, of his bursting all his sinews, and making his eyes start out of his head, in pulling his ship off a rock, whereby he saved to his owners”—Here he was interrupted by the captain, who exclaimed, “Belay, Tom, belay; pr’ythee, don’t veer out such a deal of jaw. Clap a stopper on thy cable and bring thyself up, my lad—what a deal of stuff thou has pumped up concerning bursting and starting, and pulling ships; Laud have mercy upon us!—look ye here, brother—look ye here—mind these poor crippled joints; two fingers on the starboard, and three on the larboard hand; crooked, d’ye see, like the knees of a bilander. I’ll tell you what, brother, you seem to be a—ship deep laden—rich cargo—current setting into the bay—hard gale—lee shore— all hands in the boat—tow round the headland—self pulling for dear blood, against the whole crew—snap go the finger-braces—crack went the eye-blocks. Bounce daylight—flash starlight—down I foundered, dark as hell—whiz went my ears, and my head spun like a whirligig. That don’t signify—I’m a Yorkshire boy, as the saying is—all my life at sea, brother, by reason of an old grandmother and maiden aunt, a couple of old stinking—kept

me these forty years out of my grandfather's estate. Hearing as how they had taken their departure, came ashore, hired horses, and clapped on all my canvas, steering to the northward, to take possession of my—But it don't signify talking—these two old piratical— had held a palaver with a lawyer—an attorney, Tom, d'ye mind me, an attorney—and by his assistance hove me out of my inheritance. That is all, brother—hove me out of five hundred pounds a year—that's all—what signifies—but such windfalls we don't every day pick up along shore. Fill about, brother—yes, by the L—d! those two smuggling harridans, with the assistance of an attorney—an attorney, Tom—hove me out of five hundred a year.” “Yes, indeed, sir,” added Mr. Clarke, “those two malicious old women docked the intail, and left the estate to an alien.”

Here Mr. Ferret thought proper to intermingle in the conversation with a “Pish, what dost talk of docking the intail? Dost not know that by the statute Westm. 2, 13 Ed. the will and intention of the donor must be fulfilled, and the tenant in tail shall not alien after issue had, or before.” “Give me leave, sir,” replied Tom, “I presume you are a practitioner in the law. Now, you know, that in the case of a contingent remainder, the intail may be destroyed by levying a fine, and suffering a recovery, or otherwise destroying the particular estate, before the contingency happens. If feoffees, who possess an estate only during the life of a son, where divers remainders are limited over, make a feoffment in fee to him, by the feoffment, all the future remainders are destroyed. Indeed, a person in remainder may have a writ of intrusion, if any do intrude after the death of a tenant for life, and the writ ex gravi querela lies to execute a device in remainder after the death of a tenant in tail without issue.” “Spoke like a true disciple of Geber,” cries Ferret. “No, sir,” replied Mr. Clarke, “Counsellor Caper is in the conveyancing way—I was clerk to Serjeant Croker.” “Ay, now you may set up for yourself,” resumed the other; “for you can prate as unintelligibly as the best of them.”

“Perhaps,” said Tom, “I do not make myself understood; if so be as how that is the case, let us change the position, and suppose that this here case is a tail after a possibility of issue extinct. If a tenant in tail after a possibility make a feoffment of his land, he in reversion may enter for the forfeiture. Then we must make a distinction between general tail and special tail. It is the word body that makes the intail: there must be a body in the tail, devised to heirs male or female, otherwise it is a fee-simple, because it is not limited of what body. Thus a corporation cannot be seized in tail. For example, here is a young woman—What is your name, my dear?” “Dolly,” answered the daughter, with a curtsey. “Here's Dolly—I seize Dolly in tail—Dolly, I seize you in tail”—“Sha't then,” cried Dolly, pouting. “I am seized of land in fee—I settle on Dolly in tail.”

Dolly, who did not comprehend the nature of the illustration, understood him in a literal sense, and, in a whimpering tone, exclaimed, “Sha't then, I tell thee, cursed tuoad!” Tom, however, was so transported with his subject, that he took no notice of poor Dolly's mistake, but proceeded in his harangue upon the different kinds of tails, remainders, and seisins, when he was interrupted by a noise that alarmed the whole company. The rain had been succeeded by a storm of wind that howled around the house with the most savage impetuosity, and the heavens were overcast in such a manner that not one star appeared, so that all without was darkness and uproar. This aggravated the horror of divers loud screams, which even the noise of the blast could not exclude from the ears of our astonished travellers. Captain Crowe called out, “Avast, avast!” Tom Clarke sat silent, staring wildly, with his mouth still open; the surgeon himself seemed startled, and Ferret's countenance betrayed evident marks of confusion. The ostler moved nearer the chimney, and the good woman of the house, with her two daughters, crept closer to the company.

After some pause, the captain starting up, “These,” said he, “be signals of distress. Some poor souls in danger of foundering—let us bear up a-head, and see if we can give them any assistance.” The landlady begged him, for Christ's sake, not to think of going out, for it was a spirit that would lead him astray into fens and rivers, and certainly do him a mischief. Crowe seemed to be staggered by this remonstrance, which his nephew reinforced, observing, that it might be a stratagem of rogues to decoy them into the fields, that they might rob them under the cloud of night. Thus exhorted,

he resumed his seat, and Mr. Ferret began to make very severe strictures upon the folly and fear of those who believed and trembled at the visitation of spirits, ghosts, and goblins. He said he would engage with twelve pennyworth of phosphorus to frighten a whole parish out of their senses; then he expatiated on the pusillanimity of the nation in general, ridiculed the militia, censured the government, and dropped some hints about a change of hands, which the captain could not, and the doctor would not, comprehend.

Tom Clarke, from the freedom of his discourse, concluded he was a ministerial spy, and communicated his opinion to his uncle in a whisper, while this misanthrope continued to pour forth his invectives with a fluency peculiar to himself. The truth is, Mr. Ferret had been a party writer, not from principle, but employment, and had felt the rod of power, in order to avoid a second exertion of which, he now found it convenient to skulk about in the country, for he had received intimation of a warrant from the secretary of state, who wanted to be better acquainted with his person. Notwithstanding the ticklish nature of his situation, it was become so habitual to him to think and speak in a certain manner, that even before strangers whose principles and connexions he could not possibly know, he hardly ever opened his mouth, without uttering some direct or implied sarcasm against the government.

He had already proceeded a considerable way in demonstrating, that the nation was bankrupt and beggared, and that those who stood at the helm were steering full into the gulf of inevitable destruction, when his lecture was suddenly suspended by a violent knocking at the door, which threatened the whole house with inevitable demolition. Captain Crowe, believing they should be instantly boarded, unsheathed his hanger, and stood in a posture of defence. Mr. Fillet armed himself with the poker, which happened to be red hot; the ostler pulled down a rusty firelock, that hung by the roof, over a flich of bacon. Tom Clarke perceiving the landlady and her children distracted with terror, conducted them, out of mere compassion, below stairs into the cellar; and as for Mr. Ferret, he prudently withdrew into an adjoining pantry.

But as a personage of great importance in this entertaining history was forced to remain some time at the door before he could gain admittance, so must the reader wait with patience for the next chapter, in which he will see the cause of this disturbance explained much to his comfort and edification.

CHAPTER TWO

IN WHICH THE HERO OF THESE ADVENTURES MAKES HIS FIRST APPEARANCE ON THE STAGE OF ACTION

The outward door of the Black Lion had already sustained two dreadful shocks, but at the third it flew open, and in stalked an apparition that smote the hearts of our travellers with fear and trepidation. It was the figure of a man armed cap-a-pee, bearing on his shoulders a bundle dropping with water, which afterwards appeared to be the body of a man that seemed to have been drowned, and fished up from the bottom of the neighbouring river.

Having deposited his burden carefully on the floor, he addressed himself to the company in these words: "Be not surprised, good people, at this unusual appearance, which I shall take an opportunity to explain, and forgive the rude and boisterous manner in which I have demanded, and indeed forced admittance; the violence of my intrusion was the effect of necessity. In crossing the river, my squire and his horse were swept away by the stream, and, with some difficulty, I have been able to drag him ashore, though I am afraid my assistance reached him too late, for since I brought him to land he has given no signs of life."

Here he was interrupted by a groan, which issued from the chest of the squire, and terrified the spectators as much as it comforted the master. After some recollection, Mr. Fillet began to undress the body, which was laid in a blanket on the floor, and rolled from side to side by his direction. A considerable quantity of water being discharged from the mouth of this unfortunate squire, he uttered a hideous roar, and, opening his eyes, stared wildly around. Then the surgeon undertook for his recovery; and his master went forth with the ostler in quest of the horses, which he had left by the side of the river. His back was no sooner turned, than Ferret, who had been peeping from behind the pantry-door, ventured to rejoin the company; pronouncing with a smile, or rather grin, of contempt, "Hey-day! what precious mummery is this? What, are we to have the farce of Hamlet's ghost?" "Adzooks," cried the captain, "My kinsman Tom has dropped astern—hope in God a-has not bulged to, and gone to bottom." "Pish," exclaimed the misanthrope, "there's no danger; the young lawyer is only seizing Dolly in tail."

Certain it is, Dolly squeaked at that instant in the cellar; and Clarke appearing soon after in some confusion, declared she had been frightened by a flash of lightning. But this assertion was not confirmed by the young lady herself, who eyed him with a sullen regard, indicating displeasure, though not indifference; and when questioned by her mother, replied, "A doan't maind what a-says, so a doan't, vor all his goalden jacket, then."

In the meantime the surgeon had performed the operation of phlebotomy on the squire, who was lifted into a chair, and supported by the landlady for that purpose; but he had not as yet given any sign of having retrieved the use of his senses. And here Mr. Fillet could not help contemplating, with surprise, the strange figure and accoutrements of his patient, who seemed in age to be turned of fifty. His stature was below the middle size; he was thick, squat, and brawny, with a small protuberance on one shoulder, and a prominent belly, which, in consequence of the water he had swallowed, now strutted beyond its usual dimensions. His forehead was remarkably convex, and so very low, that his black bushy hair descended within an inch of his nose; but this did not conceal the wrinkles of his front, which were manifold. His small glimmering eyes resembled those of the Hampshire porker, that turns up the soil with his projecting snout. His cheeks were shrivelled and puckered at the corners, like the seams of a regimental coat as it comes from the hands of the contractor. His nose bore a strong analogy in shape to a tennis-ball, and in colour to a mulberry; for all the water of the river

had not been able to quench the natural fire of that feature. His upper jaw was furnished with two long white sharp-pointed teeth or fangs, such as the reader may have observed in the chaps of a wolf, or full-grown mastiff, and an anatomist would describe as a preternatural elongation of the dentes canini. His chin was so long, so peaked, and incurvated, as to form in profile, with his impending forehead, the exact resemblance of a moon in the first quarter. With respect to his equipage, he had a leathern cap upon his head, faced like those worn by marines, and exhibiting in embroidery, the figure of a crescent. His coat was of white cloth, faced with black, and cut in a very antique fashion; and, in lieu of a waistcoat, he wore a buff jerkin. His feet were cased with loose buskins, which, though they rose almost to his knee, could not hide that curvature, known by the appellation of bandy legs. A large string of bandaliers garnished a broad belt that graced his shoulders, from whence depended an instrument of war, which was something between a back-sword and a cutlass; and a case of pistols were stuck in his girdle.

Such was the figure which the whole company now surveyed with admiration. After some pause, he seemed to recover his recollection. He rolled about his eyes around, and, attentively surveying every individual, exclaimed, in a strange tone, “Bodikins! where’s Gilbert?” This interrogation did not savour much of sanity, especially when accompanied with a wild stare, which is generally interpreted as a sure sign of a disturbed understanding. Nevertheless, the surgeon endeavoured to assist his recollection. “Come,” said he, “have a good heart.—How dost do, friend?” “Do!” replied the squire, “do as well as I can.—That’s a lie too; I might have done better. I had no business to be here.” “You ought to thank God and your master,” resumed the surgeon, “for the providential escape you have had.” “Thank my master!” cried the squire, “thank the devil! Go and teach your grannum to crack filberds. I know who I’m bound to pray for, and who I ought to curse the longest day I have to live.”

Here the captain interposing, “Nay, brother,” said he, “you are bound to pray for this here gentleman as your sheet-anchor; for, if so be as he had not cleared your stowage of the water you had taken in at your upper works, and lightened your veins, d’ye see, by taking away some of your blood, adad! you had driven before the gale, and never been brought up in this world again, d’ye see.” “What, then you would persuade me,” replied the patient, “that the only way to save my life was to shed my precious blood? Look ye, friend, it shall not be lost blood to me.—I take you all to witness, that there surgeon, or apothecary, or farrier, or dog-doctor, or whatsoever he may be, has robbed me of the balsam of life.—He has not left so much blood in my body as would fatten a starved flea.—O! that there was a lawyer here to serve him with a siserari.”

Then fixing his eyes upon Ferret, he proceeded: “An’t you a limb of the law, friend?—No, I cry you mercy, you look more like a showman or a conjurer.”—Ferret, nettled at this address, answered, “It would be well for you, that I could conjure a little common sense into that numskull of yours.” “If I want that commodity,” rejoined the squire, “I must go to another market, I trow.—You legerdmain men be more like to conjure the money from our pockets than sense into our skulls. Vor my own part, I was once cheated of vorty good shillings by one of your broother cups and balls.” In all probability he would have descended to particulars, had he not been seized with a return of his nausea, which obliged him to call for a bumper of brandy. This remedy being swallowed, the tumult in his stomach subsided. He desired he might be put to bed without delay, and that half a dozen eggs and a pound of bacon might, in a couple of hours, be dressed for his supper.

He was accordingly led off the scene by the landlady and her daughter; and Mr. Ferret had just time to observe the fellow was a composition, in which he did not know whether knave or fool most predominated, when the master returned from the stable. He had taken off his helmet, and now displayed a very engaging countenance. His age did not seem to exceed thirty. He was tall, and seemingly robust; his face long and oval, his nose aquiline, his mouth furnished with a set of elegant teeth, white as the drifted snow, his complexion clear, and his aspect noble. His chestnut hair loosely flowed in short natural curls; and his grey eyes shone with such vivacity, as plainly showed

that his reason was a little discomposed. Such an appearance prepossessed the greater part of the company in his favour. He bowed round with the most polite and affable address; inquired about his squire, and, being informed of the pains Mr. Fillet had taken for his recovery, insisted upon that gentleman's accepting a handsome gratuity. Then, in consideration of the cold bath he had undergone, he was prevailed upon to take the post of honour; namely, the great chair fronting the fire, which was reinforced with a billet of wood for his comfort and convenience.

Perceiving his fellow-travellers, either overawed into silence by his presence, or struck dumb with admiration at his equipage, he accosted them in these words, while an agreeable smile dimpled on his cheek:—

“The good company wonders, no doubt, to see a man cased in armour, such as hath been for above a whole century disused in this and every other country of Europe; and perhaps they will be still more surprised, when they hear that man profess himself a novitiate of that military order, which hath of old been distinguished in Great Britain, as well as through all Christendom, by the name of knights-errant. Yes, gentlemen, in that painful and thorny path of toil and danger I have begun my career, a candidate for honest fame; determined, as far as in me lies, to honour and assert the efforts of virtue; to combat vice in all her forms, redress injuries, chastise oppression, protect the helpless and forlorn, relieve the indigent, exert my best endeavours in the cause of innocence and beauty, and dedicate my talents, such as they are, to the service of my country.”

“What!” said Ferret, “you set up for a modern Don Quixote? The scheme is rather too stale and extravagant. What was a humorous romance and well-timed satire in Spain near two hundred years ago, will make but a sorry jest, and appear equally insipid and absurd when really acted from affectation, at this time of day, in a country like England.”

The knight, eyeing this censor with a look of disdain, replied, in a solemn, lofty tone: “He that from affectation imitates the extravagancies recorded of Don Quixote, is an impostor equally wicked and contemptible. He that counterfeits madness, unless he dissembles, like the elder Brutus, for some virtuous purpose, not only debases his own soul, but acts as a traitor to Heaven, by denying the divinity that is within him. I am neither an affected imitator of Don Quixote, nor, as I trust in Heaven, visited by that spirit of lunacy so admirably displayed in the fictitious character exhibited by the inimitable Cervantes. I have not yet encountered a windmill for a giant, nor mistaken this public-house for a magnificent castle; neither do I believe this gentleman to be the constable; nor that worthy practitioner to be Master Elizabat, the surgeon recorded in Amadis de Gaul; nor you to be the enchanter Alquife, nor any other sage of history or romance; I see and distinguish objects as they are discerned and described by other men. I reason without prejudice, can endure contradiction, and, as the company perceives, even bear impertinent censure without passion or resentment. I quarrel with none but the foes of virtue and decorum, against whom I have declared perpetual war, and them I will everywhere attack as the natural enemies of mankind.”

“But that war,” said the cynic, “may soon be brought to a conclusion, and your adventures close in Bridewell, provided you meet with some determined constable, who will seize your worship as a vagrant, according to the statute.” “Heaven and earth!” cried the stranger, starting up, and laying his hand on his sword, “do I live to hear myself insulted with such an opprobrious epithet, and refrain from trampling into dust the insolent calumniator?”

The tone in which these words were pronounced, and the indignation that flashed from the eyes of the speaker, intimidated every individual of the society, and reduced Ferret to a temporary privation of all his faculties. His eyes retired within their sockets; his complexion, which was naturally of a copper hue, now shifted to a leaden colour; his teeth began to chatter; and all his limbs were agitated by a sudden palsy. The knight observed his condition, and resumed his seat, saying, “I was to blame; my vengeance must be reserved for very different objects. Friend, you have nothing to fear—the sudden gust of passion is now blown over. Recollect yourself, and I will reason calmly on the observation you have made.”

This was a very seasonable declaration to Mr. Ferret, who opened his eyes, and wiped his forehead, while the other proceeded in these terms: “You say I am in danger of being apprehended as a vagrant. I am not so ignorant of the laws of my country, but that I know the description of those who fall within the legal meaning of this odious term. You must give me leave to inform you, friend, that I am neither bearward, fencer, stroller, gipsy, mountebank, nor mendicant; nor do I practise subtle craft, to deceive and impose upon the king’s lieges; nor can I be held as an idle disorderly person, travelling from place to place, collecting monies by virtue of counterfeited passes, briefs, and other false pretences; in what respect, therefore, am I to be deemed a vagrant? Answer boldly without fear or scruple.”

To this interrogation the misanthrope replied, with a faltering accent, “If not a vagrant, you incur the penalty for riding armed in affray of the peace.” “But, instead of riding armed in affray of the peace,” resumed the other, “I ride in preservation of the peace; and gentlemen are allowed by the law to wear armour for their defence. Some ride with blunderbusses, some with pistols, some with swords, according to their various inclinations. Mine is to wear the armour of my forefathers. Perhaps I use them for exercise, in order to accustom myself to fatigue, and strengthen my constitution; perhaps I assume them for a frolic.”

“But if you swagger, armed and in disguise, assault me on the highway, or put me in bodily fear for the sake of the jest, the law will punish you in earnest,” cried the other. “But my intention,” answered the knight, “is carefully to avoid all those occasions of offence.” “Then,” said Ferret, “you may go unarmed, like other sober people.” “Not so,” answered the knight; “as I propose to travel all times, and in all places, mine armour may guard me against the attempts of treachery; it may defend me in combat against odds, should I be assaulted by a multitude, or have occasion to bring malefactors to justice.”

“What, then,” exclaimed the philosopher, “you intend to co-operate with the honourable fraternity of thief-takers?” “I do purpose,” said the youth, eyeing him with a look of ineffable contempt, “to act as a coadjutor to the law, and even to remedy evils which the law cannot reach; to detect fraud and treason, abase insolence, mortify pride, discourage slander, disgrace immodesty, and stigmatise ingratitude, but the infamous part of a thief-catcher’s character I disclaim. I neither associate with robbers and pickpockets, knowing them to be such, that, in being intrusted with their secrets, I may the more effectually betray them; nor shall I ever pocket the reward granted by the legislature to those by whom robbers are brought to conviction; but I shall always think it my duty to rid my country of that pernicious vermin, which prey upon the bowels of the commonwealth—not but that an incorporated company of licensed thieves might, under proper regulations, be of service to the community.”

Ferret, emboldened by the passive tameness with which the stranger bore his last reflection, began to think he had nothing of Hector but his outside, and gave a loose to all the acrimony of his party rancour. Hearing the knight mention a company of licensed thieves, “What else,” cried he, “is the majority of the nation? What is your standing army at home, that eat up their fellow-subjects? What are your mercenaries abroad, whom you hire to fight their own quarrels? What is your militia, that wise measure of a sagacious ministry, but a larger gang of petty thieves, who steal sheep and poultry through mere idleness; and were they confronted with an enemy, would steal themselves away? What is your . . . but a knot of thieves, who pillage the nation under colour of law, and enrich themselves with the wreck of their country? When you consider the enormous debt of above an hundred millions, the intolerable load of taxes and impositions under which we groan, and the manner in which that burden is yearly accumulating, to support two German electorates, without our receiving anything in return, but the shows of triumph and shadows of conquest;—I say, when you reflect on these circumstances, and at the same time behold our cities filled with bankrupts, and our country with beggars, can you be so infatuated as to deny that the ministry is mad, or worse than mad—our wealth exhausted, our people miserable, our credit blasted, and our state on the brink of perdition?

This prospect, indeed, will make the fainter impression, if we recollect that we ourselves are a pack of such profligate, corrupted, pusillanimous rascals, as deserve no salvation.”

The stranger, raising his voice to a loud tone, replied, “Such, indeed, are the insinuations, equally false and insidious, with which the desperate emissaries of a party endeavour to poison the minds of his majesty’s subjects, in defiance of common honesty and common sense. But he must be blind to all perception, and dead to candour, who does not see and own that we are involved in a just and necessary war, which has been maintained on truly British principles, prosecuted with vigour, and crowned with success; that our taxes are easy, in proportion to our wealth; that our conquests are equally glorious and important; that our commerce flourishes, our people are happy, and our enemies reduced to despair. Is there a man who boasts a British heart, that repines at the success and prosperity of his country? Such there are, (Oh, shame to patriotism, and reproach to Great Britain!) who act as the emissaries of France, both in word and writing; who exaggerate our necessary burdens, magnify our dangers, extol the power of our enemies, deride our victories, extenuate our conquests, condemn the measures of our government, and scatter the seeds of dissatisfaction through the land. Such domestic traitors are doubly the objects of detestation;—first, in perverting truth; and, secondly, in propagating falsehood, to the prejudice of that community of which they have professed themselves members. One of these is well known by the name of Ferret, an old, rancorous, incorrigible instrument of sedition. Happy it is for him that he has never fallen in my way; for, notwithstanding the maxims of forbearance which I have adopted, the indignation which the character of that caitiff inspires, would probably impel me to some act of violence, and I should crush him like an ungrateful viper, that gnawed the bosom which warmed it into life!”

These last words were pronounced with a wildness of look, that even bordered upon frenzy. The misanthrope once more retired to the pantry for shelter, and the rest of the guests were evidently disconcerted.

Mr. Fillet, in order to change the conversation, which was likely to produce serious consequences, expressed uncommon satisfaction at the remarks which the knight had made, signified his approbation of the honourable office he had undertaken, declared himself happy in having seen such an accomplished cavalier, and observed, that nothing was wanting to render him a complete knight-errant, but some celebrated beauty, the mistress of his heart, whose idea might animate his breast, and strengthen his arm to the utmost exertion of valour. He added, that love was the soul of chivalry.

The stranger started at this discourse. He turned his eyes on the surgeon with a fixed regard; his countenance changed; a torrent of tears gushed down his cheeks; his head sunk upon his bosom; he heaved a profound sigh, and remained in silence with all the external marks of unutterable sorrow. The company were, in some measure, infected by his despondence, concerning the cause of which, however, they would not venture to inquire.

By this time the landlady, having disposed of the squire, desired to know, with many curtsies, if his honour would not choose to put off his wet garments, assuring him, that she had a very good feather bed at his service, upon which many gentlefolks of the virst quality had lain, that the sheets were well aired, and that Dolly would warm them for his worship with a pan of coals. This hospitable offer being repeated, he seemed to wake from a trance of grief, arose from his seat, and, bowing courteously to the company, withdrew.

Captain Crowe, whose faculty of speech had been all this time absorbed in amazement, now broke into the conversation with a volley of interjections. “Split my snatchblock!—Odd’s firkin!—Splice my old shoes!—I have sailed the salt seas, brother, since I was no higher than the Triton’s taffrel—east, west, north, and south, as the saying is—Blacks, Indians, Moors, Morattos, and Seapoys;—but, smite my timbers! such a man of war—”

Here he was interrupted by his nephew, Tom Clarke, who had disappeared at the knight’s first entrance, and now produced himself with an eagerness in his look, while the tears stared in his eyes.

—“Lord bless my soul!” cried he, “I know that gentleman, and his servant, as well as I know my own father!—I am his own godson, uncle; he stood for me when he was a boy—yes, indeed, sir, my father was steward to the estate—I may say I was bred up in the family of Sir Everhard Greaves, who has been dead these two years—this is the only son, Sir Launcelot; the best-natured, worthy, generous gentleman—I care not who knows it. I love him as well as if he was my own flesh and blood.”

At this period, Tom, whose heart was of the melting mood, began to sob and weep plenteously, from pure affection. Crowe, who was not very subject to these tendernesses, d–ed him for a chicken-hearted lubber; repeating, with much peevishness, “What dost cry for? what dost cry for, noddy?” The surgeon, impatient to know the story of Sir Launcelot, which he had heard imperfectly recounted, begged that Mr. Clarke would compose himself, and relate it as circumstantially as his memory would retain the particulars; and Tom, wiping his eyes, promised to give him that satisfaction; which the reader, if he be so minded, may partake in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

WHICH THE READER, ON PERUSAL, MAY WISH WERE CHAPTER THE LAST

The doctor prescribed a repetatur of the julep, and mixed the ingredients, *secundum artem*; Tom Clarke hemmed thrice, to clear his pipes; while the rest of the company, including Dolly and her mother, who had by this time administered to the knight, composed themselves into earnest and hushed attention. Then the young lawyer began his narrative to this effect:—

“I tell ye what, gemmen, I don’t pretend in this here case to flourish and harangue like a—having never been called to—but what of that, d’ye see? perhaps I may know as much as—facts are facts, as the saying is.—I shall tell, repeat, and relate a plain story—matters of fact, d’ye see, without rhetoric, oratory, ornament, or embellishment; without repetition, tautology, circumlocution, or going about the bush; facts which I shall aver, partly on the testimony of my own knowledge, and partly from the information of responsible evidences of good repute and credit, any circumstance known to the contrary notwithstanding.—For as the law saith, if so be as how there is an exception to evidence, that exception is in its nature but a denial of what is taken to be good by the other party, and exceptio in non exceptis, firmat regulam, d’ye see. —But howsoever, in regard to this here affair, we need not be so scrupulous as if we were pleading before a judge *sedente curia*.”

Ferret, whose curiosity was rather more eager than that of any other person in this audience, being provoked by this preamble, dashed the pipe he had just filled in pieces against the grate; and after having pronounced the interjection *pish!* with an acrimony of aspect altogether peculiar to himself, “If,” said he, “impertinence and folly were felony by the statute, there would be no warrant of unexceptionable evidence to hang such an eternal babbler.” “Anan, babbler!” cried Tom, reddening with passion, and starting up; “I’d have you to know, sir, that I can bite as well as babble; and that, if I am so minded, I can run upon the foot after my game without being in fault, as the saying is; and, which is more, I can shake an old fox by the collar.”

How far this young lawyer might have proceeded to prove himself staunch on the person of the misanthrope, if he had not been prevented, we shall not determine; but the whole company were alarmed at his looks and expressions. Dolly’s rosy cheeks assumed an ash colour, while she ran between the disputants, crying, “Naay, naay—vor the love of God doan’t then, doan’t then!” But Captain Crowe exerted a parental authority over his nephew, saying, “Avast, Tom, avast!—Snug’s the word—we’ll have no boarding, d’ye see.—Haul forward thy chair again, take thy berth, and proceed with thy story in a direct course, without yawing like a Dutch yanky.”

Tom, thus tutored, recollected himself, resumed his seat, and, after some pause, plunged at once into the current of narration. “I told you before, gemmen, that the gentleman in armour was the only son of Sir Everhard Greaves, who possessed a free estate of five thousand a year in our country, and was respected by all his neighbours as much for his personal merit as for his family fortune. With respect to his son Launcelot, whom you have seen, I can remember nothing until he returned from the university, about the age of seventeen, and then I myself was not more than ten years old. The young gemman was at that time in mourning for his mother; though, God knows, Sir Everhard had more cause to rejoice than to be afflicted at her death:—for, among friends” (here he lowered his voice, and looked round the kitchen), “she was very whimsical, expensive, ill-tempered, and, I’m afraid, a little—upon the— flightly order—a little touched or so;—but mum for that—the lady is now dead; and it is my maxim, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. The young squire was even then very handsome, and looked remarkably well in his weepers; but he had an awkward air and shambling gait, stooped

mortally, and was so shy and silent that he would not look a stranger in the face, nor open his mouth before company. Whenever he spied a horse or carriage at the gate, he would make his escape into the garden, and from thence into the park; where many is the good time and often he has been found sitting under a tree, with a book in his hand, reading Greek, Latin, and other foreign linguas.

“Sir Everhard himself was no great scholar, and my father had forgot his classical learning; and so the rector of the parish was desired to examine young Launcelot. It was a long time before he found an opportunity; the squire always gave him the slip.—At length the parson caught him in bed of a morning, and, locking the door, to it they went tooth and nail. What passed betwixt them the Lord in heaven knows; but when the doctor came forth, he looked wild and haggard as if he had seen a ghost, his face as white as paper, and his lips trembling like an aspen-leaf. ‘Parson,’ said the knight, ‘what is the matter?—how dost find my son? I hope he won’t turn out a ninny, and disgrace his family?’ The doctor, wiping the sweat from his forehead, replied, with some hesitation, ‘he could not tell—he hoped the best—the squire was to be sure a very extraordinary young gentleman.’—But the father urging him to give an explicit answer, he frankly declared, that, in his opinion, the son would turn out either a mirror of wisdom, or a monument of folly; for his genius and disposition were altogether preternatural. The knight was sorely vexed at this declaration, and signified his displeasure by saying, the doctor, like a true priest, dealt in mysteries and oracles, that would admit of different and indeed contrary interpretations. He afterwards consulted my father, who had served as a steward upon the estate for above thirty years, and acquired a considerable share of his favour. ‘Will Clarke,’ said he, with tears in his eyes, ‘what shall I do with this unfortunate lad? I would to God he had never been born; for I fear he will bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. When I am gone, he will throw away the estate, and bring himself to infamy and ruin, by keeping company with rooks and beggars.—O Will! I could forgive extravagance in a young man; but it breaks my heart to see my only son give such repeated proofs of a mean spirit and sordid disposition!’

“Here the old gentleman shed a flood of tears, and not without some shadow of reason. By this time Launcelot was grown so reserved to his father, that he seldom saw him or any of his relations, except when he was in a manner forced to appear at table, and there his bashfulness seemed every day to increase. On the other hand, he had formed some very strange connexions. Every morning he visited the stable, where he not only conversed with the grooms and helpers, but scraped acquaintance with the horses; he fed his favourites with his own hand, stroked, caressed, and rode them by turns; till at last they grew so familiar, that, even when they were a-field at grass, and saw him at a distance, they would toss their manes, whinny like so many colts at sight of the dam, and, galloping up to the place where he stood, smell him all over.

“You must know that I myself, though a child, was his companion in all these excursions. He took a liking to me on account of my being his godson, and gave me more money than I knew what to do with. He had always plenty of cash for the asking, as my father was ordered to supply him liberally, the knight thinking that a command of money might help to raise his thoughts to a proper consideration of his own importance. He never could endure a common beggar, that was not either in a state of infancy or of old age; but, in other respects, he made the guineas fly in such a manner, as looked more like madness than generosity. He had no communication with your rich yeomen, but rather treated them and their families with studied contempt, because forsooth they pretended to assume the dress and manners of the gentry.

“They kept their footmen, their saddle horses, and chaises; their wives and daughters appeared in their jewels, their silks, and their satins, their negligees and trollopees; their clumsy shanks, like so many shins of beef, were cased in silk hose and embroidered slippers; their raw red fingers, gross as the pipes of a chamber organ, which had been employed in milking the cows, in twirling the mop or churn-staff, being adorned with diamonds, were taught to thrum the pandola, and even to touch the keys of the harpsichord! Nay, in every village they kept a rout, and set up an assembly; and in one place a hog-butcher was master of the ceremonies.

“I have heard Mr. Greaves ridicule them for their vanity and awkward imitation; and therefore, I believe, he avoided all concerns with them, even when they endeavoured to engage his attention. It was the lower sort of people with whom he chiefly conversed, such as ploughmen, ditchers, and other day-labourers. To every cottager in the parish he was a bounteous benefactor. He was, in the literal sense of the word, a careful overseer of the poor; for he went from house to house, industriously inquiring into the distresses of the people. He repaired their huts, clothed their backs, filled their bellies, and supplied them with necessaries for exercising their industry and different occupations.

“I’ll give you one instance now, as a specimen of his character:—He and I, strolling one day on the side of a common, saw two boys picking hips and haws from the hedges; one seemed to be about five, and the other a year older; they were both barefoot and ragged, but at the same time fat, fair, and in good condition. ‘Who do you belong to?’ said Mr. Greaves. ‘To Mary Stile,’ replied the oldest, ‘the widow that rents one of them housen.’ ‘And how dost live, my boy? Thou lookest fresh and jolly,’ resumed the squire. ‘Lived well enough till yesterday,’ answered the child. ‘And pray what happened yesterday, my boy?’ continued Mr. Greaves. ‘Happened!’ said he, ‘why, mammy had a couple of little Welsh keawes, that gi’en milk enough to fill all our bellies; mammy’s, and mine, and Dick’s here, and my two little sisters’ at hoam:—Yesterday the squire seized the keawes for rent, God rot’un! Mammy’s gone to bed sick and sulky; my two sisters be crying at hoam vor vood; and Dick and I be come hither to pick haws and bullies.’

“My godfather’s face grew red as scarlet; he took one of the children in either hand, and leading them towards the house, found Sir Everhard talking with my father before the gate. Instead of avoiding the old gentleman, as usual, he brushed up to him with a spirit he had never shown before, and presenting the two ragged boys, ‘Surely, sir,’ said he, ‘you will not countenance that there ruffian, your steward, in oppressing the widow and fatherless? On pretence of distraining for the rent of a cottage, he has robbed the mother of these and other poor infant-orphans of two cows, which afforded them their whole sustenance. Shall you be concerned in tearing the hard-earned morsel from the mouth of indigence? Shall your name, which has been so long mentioned as a blessing, be now detested as a curse by the poor, the helpless, and forlorn? The father of these babes was once your gamekeeper, who died of a consumption caught in your service.—You see they are almost naked—I found them plucking haws and sloes, in order to appease their hunger. The wretched mother is starving in a cold cottage, distracted with the cries of other two infants, clamorous for food; and while her heart is bursting with anguish and despair, she invokes Heaven to avenge the widow’s cause upon the head of her unrelenting landlord!’

“This unexpected address brought tears into the eyes of the good old gentleman. ‘Will Clarke,’ said he to my father, ‘how durst you abuse my authority at this rate? You who know I have always been a protector, not an oppressor of the needy and unfortunate. I charge you, go immediately and comfort this poor woman with immediate relief; instead of her own cows, let her have two of the best milch cows of my dairy; they shall graze in my parks in summer, and be foddered with my hay in winter.—She shall sit rent-free for life; and I will take care of these her poor orphans.’

“This was a very affecting scene. Mr. Launcelot took his father’s hand and kissed it, while the tears ran down his cheeks; and Sir Everhard embraced his son with great tenderness, crying, ‘My dear boy! God be praised for having given you such a feeling heart.’ My father himself was moved, thof a practitioner of the law, and consequently used to distresses.—He declared, that he had given no directions to distrain; and that the bailiff must have done it by his own authority.—‘If that be the case,’ said the young squire, ‘let the inhuman rascal be turned out of our service.’

“Well, gemmen, all the children were immediately clothed and fed, and the poor widow had well-nigh run distracted with joy. The old knight, being of a humane temper himself, was pleased to see such proofs of his son’s generosity. He was not angry at his spending his money, but at squandering away his time among the dregs of the people. For you must know, he not only made matches, portioned poor maidens, and set up young couples that came together without money; but

he mingled in every rustic diversion, and bore away the prize in every contest. He excelled every swain of that district in feats of strength and activity; in leaping, running, wrestling, cricket, cudgel-playing, and pitching the bar; and was confessed to be, out of sight, the best dancer at all wakes and holidays. Happy was the country-girl who could engage the young squire as her partner! To be sure, it was a comely sight for to see as how the buxom country-lasses, fresh and fragrant and blushing like the rose, in their best apparel dight, their white hose, and clean short dimity petticoats, their gaudy gowns of printed cotton; their top-knots and stomachers, bedizened with bunches of ribbons of various colours, green, pink, and yellow; to see them crowned with garlands, and assembled on Mayday, to dance before Squire Launcelot, as he made his morning's progress through the village. Then all the young peasants made their appearance with cockades, suited to the fancies of their several sweethearts, and boughs of flowering hawthorn. The children sported about like flocks of frisking lambs, or the young fry swarming under the sunny bank of some meandering river. The old men and women, in their holiday garments, stood at their doors to receive their benefactor, and poured forth blessings on him as he passed. The children welcomed him with their shrill shouts, the damsels with songs of praise, and the young men, with the pipe and tabor, marched before him to the May-pole, which was bedecked with flowers and bloom. There the rural dance began. A plentiful dinner, with oceans of good liquor, was bespoke at the White Hart. The whole village was regaled at the squire's expense; and both the day and the night was spent in mirth and pleasure.

“Lord help you! he could not rest if he thought there was an aching heart in the whole parish. Every paltry cottage was in a little time converted into a pretty, snug, comfortable habitation, with a wooden porch at the door, glass casements in the windows, and a little garden behind, well stored with greens, roots, and salads. In a word, the poor's rate was reduced to a mere trifle; and one would have thought the golden age was revived in Yorkshire. But, as I told you before, the old knight could not bear to see his only son so wholly attached to these lowly pleasures, while he industriously shunned all opportunities of appearing in that superior sphere to which he was designed by nature and by fortune. He imputed his conduct to meanness of spirit, and advised with my father touching the properest expedient to wean his affections from such low-born pursuits. My father counselled him to send the young gentleman up to London, to be entered as a student in the Temple, and recommended him to the superintendence of some person who knew the town, and might engage him insensibly in such amusements and connexions, as would soon lift his ideas above the humble objects on which they had been hitherto employed.

“This advice appeared so salutary, that it was followed without the least hesitation. The young squire himself was perfectly well satisfied with the proposal; and in a few days he set out for the great city. But there was not a dry eye in the parish at his departure, although he prevailed upon his father to pay in his absence all the pensions he had granted to those who could not live on the fruit of their own industry. In what manner he spent his time in London, it is none of my business to inquire; thof I know pretty well what kind of lives are led by gemmen of your Inns of Court.—I myself once belonged to Serjeants' Inn, and was perhaps as good a wit and a critic as any Templar of them all. Nay, as for that matter, thof I despise vanity, I can aver with a safe conscience, that I had once the honour to belong to the society called the Town. We were all of us attorney's clerks, gemmen, and had our meetings at an ale-house in Butcher Row, where we regulated the diversions of the theatre.

“But to return from this digression. Sir Everhard Greaves did not seem to be very well pleased with the conduct of his son at London. He got notice of some irregularities and scrapes into which he had fallen; and the squire seldom wrote to his father, except to draw upon him for money; which he did so fast, that in eighteen months the old gentleman lost all patience.

“At this period Squire Darnel chanced to die, leaving an only daughter, a minor, heiress of three thousand a year under the guardianship of her uncle Anthony, whose brutal character all the world knows. The breath was no sooner out of his brother's body, than he resolved, if possible, to succeed him in parliament as representative for the borough of Ashenton. Now you must know, that this

borough had been for many years a bone of contention between the families of Greaves and Darnel; and at length the difference was compromised by the interposition of friends, on condition that Sir Everhard and Squire Darnel should alternately represent the place in parliament. They agreed to this compromise for their mutual convenience; but they were never heartily reconciled. Their political principles did not tally; and their wives looked upon each other as rivals in fortune and magnificence. So that there was no intercourse between them, thof they lived in the same neighbourhood. On the contrary, in all disputes, they constantly headed the opposite parties. Sir Everhard understanding that Anthony Darnel had begun to canvass, and was putting every iron in the fire, in violation and contempt of the pactum familiae before mentioned, fell into a violent passion, that brought on a severe fit of the gout; by which he was disabled from giving personal attention to his own interest. My father, indeed, employed all his diligence and address, and spared neither money, time, nor constitution, till at length he drank himself into a consumption, which was the death of him. But, after all, there is a great difference between a steward and a principal. Mr. Darnel attended in propria persona, flattered and caressed the women, feasted the electors, hired mobs, made processions, and scattered about his money in such a manner, that our friends durst hardly show their heads in public.

“At this very crisis, our young squire, to whom his father had written an account of the transaction, arrived unexpectedly at Greavesbury Hall, and had a long private conference with Sir Everhard. The news of his return spread like wildfire through all that part of the country. Bonfires were made, and the bells set a-ringing in several towns and steeples; and next morning above seven hundred people were assembled at the gate, with music, flags, and streamers, to welcome their young squire, and accompany him to the borough of Ashenton. He set out on foot with his retinue, and entered one end of the town just as Mr. Darnel’s mob had come in at the other. Both arrived about the same time at the market-place; but Mr. Darnel, mounting first into the balcony of the town-house, made a long speech to the people in favour of his own pretensions, not without some invidious reflections glanced at Sir Everhard, his competitor.

“We did not much mind the acclamations of his party, which we knew had been hired for the purpose; but we were in some pain for Mr. Greaves, who had not been used to speak in public. He took his turn, however, in the balcony, and, uncovering his head, bowed all round with the most engaging courtesy. He was dressed in a green frock, trimmed with gold, and his own dark hair flowed about his ears in natural curls, while his face was overspread with a blush, that improved the glow of youth to a deeper crimson; and I daresay set many a female heart a palpitating. When he made his first appearance, there was just such a humming and clapping of hands as you may have heard when the celebrated Garrick comes upon the stage in King Lear, or King Richard, or any other top character. But how agreeably were we disappointed, when our young gentleman made such an oration as would not have disgraced a Pitt, an Egmont, or a Murray! while he spoke, all was hushed in admiration and attention; you could have almost heard a feather drop to the ground. It would have charmed you to hear with what modesty he recounted the services which his father and grandfather had done to the corporation; with what eloquence he expatiated upon the shameful infraction of the treaty subsisting between the two families; and with what keen and spirited strokes of satire he retorted the sarcasms of Darnel.

“He no sooner concluded his harangue, than there was such a burst of applause, as seemed to rend the very sky. Our music immediately struck up; our people advanced with their ensigns, and, as every man had a good cudgel, broken heads would have ensued, had not Mr. Darnel and his party thought proper to retreat with uncommon despatch. He never offered to make another public entrance, as he saw the torrent ran so violently against him; but sat down with his loss, and withdrew his opposition, though at bottom extremely mortified and incensed. Sir Everhard was unanimously elected, and appeared to be the happiest man upon earth; for, besides the pleasure arising from his victory over this competitor, he was now fully satisfied that his son, instead of disgracing, would do honour to his family. It would have moved a heart of stone, to see with what a tender transport

of paternal joy he received his dear Launcelot, after having heard of his deportment and success at Ashenton; where, by the bye, he gave a ball to the ladies, and displayed as much elegance and politeness, as if he had been bred at the court of Versailles.

“This joyous season was of short duration. In a little time all the happiness of the family was overcast by a sad incident, which hath left such an unfortunate impression upon the mind of the young gentleman, as, I am afraid, will never be effaced. Mr. Darnel’s niece and ward, the great heiress, whose name is Aurelia, was the most celebrated beauty of the whole country; if I said the whole kingdom, or indeed all Europe, perhaps I should barely do her justice. I don’t pretend to be a limner, gemmen; nor does it become me to delineate such excellence; but surely I may presume to repeat from the play—

Oh! she is all that painting can express,
Or youthful poets fancy when they love?

“At that time she might be about seventeen, tall and fair, and so exquisitely shaped—you may talk of your Venus de Medicis, your Dianas, your Nymphs, and Galateas; but if Praxiteles, and Roubilliac, and Wilton, were to lay their heads together, in order to make a complete pattern of beauty, they would hardly reach her model of perfection.—As for complexion, poets will talk of blending the lily with the rose, and bring in a parcel of similes of cowslips, carnations, pinks, and daisies.—There’s Dolly, now, has got a very good complexion.—Indeed, she’s the very picture of health and innocence—you are, indeed, my pretty lass;—but *parva componere magnis*.—Miss Darnel is all amazing beauty, delicacy, and dignity! Then the softness and expression of her fine blue eyes; her pouting lips of coral hue; her neck, that rises like a tower of polished alabaster between two mounts of snow. I tell you what, gemmen, it don’t signify talking; if e’er a one of you was to meet this young lady alone, in the midst of a heath or common, or any unfrequented place, he would down on his knees, and think he kneeled before some supernatural being. I’ll tell you more: she not only resembles an angel in beauty, but a saint in goodness, and an hermit in humility;—so void of all pride and affectation; so soft, and sweet, and affable, and humane! Lord! I could tell such instances of her charity!

“Sure enough, she and Sir Launcelot were formed by nature for each other. Howsoever, the cruel hand of fortune hath intervened, and severed them for ever. Every soul that knew them both, said it was a thousand pities but they should come together, and extinguish, in their happy union, the mutual animosity of the two families, which had so often embroiled the whole neighbourhood. Nothing was heard but the praises of Miss Aurelia Darnel and Mr. Launcelot Greaves; and no doubt the parties were prepossessed, by this applause, in favour of each other. At length, Mr. Greaves went one Sunday to her parish church; but, though the greater part of the congregation watched their looks, they could not perceive that she took the least notice of him; or that he seemed to be struck with her appearance. He afterwards had an opportunity of seeing her, more at leisure, at the York assembly, during the races; but this opportunity was productive of no good effect, because he had that same day quarrelled with her uncle on the turf.

“An old grudge, you know, gemmen, is soon inflamed to a fresh rupture. It was thought Mr. Darnel came on purpose to show his resentment. They differed about a bet upon Miss Cleverlegs, and, in the course of the dispute, Mr. Darnel called him a petulant boy. The young squire, who was as hasty as gunpowder, told him he was man enough to chastise him for his insolence; and would do it on the spot, if he thought it would not interrupt the diversion. In all probability they would have come to points immediately, had not the gentlemen interposed; so that nothing further passed, but abundance of foul language on the part of Mr. Anthony, and a repeated defiance to single combat.

“Mr. Greaves, making a low bow, retired from the field; and in the evening danced at the assembly with a young lady from the bishoprick, seemingly in good temper and spirits, without having any words with Mr. Darnel, who was also present. But in the morning he visited that proud neighbour

betimes; and they had almost reached a grove of trees on the north side of the town, when they were suddenly overtaken by half a dozen gentlemen, who had watched their motions. It was in vain for them to dissemble their design, which could not now take effect. They gave up their pistols, and a reconciliation was patched up by the pressing remonstrances of their common friends; but Mr. Darnel's hatred still rankled at bottom, and soon broke out in the sequel. About three months after this transaction, his niece Aurelia, with her mother, having been to visit a lady in the chariot, the horses being young, and not used to the traces, were startled at the braying of a jackass on the common, and, taking fright, ran away with the carriage, like lightning. The coachman was thrown from the box, and the ladies screamed piteously for help. Mr. Greaves chanced to be a-horseback on the other side of an enclosure, when he heard their shrieks; and riding up the hedge, knew the chariot, and saw their disaster. The horses were then running full speed in such a direction, as to drive headlong over a precipice into a stone quarry, where they and the chariot, and the ladies, must be dashed to pieces.

“You may conceive, gemmen, what his thoughts were when he saw such a fine young lady, in the flower of her age, just plunging into eternity; when he saw the lovely Aurelia on the brink of being precipitated among rocks, where her delicate limbs must be mangled and tore asunder; when he perceived, that, before he could ride round by the gate, the tragedy would be finished. The fence was so thick and high, flanked with a broad ditch on the outside, that he could not hope to clear it, although he was mounted on Scipio, bred out of Miss Cowslip, the sire Muley, and his grandsire the famous Arabian Mustapha.—Scipio was bred by my father, who would not have taken a hundred guineas for him, from any other person but the young squire—indeed, I have heard my poor father say”—

By this time Ferret's impatience was become so outrageous, that he exclaimed in a furious tone, “D—n your father, and his horse, and his colt into the bargain!”

Tom made no reply; but began to strip with great expedition. Captain Crowe was so choked with passion that he could utter nothing but disjointed sentences. He rose from his seat, brandished his horsewhip, and, seizing his nephew by the collar, cried, “Odd's heartlikins! sirrah, I have a good mind—Devil fire your running tackle, you landlubber!— can't you steer without all this tacking hither and thither, and the Lord knows whither?—‘Noint my block! I'd give thee a rope's end for thy supper if it wan't”—

Dolly had conceived a sneaking kindness for the young lawyer, and thinking him in danger of being roughly handled, flew to his relief. She twisted her hand in Crowe's neckcloth without ceremony, crying, “Sha't then, I tell thee, old codger—who kears a vig vor thy voolish tantrums?”

While Crowe looked black in the face, and ran the risk of strangulation under the gripe of this Amazon, Mr. Clarke having disengaged himself of his hat, wig, coat, and waistcoat, advanced in an elegant attitude of manual offence towards the misanthrope, who snatched up a gridiron from the chimney corner, and Discord seemed to clap her sooty wings in expectation of battle. But as the reader may have more than once already cursed the unconscionable length of this chapter, we must postpone to the next opportunity the incidents that succeeded this denunciation of war.

CHAPTER FOUR

IN WHICH IT APPEARS THAT THE KNIGHT, WHEN HEARTILY SET IN FOR SLEEPING, WAS NOT EASILY DISTURBED

In all probability the kitchen of the Black Lion, from a domestic temple of society and good fellowship, would have been converted into a scene or stage of sanguinary dispute, had not Pallas, or Discretion, interposed in the person of Mr. Fillet, and, with the assistance of the ostler, disarmed the combatants, not only of their arms, but also of their resentment.

The impetuosity of Mr. Clarke was a little checked at sight of the gridiron, which Ferret brandished with uncommon dexterity; a circumstance from whence the company were, upon reflection, induced to believe, that before he plunged into the sea of politics, he had occasionally figured in the character of that facetious droll, who accompanies your itinerant physicians, under the familiar appellation of Merry-Andrew, or Jack-Pudding, and on a wooden stage entertains the populace with a solo on the saltbox, or a sonata on the tongs and gridiron. Be that as it may, the young lawyer seemed to be a little discomposed at the glancing of this extraordinary weapon of offence, which the fair hands of Dolly had scoured, until it had shone as bright as the shield of Achilles; or as the emblem of good old English fare, which hangs by a red ribbon round the neck of that thrice-honoured sage's head, in velvet bonnet cased, who presides by rotation at the genial board, distinguished by the title of the Beef-steak Club where the delicate rumps irresistibly attract the stranger's eye, and, while they seem to cry, "Come cut me—come cut me," constrain, by wondrous sympathy, each mouth to overflow. Where the obliging and humorous Jemmy B-t, the gentle Billy H-d, replete with human kindness, and the generous Johnny B-d, respected and beloved by all the world, attend as the priests and ministers of mirth, good cheer, and jollity, and assist with culinary art the raw, unpractised, awkward guest.

But to return from this digressive simile. The ostler no sooner stept between those menacing antagonists, than Tom Clarke very quietly resumed his clothes, and Mr. Ferret resigned the gridiron without further question. The doctor did not find it quite so easy to release the throat of Captain Crowe from the masculine grasp of the virago Dolly, whose fingers could not be disengaged until the honest seaman was almost at the last gasp. After some pause, during which he panted for breath, and untied his neckcloth, "D—n thee, for a brimstone galley," cried he; "I was never so grappled withal since I knew a card from a compass.— Adzooks! the jade has so tautened my rigging, d'ye see, that I —Snatch my bowlines, if I come athwart thy hawser, I'll turn thy keel upwards—or mayhap set thee a-driving under thy bare poles—I will—I will, you hell-fire, saucy—I will."

Dolly made no reply; but seeing Mr. Clarke sit down again with great composure, took her station likewise at the opposite side of the apartment. Then Mr. Fillet requested the lawyer to proceed with his story, which, after three hems, he accordingly prosecuted in these words:

"I told you, gemmen, that Mr. Greaves was mounted on Scipio, when he saw Miss Darnel and her mother in danger of being hurried over a precipice. Without reflecting a moment, he gave Scipio the spur, and at one spring he cleared five-and-twenty feet, over hedge and ditch and every obstruction. Then he rode full speed, in order to turn the coach-horses; and, finding them quite wild and furious, endeavoured to drive against the counter of the hither horse, which he missed, and staked poor Scipio on the pole of the coach. The shock was so great, that the coach-horses made a full stop within ten yards of the quarry, and Mr. Greaves was thrown forwards towards the coach-box, which mounting with admirable dexterity, he seized the reins before the horses could recover of their fright. At that instant the coachman came running up, and loosed them from the traces with the utmost

despatch. Mr. Greaves had now time to give his attention to the ladies, who were well-nigh distracted with fear. He no sooner opened the chariot door than Aurelia, with a wildness of look, sprung into his arms, and, clasping him round the neck, fainted away. I leave you to guess, gemmen, what were his feelings at this instant. The mother was not so discomposed, but that she could contribute to the recovery of her daughter, whom the young squire still supported in his embrace. At length she retrieved the use of her senses, and, perceiving the situation in which she was, the blood revisited her face with a redoubled glow, while she desired him to set her down upon the turf.

“Mrs. Darnel, far from being shy or reserved in her compliments of acknowledgments, kissed Mr. Launcelot without ceremony, the tears of gratitude running down her cheeks; she called him her dear son, her generous deliverer, who, at the hazard of his own life, had saved her and her child from the most dismal fate that could be imagined.

“Mr. Greaves was so much transported on this occasion, that he could not help disclosing a passion, which he had hitherto industriously concealed. ‘What I have done,’ said he, ‘was but a common office of humanity, which I would have performed for any of my fellow-creatures; but for the preservation of Miss Aurelia Darnel, I would at any time sacrifice my life with pleasure.’ The young lady did not hear this declaration unmoved. Her face was again flushed, and her eyes sparkled with pleasure. Nor was the youth’s confession disagreeable to the good lady, her mother, who, at one glance, perceived all the advantages of such an union between the two families.

“Mr. Greaves proposed to send the coachman to his father’s stable for a pair of sober horses, that could be depended upon, to draw the ladies home to their own habitation; but they declined the offer, and chose to walk, as the distance was not great. He then insisted upon his being their conductor; and, each taking him under the arm, supported them to their own gate, where such an apparition filled all the domestics with astonishment. Mrs. Darnel taking him by the hand, led him into the house, where she welcomed him with another affectionate embrace, and indulged him with an ambrosial kiss of Aurelia, saying, ‘But for you, we had both been by this time in eternity. Sure it was Heaven that sent you as an angel to our assistance!’ She kindly inquired if he had himself sustained any damage in administering that desperate remedy to which they owed their lives. She entertained him with a small collation; and, in the course of the conversation, lamented the animosity which had so long divided two neighbouring families of such influence and character. He was not slow in signifying his approbation of her remarks, and expressing the most eager desire of seeing all those unhappy differences removed. In a word, they parted with mutual satisfaction.

“Just as he advanced from the outward gate, on his return to Greavesbury Hall, he was met by Anthony Darnel on horseback, who, riding up to him with marks of surprise and resentment, saluted him with, ‘Your servant, sir.—Have you any commands for me?’ The other replying with an air of indifference, ‘None at all,’—Mr. Darnel asked, what had procured him the honour of a visit. The young gentleman, perceiving by the manner in which he spoke, that the old quarrel was not yet extinguished, answered with equal disdain, that the visit was not intended for him; and that, if he wanted to know the cause of it, he might inform himself by his own servants. ‘So I shall,’ cried the uncle of Aurelia; ‘and perhaps let you know my sentiments of the matter.’—‘Hereafter as it may be,’ said the youth; who, turning out of the avenue, walked home, and made his father acquainted with the particulars of this adventure.

“The old gentleman chid him for his rashness; but seemed pleased with the success of his attempt; and still more so, when he understood his sentiments of Aurelia, and the deportment of the ladies.

“Next day the son sent over a servant with a compliment to inquire about their health; and the messenger, being seen by Mr. Darnel, was told that the ladies were indisposed, and did not choose to be troubled with messages. The mother was really seized with a fever, produced by the agitation of her spirits, which every day became more and more violent, until the physicians despaired of her life.

Believing that her end approached, she sent a trusty servant to Mr. Greaves, desiring that she might see him without delay; and he immediately set out with the messenger, who introduced him in the dark.

“He found the old lady in bed almost exhausted, and the fair Aurelia sitting by her overwhelmed with grief, her lovely hair in the utmost disorder, and her charming eyes inflamed with weeping. The good lady beckoning Mr. Launcelot to approach, and directing all the attendants to quit the room, except a favourite maid, from whom I learned the story, she took him by the hand, and fixing her eyes upon him with all the fondness of a mother, shed some tears in silence, while the same marks of sorrow trickled down his cheeks. After this affecting pause, ‘My dear son,’ said she, ‘Oh! that I could have lived to see you so indeed! you find me hastening to the goal of life.’ Here the tender-hearted Aurelia, being unable to contain herself longer, broke out into a violent passion of grief, and wept aloud. The mother, waiting patiently till she had thus given vent to her anguish, calmly entreated her to resign herself submissively to the will of Heaven; then turning to Mr. Launcelot, ‘I had indulged,’ said she, ‘a fond hope of seeing you allied to my family. This is no time for me to insist upon the ceremonies and forms of a vain world. Aurelia looks upon you with the eyes of tender prepossession.’ No sooner had she pronounced these words than he threw himself on his knees before the young lady, and pressing her hand to his lips, breathed the softest expressions which the most delicate love could suggest. ‘I know,’ resumed the mother, ‘that your passion is mutually sincere, and I should die satisfied if I thought your union would not be opposed; but that violent man, my brother-in-law, who is Aurelia’s sole guardian, will thwart her wishes with every obstacle that brutal resentment and implacable malice can contrive. Mr. Greaves, I have long admired your virtues, and am confident that I can depend upon your honour. You shall give me your word, that when I am gone you will take no steps in this affair without the concurrence of your father, and endeavour, by all fair and honourable means, to vanquish the prejudices, and obtain the consent of her uncle; the rest we must leave to the dispensation of Providence.’

“The squire promised, in the most solemn and fervent manner, to obey all her injunctions, as the last dictates of a parent whom he should never cease to honour. Then she favoured them both with a great deal of salutary advice touching their conduct before and after marriage, and presented him with a ring as a memorial of her affection, at the same time he pulled another off his finger, and made a tender of it as a pledge of his love to Aurelia, whom her mother permitted to receive this token. Finally, he took a last farewell of the good matron, and returned to his father with the particulars of this interview.

“In two days Mrs. Darnel departed this life, and Aurelia was removed to the house of a relation, where her grief had like to have proved fatal to her constitution.

“In the meantime, the mother was no sooner committed to the earth, than Mr. Greaves, mindful of her exhortations, began to take measures for a reconciliation with the guardian. He engaged several gentlemen to interpose their good offices, but they always met with the most mortifying repulse, and at last Anthony Darnel declared that his hatred to the house of Greaves was hereditary, habitual, and unconquerable. He swore he would spend his heart’s blood to perpetuate the quarrel, and that, sooner than his niece should match with young Launcelot, he would sacrifice her with his own hand.

“The young gentleman, finding his prejudice so rancorous and invincible, left off making any further advances, and, since he found it impossible to obtain his consent, resolved to cultivate the good graces of Aurelia, and wed her in despite of her implacable guardian. He found means to establish a literary correspondence with her as soon as her grief was a little abated, and even to effect an interview, after her return to her own house; but he soon had reason to repent of his indulgence. The uncle entertained spies upon the young lady, who gave him an account of this meeting, in consequence of which she was suddenly hurried to some distant part of the country, which we never could discover.

“It was then we thought Mr. Launcelot a little disordered in his brain, his grief was so wild, and his passion so impetuous. He refused all sustenance, neglected his person, renounced his amusements, rode out in the rain, sometimes bareheaded; strolled about the fields all night, and became so peevish,

that none of the domestics durst speak to him without the hazard of broken bones. Having played these pranks for about three weeks, to the unspeakable chagrin of his father, and the astonishment of all that knew him, he suddenly grew calm, and his good-humour returned. But this, as your seafaring people say, was a deceitful calm, that soon ushered in a dreadful storm.

“He had long sought an opportunity to tamper with some of Mr. Darnel’s servants, who could inform him of the place where Aurelia was confined; but there was not one about the family who could give him that satisfaction, for the persons who accompanied her remained as a watch upon her motions, and none of the other domestics were privy to the transaction. All attempts proving fruitless, he could no longer restrain his impatience, but throwing himself in the way of the uncle, upbraided him in such harsh terms, that a formal challenge ensued. They agreed to decide their difference without witnesses, and one morning, before sunrise, met on that very common where Mr. Greaves had saved the life of Aurelia. The first pistol was fired on each side without any effect, but Mr. Darnel’s second wounded the young squire in the flank; nevertheless, having a pistol in reserve, he desired his antagonist to ask his life. The other, instead of submitting, drew his sword, and Mr. Greaves, firing his piece into the air, followed his example. The contest then became very hot, though of short continuance. Darnel being disarmed at the first onset, our young squire gave him back the sword, which he was base enough to use a second time against his conqueror. Such an instance of repeated ingratitude and brutal ferocity divested Mr. Greaves of his temper and forbearance. He attacked Mr. Anthony with great fury, and at the first lunge ran him up to the hilt, at the same time seized with his left hand the shell of his enemy’s sword, which he broke in disdain. Mr. Darnel having fallen, the other immediately mounted his horse, which he had tied to a tree before the engagement, and, riding full speed to Ashenton, sent a surgeon to Anthony’s assistance. He afterwards ingenuously confessed all these particulars to his father, who was overwhelmed with consternation, for the wounds of Darnel were judged mortal; and, as no person had seen the particulars of the duel, Mr. Launcelot might have been convicted of murder.

“On these considerations, before a warrant could be served upon him, the old knight, by dint of the most eager entreaties, accompanied with marks of horror and despair, prevailed upon his son to withdraw himself from the kingdom until such time as the storm should be overblown. Had his heart been unengaged, he would have chose to travel, but at this period, when his whole soul was engrossed, and so violently agitated by his passion for Aurelia, nothing but the fear of seeing the old gentleman run distracted would have induced him to desist from the pursuit of that young lady, far less quit the kingdom where she resided.

“Well then, gemmen, he repaired to Harwich, where he embarked for Holland, from whence he proceeded to Brussels, where he procured a passport from the French king, by virtue of which he travelled to Marseilles, and there took a tartan for Genoa. The first letter Sir Everhard received from him was dated at Florence. Meanwhile the surgeon’s prognostic was not altogether verified. Mr. Darnel did not die immediately of his wounds, but he lingered a long time, as it were in the arms of death, and even partly recovered, yet, in all probability, he will never be wholly restored to the enjoyment of his health, and is obliged every summer to attend the hot-well at Bristol. As his wounds began to heal, his hatred to Mr. Greaves seemed to revive with augmented violence, and he is now, if possible, more than ever determined against all reconciliation.

“Mr. Launcelot, after having endeavoured to amuse his imagination with a succession of curious objects, in a tour of Italy, took up his residence at a town called Pisa, and there fell into a deep melancholy, from which nothing could rouse him but the news of his father’s death.

“The old gentleman, God rest his soul, never held up his head after the departure of his darling Launcelot, and the dangerous condition of Darnel kept up his apprehension. This was reinforced by the obstinate silence of the youth, and certain accounts of his disordered mind, which he had received from some of those persons who take pleasure in communicating disagreeable tidings. A complication of all these grievances, co-operating with a severe fit of the gout and gravel, produced

a fever, which, in a few days, brought Sir Everhard to his long home, after he had settled his affairs with heaven and earth, and made his peace with God and man. I'll assure you, gemmen, he made a most edifying and Christian end; he died regretted by all his neighbours except Anthony, and might be said to be embalmed by the tears of the poor, to whom he was always a bounteous benefactor.

“When the son, now Sir Launcelot, came home, he appeared so meagre, wan, and hollow-eyed, that the servants hardly knew their young master. His first care was to take possession of his fortune, and settle accounts with the steward who had succeeded my father. These affairs being discussed, he spared no pains to get intelligence concerning Miss Darnel; and soon learned more of that young lady than he desired to know; for it was become the common talk of the country, that a match was agreed upon between her and young Squire Sycamore, a gentleman of a very great fortune. These tidings were probably confirmed under her own hand, in a letter which she wrote to Sir Launcelot. The contents were never exactly known but to the parties themselves; nevertheless, the effects were too visible, for, from that blessed moment, he spoke not one word to any living creature for the space of three days; but was seen sometimes to shed a flood of tears, and sometimes to burst out into a fit of laughing. At last he broke silence, and seemed to wake from his disorder. He became more fond than ever of the exercise of riding, and began to amuse himself again with acts of benevolence.

“One instance of his generosity and justice deserves to be recorded in brass or marble. You must know, gemmen, the rector of the parish was lately dead, and Sir Everhard had promised the presentation to another clergyman. In the meantime, Sir Launcelot chancing one Sunday to ride through a lane, perceived a horse saddled and bridled, feeding on the side of a fence; and, casting his eyes around, beheld on the other side of the hedge an object lying extended on the ground, which he took to be the body of a murdered traveller. He forthwith alighted, and, leaping into the field, descried a man at full length, wrapped in a greatcoat and writhing in agony. Approaching nearer, he found it was a clergyman, in his gown and cassock. When he inquired into the case, and offered his assistance, the stranger rose up, thanked him for his courtesy, and declared that he was now very well. The knight who thought there was something mysterious in this incident, expressed a desire to know the cause of his rolling in the grass in that manner, and the clergyman, who knew his person, made no scruple in gratifying his curiosity. ‘You must know, sir,’ said he, ‘I serve the curacy of your own parish, for which the late incumbent paid me twenty pounds a year; but this sum being scarce sufficient to maintain my wife and children, who are five in number, I agreed to read prayers in the afternoon at another church, about four miles from hence; and for this additional duty I receive ten pounds more. As I keep a horse, it was formerly an agreeable exercise rather than a toil; but of late years I have been afflicted with a rupture, for which I consulted the most eminent operators in the kingdom; but I have no cause to rejoice in the effects of their advice, though one of them assured me I was completely cured. The malady is now more troublesome than ever, and often comes upon me so violently while I am on horseback, that I am forced to alight, and lie down upon the ground, until the cause of the disorder can for the time be reduced.’

“Sir Launcelot not only condoled with him upon his misfortune, but desired him to throw up the second cure, and he would pay him ten pounds a year out of his own pocket. ‘Your generosity confounds me, good sir,’ replied the clergyman; ‘and yet I ought not to be surprised at any instance of benevolence in Sir Launcelot Greaves; but I will check the fulness of my heart. I shall only observe, that your good intention towards me can hardly take effect. The gentleman, who is to succeed the late incumbent, has given me notice to quit the premises, as he hath provided a friend of his own for the curacy.’ ‘What!’ cried the knight, ‘does he mean to take your bread from you, without assigning any other reason?’ ‘Surely, sir,’ replied the ecclesiastic, ‘I know of no other reason. I hope my morals are irreproachable, and that I have done my duty with a conscientious regard; I may venture an appeal to the parishioners among whom I have lived these seventeen years. After all, it is natural for every man to favour his own friends in preference to strangers. As for me, I propose to try my fortune in the great city, and I doubt not but Providence will provide for me and my little ones.’

“To this declaration Sir Launcelot made no reply; but, riding home, set on foot a strict inquiry into the character of this man, whose name was Jenkins. He found that he was a reputed scholar, equally remarkable for his modesty and good life; that he visited the sick, assisted the needy, compromised disputes among his neighbours, and spent his time in such a manner as would have done honour to any Christian divine. Thus informed, the knight sent for the gentleman to whom the living had been promised, and accosted him to this effect: ‘Mr. Tootle, I have a favour to ask of you. The person who serves the cure of this parish is a man of good character, beloved by the people, and has a large family. I shall be obliged to you if you will continue him in the curacy.’ The other told him he was sorry he could not comply with his request, being that he had already promised the curacy to a friend of his own. ‘No matter,’ replied Sir Launcelot, ‘since I have not interest with you, I will endeavour to provide for Mr. Jenkins in some other way.’

“That same afternoon he walked over to the curate’s house, and told him that he had spoken in his behalf to Dr. Tootle, but the curacy was pre-engaged. The good man having made a thousand acknowledgments for the trouble his honour had taken; ‘I have not interest sufficient to make you curate,’ said the knight, ‘but I can give you the living itself, and that you shall have.’ So saying, he retired, leaving Mr. Jenkins incapable of uttering one syllable, so powerfully was he struck with this unexpected turn of good fortune. The presentation was immediately made out, and in a few days Mr. Jenkins was put in possession of his benefice, to the inexpressible joy of the congregation.

“Hitherto everything went right, and every unprejudiced person commended the knight’s conduct; but in a little time his generosity seemed to overleap the bounds of discretion, and even in some cases might be thought tending to a breach of the king’s peace. For example, he compelled, *vi et armis*, a rich farmer’s son to marry the daughter of a cottager, whom the young fellow had debauched. Indeed, it seems there was a promise of marriage in the case, though it could not be legally ascertained. The wench took on dismally, and her parents had recourse to Sir Launcelot, who, sending for the delinquent, expostulated with him severely on the injury he had done the young woman, and exhorted him to save her life and reputation by performing his promise, in which case he, Sir Launcelot, would give her three hundred pounds to her portion. Whether the farmer thought there was something interested in this uncommon offer, or was a little elevated by the consciousness of his father’s wealth, he rejected the proposal with rustic disdain, and said, if so be as how the wench would swear the child to him, he would settle it with the parish; but declared, that no squire in the land should oblige him to buckle with such a cracked pitcher. This resolution, however, he could not maintain; for, in less than two hours the rector of the parish had direction to publish the banns, and the ceremony was performed in due course.

“Now, though we know not precisely the nature of the arguments that were used with the farmer, we may conclude they were of the minatory species, for the young fellow could not, for some time, look any person in the face.

“The knight acted as the general redresser of grievances. If a woman complained to him of being ill-treated by her husband, he first inquired into the foundation of the complaint, and, if he found it just, catechised the defendant. If the warning had no effect, and the man proceeded to fresh acts of violence, then his judge took the execution of the law in his own hand, and horsewhipped the party. Thus he involved himself in several law-suits, that drained him of pretty large sums of money. He seemed particularly incensed at the least appearance of oppression; and supported divers poor tenants against the extortion of their landlords. Nay, he has been known to travel two hundred miles as a volunteer, to offer his assistance in the cause of a person, who he heard was by chicanery and oppression wronged of a considerable estate. He accordingly took her under his protection, relieved her distresses, and was at a vast expense in bringing the suit to a determination; which being unfavourable to his client, he resolved to bring an appeal into the House of Lords, and certainly would have executed his purpose, if the gentlewoman had not died in the interim.”

At this period Ferret interrupted the narrator, by observing that the said Greaves was a common nuisance, and ought to be prosecuted on the statute of barratry.

“No, sir,” resumed Mr. Clarke, “he cannot be convicted of barratry, unless he is always at variance with some person or other, a mover of suits and quarrels, who disturbs the peace under colour of law. Therefore he is in the indictment styled, *Communis malefactor, calumniator, et seminor litium.*”

“Pr’ythee, truce with thy definitions,” cried Ferret, “and make an end to thy long-winded story. Thou hast no title to be so tedious, until thou comest to have a coif in the Court of Common Pleas.”

Tom smiled contemptuous, and had just opened his mouth to proceed, when the company were disturbed by a hideous repetition of groans, that seemed to issue from the chamber in which the body of the squire was deposited. The landlady snatched the candle, and ran into the room, followed by the doctor and the rest; and this accident naturally suspended the narration. In like manner we shall conclude the chapter, that the reader may have time to breathe and digest what he has already heard.

CHAPTER FIVE

IN WHICH THIS RECAPITULATION DRAWS TO A CLOSE

When the landlady entered the room from whence the groaning proceeded, she found the squire lying on his back, under the dominion of the nightmare, which rode him so hard that he not only groaned and snorted, but the sweat ran down his face in streams. The perturbation of his brain, occasioned by this pressure, and the fright he had lately undergone, gave rise to a very terrible dream, in which he fancied himself apprehended for a robbery. The horror of the gallows was strong upon him, when he was suddenly awaked by a violent shock from the doctor; and the company broke in upon his view, still perverted by fear, and bedimmed by slumber. His dream was now realised by a full persuasion that he was surrounded by the constable and his gang. The first object that presented itself to his disordered view was the figure of Ferret, who might very well have passed for the finisher of the law; against him, therefore, the first effort of his despair was directed. He started upon the floor, and seizing a certain utensil, that shall be nameless, launched it at the misanthrope with such violence, that had he not cautiously slipt his head aside, it is supposed that actual fire would have been produced from the collision of two such hard and solid substances. All future mischief was prevented by the strength and agility of Captain Crowe, who, springing upon the assailant, pinioned his arms to his sides, crying, "O, d—n ye, if you are for running a-head, I'll soon bring you to your bearings."

The squire, thus restrained, soon recollected himself, and gazing upon every individual in the apartment, "Wounds!" said he, "I've had an ugly dream. I thought, for all the world, they were carrying me to Newgate, and that there was Jack Ketch coom to vetch me before my taim."

Ferret, who was the person he had thus distinguished, eyeing him with a look of the most emphatic malevolence, told him it was very natural for a knave to dream of Newgate; and that he hoped to see the day when his dream would be found a true prophecy, and the commonwealth purged of all such rogues and vagabonds. But it could not be expected that the vulgar would be honest and conscientious, while the great were distinguished by profligacy and corruption. The squire was disposed to make a practical reply to this insinuation, when Mr. Ferret prudently withdrew himself from the scene of altercation. The good woman of the house persuaded his antagonist to take out his nap, assuring him that the eggs and bacon, with a mug of excellent ale, should be forthcoming in due season. The affair being thus fortunately adjusted, the guests returned to the kitchen, and Mr. Clarke resumed his story to this effect:—

"You'll please to take notice, gemmen, that, besides the instances I have alleged of Sir Launcelot's extravagant benevolence, I could recount a great many others of the same nature, and particularly the laudable vengeance he took of a country lawyer. I'm sorry that any such miscreant should belong to the profession. He was clerk of the assize, gemmen, in a certain town, not a great way distant; and having a blank pardon left by the judges for some criminals whose cases were attended with favourable circumstances, he would not insert the name of one who could not procure a guinea for the fee; and the poor fellow, who had only stole an hour-glass out of a shoemaker's window, was actually executed, after a long respite, during which he had been permitted to go abroad, and earn his subsistence by his daily labour.

"Sir Launcelot being informed of this barbarous act of avarice, and having some ground that bordered on the lawyer's estate, not only rendered him contemptible and infamous, by exposing him as often as they met on the grand jury, but also, being vested with the property of the great tithe, proved such a troublesome neighbour, sometimes by making waste among his hay and corn, sometimes by

instituting suits against him for petty trespasses, that he was fairly obliged to quit his habitation, and remove into another part of the kingdom.

“All these avocations could not divert Sir Launcelot from the execution of a wild scheme, which has carried his extravagance to such a pitch that I am afraid, if a statute—you understand me, gemmen—were sued, the jury would—I don’t choose to explain myself further on this circumstance. Be that as it may, the servants at Greavesbury Hall were not a little confounded, when their master took down from the family armoury a complete suit of armour, which belonged to his great-grandfather, Sir Marmaduke Greaves, a great warrior, who lost his life in the service of his king. This armour being scoured, repaired, and altered, so as to fit Sir Launcelot, a certain knight, whom I don’t choose to name, because I believe he cannot be proved *compos mentis*, came down, seemingly on a visit, with two attendants; and, on the evening of the festival of St. George, the armour being carried into the chapel. Sir Launcelot (Lord have mercy upon us!) remained all night in that dismal place alone, and without light, though it was confidently reported all over the country, that the place was haunted by the spirit of his great-great-uncle, who, being lunatic, had cut his throat from ear to ear, and was found dead on the communion table.”

It was observed, that while Mr. Clarke rehearsed this circumstance his eyes began to stare and his teeth to chatter; while Dolly, whose looks were fixed invariably on this narrator, growing pale, and hitching her joint-stool nearer the chimney, exclaimed, in a frightened tone, “Mooother, mooother, in the neame of God, look to ‘un! how a quakes! as I’m a precious saoul, a looks as if a saw something.” Tom forced a smile, and thus proceeded:—

“While Sir Launcelot tarried within the chapel, with the doors all locked, the other knight stalked round and round it on the outside, with his sword drawn, to the terror of divers persons who were present at the ceremony. As soon as day broke he opened one of the doors, and going in to Sir Launcelot, read a book for some time, which we did suppose to be the constitutions of knight-errantry. Then we heard a loud slap, which echoed through the whole chapel, and the stranger pronounce, with an audible and solemn voice, ‘In the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George, I dub thee knight—be faithful, bold, and fortunate.’ You cannot imagine, gemmen, what an effect this strange ceremony had upon the people who were assembled. They gazed at one another in silent horror, and when Sir Launcelot came forth completely armed, took to their heels in a body, and fled with the utmost precipitation. I myself was overturned in the crowd; and this was the case with that very individual person who now serves him as squire. He was so frightened that he could not rise, but lay roaring in such a manner that the knight came up and gave him a thwack with his lance across the shoulders, which roused him with a vengeance. For my own part I freely own I was not unmoved at seeing such a figure come stalking out of a church in the grey of the morning; for it recalled to my remembrance the idea of the ghost in Hamlet, which I had seen acted in Drury Lane, when I made my first trip to London, and I had not yet got rid of the impression.

“Sir Launcelot, attended by the other knight, proceeded to the stable, from whence, with his own hands, he drew forth one of his best horses, a fine mettlesome sorrel, who had got blood in him, ornamented with rich trappings. In a trice, the two knights, and the other two strangers, who now appeared to be trumpeters, were mounted. Sir Launcelot’s armour was lacquered black; and on his shield was represented the moon in her first quarter, with the motto, *Impleat orbem*. The trumpets having sounded a charge, the stranger pronounced with a loud voice, ‘God preserve this gallant knight in all his honourable achievements; and may he long continue to press the sides of his now adopted steed, which I denominate *Bronzomarte*, hoping that he will rival in swiftness and spirit, *Bayardo*, *Brigliadoro*, or any other steed of past or present chivalry!’ After another flourish of the trumpets, all four clapped spurs to their horses, Sir Launcelot couching his lance, and galloped to and fro, as if they had been mad, to the terror and astonishment of all the spectators.

“What should have induced our knight to choose this here man for his squire, is not easy to determine; for, of all the servants about the house, he was the least likely either to please his master,

or engage in such an undertaking. His name is Timothy Crabshaw, and he acted in the capacity of whipper-in to Sir Everhard. He afterwards married the daughter of a poor cottager, by whom he has several children, and was employed about the house as a ploughman and carter. To be sure, the fellow has a dry sort of humour about him; but he was universally hated among the servants, for his abusive tongue and perverse disposition, which often brought him into trouble; for, though the fellow is as strong as an elephant, he has no more courage naturally than a chicken; I say naturally, because, since his being a member of knight-errantry, he has done some things that appear altogether incredible and preternatural.

“Timothy kept such a bawling, after he had received the blow from Sir Launcelot, that everybody on the field thought that some of his bones were broken; and his wife, with five bantlings, came snivelling to the knight, who ordered her to send the husband directly to his house. Tim accordingly went thither, groaning piteously all the way, creeping along, with his body bent like a Greenland canoe. As soon as he entered the court, the outward door was shut; and Sir Launcelot coming downstairs with a horsewhip in his hand, asked what was the matter with him that he complained so dismally? To this question he replied, that it was as common as duck-weed in his country for a man to complain when his bones were broke. ‘What should have broke your bones?’ said the knight. ‘I cannot guess,’ answered the other, ‘unless it was that delicate switch that your honour in your mad pranks handled so dexterously upon my carcass.’ Sir Launcelot then told him, there was nothing so good for a bruise, as a sweat; and he had the remedy in his hand. Timothy, eyeing the horsewhip askance, observed that there was another still more speedy, to wit, a moderate pill of lead, with a sufficient dose of gunpowder. ‘No, rascal,’ cried the knight; ‘that must be reserved for your betters.’ So saying, he employed the instrument so effectually, that Crabshaw soon forgot his fractured ribs, and capered about with great agility.

“When he had been disciplined in this manner to some purpose, the knight told him he might retire, but ordered him to return next morning, when he should have a repetition of the medicine, provided he did not find himself capable of walking in an erect posture.

“The gate was no sooner thrown open, than Timothy ran home with all the speed of a greyhound, and corrected his wife, by whose advice he had pretended to be so grievously damaged in his person.

“Nobody dreamed that he would next day present himself at Greavesbury Hall; nevertheless, he was there very early in the morning, and even closeted a whole hour altogether with Sir Launcelot. He came out, making wry faces, and several times slapped himself on the forehead, crying, ‘Bodikins! thof he be crazy, I an’t, that I an’t?’ When he was asked what was the matter, he said, he believed the devil had got in him, and he should never be his own man again.

“That same day the knight carried him to Ashenton, where he bespoke those accoutrements which he now wears; and while these were making, it was thought the poor fellow would have run distracted. He did nothing but growl, and curse and swear to himself, run backwards and forwards between his own hut and Greavesbury Hall, and quarrel with the horses in the stable. At length, his wife and family were removed into a snug farmhouse, that happened to be empty, and care taken that they should be comfortably maintained.

“These precautions being taken, the knight, one morning, at daybreak, mounted Bronzomarte, and Crabshaw, as his squire, ascended the back of a clumsy cart-horse, called Gilbert. This, again, was looked upon as an instance of insanity in the said Crabshaw; for, of all the horses in the stable, Gilbert was the most stubborn and vicious, and had often like to have done mischief to Timothy while he drove the cart and plough. When he was out of humour, he would kick and plunge as if the devil was in him. He once thrust Crabshaw into the middle of a quick-set hedge, where he was terribly torn; another time he canted him over his head into a quagmire, where he stuck with his heels up, and must have perished, if people had not been passing that way; a third time he seized him in the stable with his teeth by the rim of the belly, and swung him off the ground, to the great danger of his life; and I’ll be hanged, if it was not owing to Gilbert, that Crabshaw was now thrown into the river.

“Thus mounted and accoutred, the knight and his squire set out on their first excursion. They turned off from the common highway, and travelled all that day without meeting anything worthy recounting; but, in the morning of the second day, they were favoured with an adventure. The hunt was upon a common through which they travelled, and the hounds were in full cry after a fox, when Crabshaw, prompted by his own mischievous disposition, and neglecting the order of his master, who called aloud to him to desist, rode up to the hounds, and crossed them at full gallop. The huntsman, who was not far off, running towards the squire, bestowed upon his head such a memento with his pole, as made the landscape dance before his eyes; and, in a twinkling he was surrounded by all the fox-hunters, who plied their whips about his ears with infinite agility. Sir Launcelot, advancing at an easy pace, instead of assisting the disastrous squire, exhorted his adversaries to punish him severely for his insolence, and they were not slow in obeying this injunction. Crabshaw, finding himself in this disagreeable situation, and that there was no succour to be expected from his master, on whose prowess he had depended, grew desperate, and, clubbing his whip, laid about him with great fury, wheeling about Gilbert, who was not idle; for he, having received some of the favours intended for his rider, both bit with his teeth and kicked with his heels; and, at last, made his way through the ring that encircled him, though not before he had broke the huntsman’s leg, lamed one of the best horses on the field, and killed half a score of the hounds.

“Crabshaw, seeing himself clear of the fray, did not tarry to take leave of his master, but made the most of his way to Greavesbury Hall, where he appeared hardly with any vestige of the human countenance, so much had he been defaced in this adventure. He did not fail to raise a great clamour against Sir Launcelot, whom he cursed as a coward in plain terms, swearing he would never serve him another day. But whether he altered his mind on cooler reflection, or was lectured by his wife, who well understood her own interest, he rose with the cock, and went again in quest of Sir Launcelot, whom he found on the eve of a very hazardous enterprise.

“In the midst of a lane, the knight happened to meet with a party of about forty recruits, commanded by a serjeant, a corporal, and a drummer, which last had his drum slung at his back; but seeing such a strange figure mounted on a high-spirited horse, he was seized with an inclination to divert his company. With this view, he braced his drum, and, hanging it in its proper position, began to beat a point of war, advancing under the very nose of Bronzomarte; while the corporal exclaimed, ‘D—n my eyes, who have we got here?—old King Stephen, from the horse armoury in the Tower, or the fellow that rides armed at my Lord Mayor’s show?’ The knight’s steed seemed, at least, as well pleased with the sound of the drum, as were the recruits that followed it; and signified his satisfaction in some curvetings and caprioles, which did not at all discompose the rider, who, addressing himself to the serjeant, ‘Friend,’ said he, ‘you ought to teach your drummer better manners. I would chastise the fellow on the spot for his insolence, were it not out of the respect I bear to his majesty’s service.’ ‘Respect mine a—!’ cried this ferocious commander; what, d’ye think to frighten us with your pewter piss-pot on your skull, and your lacquered pot-lid on your arm? Get out of the way, and be d—ned, or I’ll raise with my halbert such a clatter upon your target, that you’ll remember it the longest day you have to live.’ At that instant, Crabshaw arriving upon Gilbert, ‘So, rascal,’ said Sir Launcelot, ‘you are returned. Go and beat in that scoundrel’s drum-head.’

“The squire, who saw no weapons of offence about the drummer but a sword, which he hoped the owner durst not draw, and being resolved to exert himself in making atonement for his desertion, advanced to execute his master’s orders; but Gilbert, who liked not the noise, refused to proceed in the ordinary way. Then the squire, turning his tail to the drummer, he advanced in a retrograde motion, and with one kick of his heels, not only broke the drum into a thousand pieces, but laid the drummer in the mire, with such a blow upon his hip-bone, that he halted all the days of his life. The recruits, perceiving the discomfiture of their leader, armed themselves with stones; the serjeant raised his halbert in a posture of defence, and immediately a severe action ensued. By this time, Crabshaw had drawn his sword, and begun to lay about him like a devil incarnate; but, in a little time, he was

saluted by a volley of stones, one of which knocked out two of his grinders, and brought him to the earth, where he had like to have found no quarter; for the whole company crowded about him, with their cudgels brandished; and perhaps he owed his preservation to their pressing so hard that they hindered one another from using their weapons.

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