AINSWORTH WILLIAM HARRISON

ROOKWOOD

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Rookwood:

Содержание

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MEMOIR

William Harrison Ainsworth was born in King Street, Manchester, February 4, 1805, in a house that has long since been demolished. His father was a solicitor in good practice, and the son had all the advantages that educational facilities could afford. He was sent to the Manchester grammar-school, and in one of his early novels has left an interesting and accurate picture of its then condition, which may be contrasted with that of an earlier period left by the "English opium-eater." At sixteen, a brilliant, handsome youth, with more taste for romance and the drama than for the dry details of the law, he was articled to a leading solicitor of Manchester. The closest friend of his youth was a Mr. James Crossley, who was some years older, but shared his intellectual taste and literary enthusiasm. A drama written for private theatricals, in his father's house was printed in *Arliss's Magazine*, and he also contributed to the *Manchester Iris*, the *Edinburgh Magazine*, and the *London Magazine*. He even started a periodical, which received the name of *The Bœotian*, and died at the sixth number. Many of the fugitive pieces of these early days were collected in volumes now exceedingly

rare: "December Tales" (London, 1823), which is not wholly from his pen; the "Works of Cheviot Tichburn" (London, 1822; Manchester, 1825), dedicated to Charles Lamb; and "A Summer Evening Tale" (London, 1825).

"Sir John Chiverton" appeared in 1826, and for forty years was regarded as one of his early works; but Mr. John Partington Aston has also claimed to be its author. In all probability, both of these young men joined in the production of the novel which attracted the attention of Sir Walter Scott. On the death of his father, in 1824, Ainsworth went to London to finish his legal education, but whatever intentions he may have formed of humdrum study and determined attention to the details of a profession in which he had no interest, were dissipated by contact with the literary world of the metropolis. He made the acquaintance of Mr. John Ebers, who at that time combined the duties of manager of the Opera House with the business of a publisher. He it was who issued "Sir John Chiverton," and the verses forming its dedication are understood to have been addressed to Anne Frances ("Fanny") Ebers, whom Ainsworth married October 11, 1826. Ainsworth had then to decide upon a career, and, acting upon the suggestion of Ebers, his father-in-law, he began business as a publisher; but after an experience of about eighteen months he abandoned it. In this brief interval he introduced the Hon. Mrs. Norton, and Ude, the cook, to the discerning though unequal admiration of the British public. He was introduced to Sir Walter Scott, who wrote the "Bonnets

of Bonnie Dundee" for an annual issued by him. Ainsworth gave him twenty guineas for it, which Sir Walter accepted, but laughingly handed over to the little daughter of Lockhart, in whose London house they had met. Ainsworth's literary aspirations still burned with undiminished ardor, and several plans were formed only to be abandoned, and when, in the summer of 1830, he visited Switzerland and Italy, he was as far as ever from the fulfilment of his desires. In 1831 he visited Chesterfield and began the novel of "Rookwood," in which he successfully applied the method of Mrs. Radcliffe to English scenes and characters. The finest passage is that relating Turpin's ride to York, which is a marvel of descriptive writing. It was written, apparently in a glow of inspiration, in less than a day and a half. "The feat," he says, "for feat it was, being the composition of a hundred novel pages in less than twenty-four hours, was achieved at 'The Elms,' a house I then occupied at Kilburn." The success of "Rookwood" was marked and immediate. Ainsworth at a bound reached popularity. This was in 1834, and in 1837 he published "Crichton," which is a fine piece of historical romance. The critics who had objected to the romantic glamor cast over the career of Dick Turpin were still further horrified at the manner in which that vulgar rascal, Jack Sheppard, was elevated into a hero of romance. The outcry was not entirely without justification, nor was it without effect on the novelist, who thenceforward avoided this perilous ground. "Jack Sheppard" appeared in *Bentley's Miscellany*, of which Ainsworth became

editor in March, 1840, at a monthly salary of £51. The story is powerfully written. In 1841 he received £1000 from the *Sunday Times* for "Old St. Paul's," and he, in 1848, had from the same source another £1000 for the "Lancashire Witches." In 1841 he began the publication of *Ainsworth's Magazine*, which came to an end in 1853, when he acquired the *New Monthly Magazine*, which he edited for many years. This was the heyday of Ainsworth's reputation alike in literature and in society. His home at Kensal Manor House became famous for its hospitality, and Dickens, Thackeray, Landseer, Clarkson Stanfield, Talfourd, Jerrold, and Cruikshank were among his guests. The list of his principal historical novels, with their dates of issue, may now be given: "Rookwood," 1834; "Crichton," 1837; "Jack Sheppard," 1839; "Tower of London," 1840; "Guy Fawkes," 1841; "Old St. Paul's, a Tale of the Plague and the Fire of London," 1841; "Windsor Castle," 1843; "St. James, or the Court of Queene Anne," 1844; "Star Chamber," 1854; "Constable of the Tower," 1861; "The Lord Mayor of London," 1862; "Cardinal Pole," 1863; "John Law, the Projector," 1864; "The Constable de Bourbon," 1866; "Talbot Harland," 1870; "Boscobel," 1872; "The Manchester Rebels, or the Fatal '45," 1873; and "The Goldsmith's Wife," 1874. These novels all met with a certain amount of success, but those of later years did not attain the striking popularity of his earlier efforts. Many have been translated into various modern languages, and the editions of his various works are so numerous that some twenty-three pages of the British Museum catalogue

are devoted to his works. The scenery and history of his native country had a perennial interest for him, and a certain group of his novels—that is, the "Lancashire Witches," "Guy Fawkes," "The Manchester Rebels," etc.—may almost be said to form a novelist's history of Lancashire from the pilgrimage of grace until the early part of the present century.

Probably no more vivid account has been written of the great fire and plague of London than that given in "Old St. Paul's." The charm of Ainsworth's novels is not at all dependent upon the analysis of motives or subtle description of character. Of this he has little or nothing, but he realizes vividly a scene or an incident, and conveys the impression with great force and directness to the reader's mind. Ainsworth came upon the reading world at a happy moment. People were weary of the inanities of the fashionable novel, and were ready to listen to one who had a power of vivacious narrative. In 1881, when he was in his seventy-seventh year, a pleasant tribute of respect and admiration was paid to him in his native town. The Mayor of Manchester entertained him at a banquet in the town hall September 15, 1881, "as an expression of the high esteem in which he is held by his fellow-townsmen and of his services to literature." In proposing Mr. Ainsworth's health, the mayor gave a curious instance of the popularity of his writings. "In our Manchester public free libraries there are two hundred and fifty volumes of Mr. Ainsworth's different works. During the last twelve months these volumes have been read seven thousand six hundred and

sixty times, mostly by the artisan class of readers. And this means that twenty volumes of his works are being perused in Manchester by readers of the free libraries every day all the year through." It was well that this pleasant recognition was not longer delayed. The contrast was pathetically great between the tall, handsome, dandified figure presented in the portraits of him by Pickersgill and Maclise, and the bent and feeble old man who stood by and acknowledged the plaudits of those who had assembled to honor him. His last published work was "Stanley Brereton," which he dedicated to his hospitable entertainer. He died at Reigate January 3, 1882, leaving a widow and also three daughters by his first marriage. He was buried at Kensal Green Cemetery. With the exception of George Gleig, he was the last survivor of the brilliant group who wrote for the early numbers of *Fraser's Magazine*, and, though he died in harness, had outlived nearly all the associates of the days when he first achieved fame.

TO MY MOTHER

When I inscribed this Romance to you, my dear Mother, on its first appearance, I was satisfied that, whatever reception it might meet with elsewhere, at your hands it would be sure of indulgence. Since then, the approbation your partiality would scarcely have withheld has been liberally accorded by the public; and I have the satisfaction of reflecting, that in following the dictates of affection, which prompted me to select the dearest friend I had in the world as the subject of a dedication, I have not overstepped the limits of prudence; nor, in connecting your honored name with this trifling production, involved you in a failure which, had it occurred, would have given you infinitely more concern than myself. After a lapse of three years, during which my little bark, fanned by pleasant and prosperous breezes, has sailed, more than once, securely into port, I again commit it to the waters, with more confidence than heretofore, and with a firmer reliance that, if it should be found "after many days," it may prove a slight memorial of the warmest filial regard.

Exposed to trials of no ordinary difficulty, and visited by domestic affliction of no common severity, you, my dear Mother, have borne up against the ills of life with a fortitude and resignation which those who know you best can best appreciate, but which none can so well understand, or so thoroughly appreciate, as myself. Suffering is the lot of all. Submission

under the dispensation is permitted to few. And it is my fervent hope that my own children may emulate your virtues, if they are happily spared your sorrows.

PREFACE

During a visit to Chesterfield, in the autumn of the year 1831, I first conceived the notion of writing this story. Wishing to describe, somewhat minutely, the trim gardens, the picturesque domains, the rook-haunted groves, the gloomy chambers, and gloomier galleries, of an ancient Hall with which I was acquainted, I resolved to attempt a story in the bygone style of Mrs. Radcliffe,—which had always inexpressible charms for me,—substituting an old English squire, an old English manorial residence, and an old English highwayman, for the Italian marchese, the castle, and the brigand of the great mistress of Romance.

While revolving this subject, I happened, one evening, to enter the spacious cemetery attached to the church with the queer, twisted steeple, which, like the uplifted tail of the renowned Dragon of Wantley, to whom "houses and churches were as capons and turkeys," seems to menace the good town of Chesterfield with destruction. Here an incident occurred, on the opening of a vault, which it is needless to relate, but which supplied me with a hint for the commencement of my romance, as well as for the ballad entitled "The Coffin." Upon this hint I immediately acted; and the earlier chapters of the book, together with the description of the ancestral mansion of the Rookwoods, were completed before I quitted Chesterfield.

Another and much larger portion of the work was written during a residence at Rottingdean, in Sussex, in the latter part of 1833, and owes its inspiration to many delightful walks over the South Downs. Romance-writing was pleasant occupation then.

The Ride to York was completed in one day and one night. This feat—for a feat it was, being the composition of a hundred ordinary novel pages in less than twenty-four hours—was achieved at "The Elms," a house I then occupied at Kilburn. Well do I remember the fever into which I was thrown during the time of composition. My pen literally scoured over the pages. So thoroughly did I identify myself with the flying highwayman, that, once started, I found it impossible to halt. Animated by kindred enthusiasm, I cleared every obstacle in my path with as much facility as Turpin disposed of the impediments that beset his flight. In his company, I mounted the hill-side, dashed through the bustling village, swept over the desolate heath, threaded the silent street, plunged into the eddying stream, and kept an onward course, without pause, without hindrance, without fatigue. With him I shouted, sang, laughed, exulted, wept. Nor did I retire to rest till, in imagination, I heard the bell of York Minster toll forth the knell of poor Black Bess.

The supernatural occurrence, forming the groundwork of one of the ballads which I have made the harbinger of doom to the house of Rookwood, is ascribed, by popular superstition, to a family resident in Sussex; upon whose estate the fatal tree—a gigantic lime, with mighty arms and huge girth of trunk,

as described in the song—is still carefully preserved. Cuckfield Place, to which this singular piece of timber is attached, is, I may state, for the benefit of the curious, the real Rookwood Hall; for I have not drawn upon imagination, but upon memory, in describing the seat and domains of that fated family. The general features of the venerable structure, several of its chambers, the old garden, and, in particular, the noble park, with its spreading prospects, its picturesque views of the Hall, "like bits of Mrs. Radcliffe,"—as the poet Shelley once observed of the same scene,—its deep glades, through which the deer come lightly tripping down, its uplands, slopes, brooks, brakes, coverts, and groves, are carefully delineated.

The superstition of a fallen branch affording a presage of approaching death is not peculiar to the family I have mentioned. Many other old houses have been equally favored: in fact, there is scarcely an ancient family in the kingdom without a boding sign. For instance, the Brerетons of Brereton, in Cheshire, were warned by the appearance of stocks of trees floating, like the swollen bodies of long-drowned men, upon the surface of a sombre lake—called Blackmere, from the inky color of its waters—adjoining their residence; and numerous other examples might be given. The death-presage of the Brerетons is alluded to by Drayton in the "*Polyolbion*."

It has been well observed by Barry Cornwall, "that the songs which occur in dramas are more natural than those which proceed from the author in person." With equal force does

the reasoning apply to the romance, which may be termed the drama of the closet. It would seem strange, on a first view, that an author should be more at home in an assumed character than his own. But experience shows the position to be correct. Conscious he is no longer individually associated with his work, the writer proceeds with all the freedom of irresponsibility. His idiosyncrasy is merged in that of the personages he represents. He thinks with their thoughts, sees with their eyes, speaks with their tongues. His strains are such as he himself—*per se*—would not, perhaps could not, have originated. In this light he may be said to bring to his subject not one mind, but several; he becomes not one poet, but many; for each actor in his drama has a share, and an important share, in the lyrical *estro* to which he gives birth. This it is which has imparted any verve, variety, or dramatic character they possess, to the ballads contained in this production. Turpin I look upon as the real songster of "Black Bess;" to Jerry Juniper I am unquestionably indebted for a flash melody which, without his hint, would never have been written, while to the sexton I owe the solitary gleam of light I have been enabled to throw upon the horrors and mystery of the churchyard.

As I have casually alluded to the flash song of Jerry Juniper, I may, perhaps, be allowed to make a few observations upon this branch of versification. It is somewhat curious, with a dialect so racy, idiomatic, and plastic as our own cant, that its metrical capabilities should have been so little essayed. The French have numerous *chansons d'argot*, ranging from the time of Charles

Bourdigné and Villon down to that of Vidocq and Victor Hugo, the last of whom has enlivened the horrors of his "*Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*" by a festive song of this class. The Spaniards possess a large collection of *Romances de Germania*, by various authors, amongst whom Quevedo holds a distinguished place. We, on the contrary, have scarcely any slang songs of merit. With a race of depredators so melodious and convivial as our highwaymen, this is the more to be wondered at. Had they no bards amongst their bands? Was there no minstrel at hand to record their exploits? I can only call to mind one robber who was a poet,—Delany, and *he* was an Irishman. This barrenness, I have shown, is not attributable to the poverty of the soil, but to the want of due cultivation. Materials are at hand in abundance, but there have been few operators. Dekker, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Ben Jonson have all dealt largely in this jargon, but not lyrically; and one of the earliest and best specimens of a canting-song occurs in Brome's "*Jovial Crew*;" and in the "*Adventures of Bamfylde Moore Carew*" there is a solitary ode, addressed by the mendicant fraternity to their newly-elected monarch; but it has little humor, and can scarcely be called a genuine canting-song. This ode brings us down to our own time; to the effusions of the illustrious Pierce Egan; to Tom Moore's Flights of "*Fancy*;" to John Jackson's famous chant, "*On the High Toby Spice Flash the Muzzle*," cited by Lord Byron in a note to "*Don Juan*;" and to the glorious Irish ballad, worth them all put together, entitled "*The Night Before Larry Was Stretched*." This facetious performance

is attributed to the late Dean Burrowes, of Cork. It is worthy of note that almost all modern aspirants to the graces of the *Musa Pedestris* are Irishmen. Of all rhymesters of the "*Road*," however, Dean Burrowes is, as yet, most fully entitled to the laurel. Larry is quite "the potato!"

And here, as the candidates are so few, and their pretensions so humble,

I can't help putting in my claim for praise

I venture to affirm that I have done something more than has been accomplished by my predecessors, or contemporaries, with the significant language under consideration. I have written a purely flash song, of which the great and peculiar merit consists in its being utterly incomprehensible to the uninformed understanding, while its meaning must be perfectly clear and perspicuous to the practised *patterer* of *Romany*, or *Pedlar's French*. I have, moreover, been the first to introduce and naturalize amongst us a measure which, though common enough in the Argotic minstrelsy of France, has been hitherto utterly unknown to our *pedestrian* poetry. Some years afterwards, the song alluded to, better known under the title of "*Nix My Dolly, Pals,—Fake Away!*" sprang into extraordinary popularity, being set to music by Rodwell, and chanted by glorious Paul Bedford and clever little Mrs. Keeley.

Before quitting the subject of these songs, I may mention

that they probably would not have been written at all if one of the earliest of them—a chance experiment—had not excited the warm approbation of my friend, Charles Ollier, author of the striking romance of "Ferrers." This induced me to prosecute the vein accidentally opened.

Turpin was the hero of my boyhood. I had always a strange passion for highwaymen, and have listened by the hour to their exploits, as narrated by my father, and especially to those of "Dauntless Dick," that "chief minion of the moon." One of Turpin's adventures in particular, the ride to Hough Green, which took deep hold of my fancy, I have recorded in song. When a boy, I have often lingered by the side of the deep old road where this robbery was committed, to cast wistful glances into its mysterious windings; and when night deepened the shadows of the trees, have urged my horse on his journey, from a vague apprehension of a visit from the ghostly highwayman. And then there was the Bollin, with its shelvy banks, which Turpin cleared at a bound; the broad meadows over which he winged his flight; the pleasant bowling-green of the pleasant old inn at Hough, where he produced his watch to the Cheshire squires, with whom he was upon terms of intimacy; all brought something of the gallant robber to mind. No wonder, in after-years, in selecting a highwayman for a character in a tale, I should choose my old favorite, Dick Turpin.

In reference to two of the characters here introduced, and drawn from personages living at the time the tale was written, it

may be mentioned that poor Jerry Juniper met his death from an accident at Chichester, while he was proceeding to Goodwood races; and that the knight of Malta,—Mr. Tom, a brewer of Truro, the self-styled Sir William Courtenay, who played the strange tricks at Canterbury chronicled in a song given in these pages,—after his release from Banning Heath Asylum, was shot through the head while leading on a mob of riotous Kentish yeomen, whom he had persuaded that he was the Messiah!

If the design of Romance be, what it has been held, the exposition of a useful truth by means of an interesting story, I fear I have but imperfectly fulfilled the office imposed upon me; having, as I will freely confess, had, throughout, an eye rather to the reader's amusement than his edification. One wholesome moral, however, may, I trust, be gathered from the perusal of this Tale; namely, that, without due governance of the passions, high aspirations and generous emotions will little avail their possessor. The impersonations of the Tempter, the Tempted, and the Better Influence may be respectively discovered, by those who care to cull the honey from the flower, in the Sexton, in Luke, and in Sybil.

The chief object I had in view in making the present essay was to see how far the infusion of a warmer and more genial current into the veins of old Romance would succeed in reviving her fluttering and feeble pulses. The attempt has succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectation. Romance, if I am not mistaken, is destined shortly to undergo an important change. Modified

by the German and French writers—by Hoffman, Tieck, Hugo, Dumas, Balzac, and Paul Lecroix (*le Bibliophile Jacob*)—the structure commenced in our own land by Horace Walpole, Monk Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe, and Maturin, but left imperfect and inharmonious, requires, now that the rubbish which choked up its approach is removed, only the hand of the skilful architect to its entire renovation and perfection.

And now, having said my say, I must bid you, worthy reader, farewell. Beseeching you, in the words of old Rabelais, "to interpret all my sayings and doings in the perfectest sense. Reverence the cheese-like brain that feeds you with all these jolly maggots; and do what lies in you to keep me always merry. Be frolic now, my lads! Cheer up your hearts, and joyfully read the rest, with all ease of your body, and comfort of your reins."

Kensal Manor-House,
December 15, 1849.

BOOK I
THE WEDDING RING

It has been observed, and I am apt to believe it is an observation which will generally be found true, that before a terrible truth comes to light, there are certain murmuring whispers fly before it, and prepare the minds of men for the reception of the truth itself.
Gallick Reports:
Case of the Count Saint Geran.

CHAPTER I
THE VAULT

Let me know, therefore, fully the intent
Of this thy dismal preparation—
This talk fit for a charnel.

Webster.

Within a sepulchral vault, and at midnight, two persons were seated. The chamber was of singular construction and considerable extent. The roof was of solid stone masonry, and rose in a wide semicircular arch to the height of about seventeen feet, measured from the centre of the ceiling to the ground

floor, while the sides were divided by slight partition-walls into ranges of low, narrow catacombs. The entrance to each cavity was surrounded by an obtusely-pointed arch, resting upon slender granite pillars; and the intervening space was filled up with a variety of tablets, escutcheons, shields, and inscriptions, recording the titles and heraldic honors of the departed. There were no doors to the niches; and within might be seen piles of coffins, packed one upon another, till the floor groaned with the weight of lead. Against one of the pillars, upon a hook, hung a rack of tattered, time-out-of-mind hatchments; and in the centre of the tomb might be seen the effigies of Sir Ranulph de Rokewode, the builder of the mausoleum, and the founder of the race who slept within its walls. This statue, wrought in black marble, differed from most monumental carved-work, in that its posture was erect and lifelike. Sir Ranulph was represented as sheathed in a complete suit of mail, decorated with his emblazoned and gilded surcoat, his arm leaning upon the pommel of a weighty curtal-axe. The attitude was that of stern repose. A conically-formed helmet rested upon the brow; the beaver was raised, and revealed harsh but commanding features. The golden spur of knighthood was fixed upon the heel; and, at the feet, enshrined in a costly sarcophagus of marble, dug from the same quarry as the statue, rested the mortal remains of one of "the sternest knights to his mortal foe that ever put speare in the rest."

Streaming in a wavering line upon the roof, the sickly flame of

a candle partially fell upon the human figures before alluded to, throwing them into darkest relief, and casting their opaque and fantastical shadows along the ground. An old coffin upon a bier, we have said, served the mysterious twain for a seat. Between them stood a bottle and a glass, evidences that whatever might be the ulterior object of their stealthy communion, the immediate comfort of the creature had not been altogether overlooked. At the feet of one of the personages were laid a mattock, a horn lantern—from which the candle had been removed—, a crowbar, and a bunch of keys. Near to these implements of a vocation which the reader will readily surmise, rested a strange superannuated terrier with a wiry back and frosted muzzle; a head minus an ear, and a leg wanting a paw. His master, for such we shall suppose him, was an old man with a lofty forehead, covered with a singularly shaped nightcap, and clothed, as to his lower limbs, with tight, ribbed, gray worsted hose, ascending externally, after a bygone fashion, considerably above the knee. The old man's elbow rested upon the handle of his spade, his wrist supported his chin, and his gray glassy eyes, glimmering like marsh-meteors in the candle-light, were fixed upon his companion with a glance of searching scrutiny.

The object of his investigation, a much more youthful and interesting person, seemed lost in reverie, and alike insensible to time, place, and the object of the meeting. With both hands grasped round the barrel of a fowling-piece, and his face leaning upon the same support, the features were entirely concealed from

view; the light, too, being at the back, and shedding its rays over, rather than upon his person, aided his disguise. Yet, even thus imperfectly defined, the outline of the head, and the proportions of the figure, were eminently striking and symmetrical. Attired in a rough forester's costume, of the mode of 1737, and of the roughest texture and rudest make, his wild garb would have determined his rank as sufficiently humble in the scale of society, had not a certain loftiness of manner, and bold, though reckless deportment, argued pretensions on the part of the wearer to a more elevated station in life, and contradicted, in a great measure, the impression produced by the homely appearance of his habiliments. A cap of shaggy brown fur, fancifully, but not ungracefully fashioned, covered his head, from beneath which, dropping, in natural clusters over his neck and shoulders, a cloud of raven hair escaped. Subsequently, when his face was more fully revealed, it proved to be that of a young man, of dark aspect, and grave, melancholy expression of countenance, approaching even to the stern, when at rest; though sufficiently animated and earnest when engaged in conversation, or otherwise excited. His features were regular, delicately formed, and might be characterized as singularly handsome, were it not for a want of roundness in the contour of the face which gave the lineaments a thin, worn look, totally distinct, however, from haggardness or emaciation. The nose was delicate and fine; the nostril especially so; the upper lip was short, curling, graceful, and haughtily expressive. As to complexion, his skin had a truly Spanish

warmth and intensity of coloring. His figure, when raised, was tall and masculine, and though slight, exhibited great personal vigor.

We will now turn to his companion, the old man with the great gray glittering eyes. Peter Bradley, of Rookwood—comitatû Ebor—, where he had exercised the vocation of sexton for the best part of a life already drawn out to the full span ordinarily allotted to mortality, was an odd caricature of humanity. His figure was lean, and almost as lank as a skeleton. His bald head reminded one of a bleached skull, allowing for the overhanging and hoary brows. Deep-seated, and sunken within their sockets, his gray orbs gleamed with intolerable lustre. Few could endure his gaze; and, aware of his power, Peter seldom failed to exercise it. He had likewise another habit, which, as it savored of insanity, made him an object of commiseration with some, while it rendered him yet more obnoxious to others. The habit we allude to, was the indulgence of wild screaming laughter at times when all merriment should be checked; and when the exhibition of levity must proceed from utter disregard of human grief and suffering, or from mental alienation.

Wearied with the prolonged silence, Peter at length condescended to speak. His voice was harsh and grating as a rusty hinge.

"Another glass?" said he, pouring out a modicum of the pale fluid.

His companion shook his head.

"It will keep out the cold," continued the sexton, pressing the liquid upon him: "and you, who are not so much accustomed as I am to the damps of a vault, may suffer from them. Besides," added he, sneeringly, "it will give you courage."

His companion answered not. But the flash of his eye resented the implied reproach.

"Nay, never stare at me so hard, Luke," continued the sexton; "I doubt neither your courage nor your firmness. But if you won't drink, I will. Here's to the rest eternal of Sir Piers Rookwood! You'll say amen to that pledge, or you are neither grandson of mine, nor offspring of his loins."

"Why should I reverence his memory," answered Luke, bitterly, refusing the proffered potion, "who showed no fatherly love for me? He disowned *me* in life: in death I disown *him*. Sir Piers Rookwood was no father of mine."

"He was as certainly your father, as Susan Bradley, your mother, was my daughter," rejoined the sexton.

"And, surely," cried Luke, impetuously, "*you* need not boast of the connection! 'Tis not for you, old man, to couple their names together—to exult in your daughter's disgrace and your own dishonor. Shame! shame! Speak not of them in the same breath, if you would not have me invoke curses on the dead! *I* have no reverence—whatever *you* may have—for the seducer—for the murderer of my mother."

"You have choice store of epithets, in sooth, good grandson," rejoined Peter, with a chuckling laugh. "Sir Piers a murderer!"

"Tush!" exclaimed Luke, indignantly, "affect not ignorance. You have better knowledge than I have of the truth or falsehood of the dark tale that has gone abroad respecting my mother's fate; and unless report has belied you foully, had substantial reasons for keeping sealed lips on the occasion. But to change this painful subject," added he, with a sudden alteration of manner, "at what hour did Sir Piers Rookwood die?"

"On Thursday last, in the night-time. The exact hour I know not," replied the sexton.

"Of what ailment?"

"Neither do I know that. His end was sudden, yet not without a warning sign."

"What warning?" inquired Luke.

"Neither more nor less than the death-omen of the house. You look astonished. Is it possible you have never heard of the ominous Lime-Tree, and the Fatal Bough? Why, 'tis a common tale hereabouts, and has been for centuries. Any old crone would tell it you. Peradventure, you *have* seen the old avenue of lime-trees leading to the hall, nearly a quarter of a mile in length, and as noble a row of timber as any in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Well, there is one tree—the last on the left hand before you come to the clock-house—larger than all the rest—a huge piece of timber, with broad spreading branches, and of I know not what girth in the trunk. That tree is, in some mysterious manner, connected with the family of Rookwood, and immediately previous to the death of one of that line, a

branch is sure to be shed from the parent stem, prognosticating his doom. But you shall hear the legend." And in a strange sepulchral tone, not inappropriate, however, to his subject, Peter chanted the following ballad:

THE LEGEND OF THE LIME-TREE

Amid the grove o'er-arched above with lime-trees old and tall
—The avenue that leads unto the Rookwood's ancient hall—,
High o'er the rest its towering crest one tree rears to the sky,
And wide out-flings, like mighty wings, its arms umbrageously.

Seven yards its base would scarce embrace—a goodly tree I ween,
With silver bark, and foliage dark, of melancholy green;
And mid its boughs two ravens house, and build from year to year,
Their black brood hatch—their black brood watch—then screaming disappear.

In that old tree when playfully the summer breezes sigh,
Its leaves are stirred, and there is heard a low and plaintive cry;
And when in shrieks the storm blast speaks its reverend boughs among,

Sad wailing moans, like human groans, the concert harsh prolong.
But whether gale or calm prevail, or threatening cloud hath fled,
By hand of Fate, predestinate, a limb that tree will shed;
A verdant bough—untouched, I trow, by axe or tempest's breath—
To Rookwood's head an omen dread of fast-approaching death.

Some think that tree instinct must be with preternatural power.
Like 'larum bell Death's note to knell at Fate's appointed hour;
While some avow that on its bough are fearful traces seen,
Red as the stains from human veins, commingling with the green.

Others, again, there are maintain that on the shattered bark
A print is made, where fiends have laid their scathing talons dark;
That, ere it falls, the raven calls thrice from that wizard bough;
And that each cry doth signify what space the Fates allow.

In olden days, the legend says, as grim Sir Ranulph view'd
A wretched hag her footsteps drag beneath his lordly wood.
His bloodhounds twain he called amain, and straightway gave her chase;
Was never seen in forest green, so fierce, so fleet a race!

With eyes of flame to Ranulph came each red and ruthless hound,
While mangled, torn—a sight forlorn!—the hag lay on the ground;
E'en where she lay was turned the clay, and limb and reeking bone
Within the earth, with ribald mirth, by Ranulph grim were thrown.

And while as yet the soil was wet with that poor witch's gore,
A lime-tree stake did Ranulph take, and pierced her bosom's core;
And, strange to tell, what next befell!—that branch at once took root,
And richly fed, within its bed, strong suckers forth did shoot.

From year to year fresh boughs appear—it waxes huge in size;
And, with wild glee, this prodigy Sir Ranulph grim espies.
One day, when he, beneath that tree, reclined in joy and pride,
A branch was found upon the ground—the next, Sir Ranulph died!

And from that hour a fatal power has ruled that Wizard Tree,
To Ranulph's line a warning sign of doom and destiny:
For when a bough is found, I trow, beneath its shade to lie,
Ere suns shall rise thrice in the skies a Rookwood sure shall die!

"And such an omen preceded Sir Piers's demise?" said Luke, who had listened with some attention to his grandsire's song.

"Unquestionably," replied the sexton. "Not longer ago than Tuesday morning, I happened to be sauntering down the avenue I have just described. I know not what took me thither at that early hour, but I wandered leisurely on till I came nigh the Wizard Lime-Tree. Great Heaven! what a surprise awaited me! a huge branch lay right across the path. It had evidently just fallen, for the leaves were green and unwithered; the sap still oozed from the splintered wood; and there was neither trace of knife nor hatchet on the bark. I looked up among the boughs to mark the spot from whence it had been torn by the hand of Fate—for no human hand had done it—and saw the pair of ancestral ravens perched amid the foliage, and croaking as those carrion fowl are wont to do when they scent a carcass afar off. Just then a livelier sound saluted my ears. The cheering cry of a pack of hounds resounded from the courts, and the great gates being thrown open, out issued Sir Piers, attended by a troop of his roystering companions, all on horseback, and all making the welkin ring with their vociferations. Sir Piers laughed as loudly as the rest, but his mirth was speedily checked. No sooner had his horse —old Rook, his favorite steed, who never swerved at stake or pale before—set eyes upon the accursed branch, than he started as if the fiend stood before him, and, rearing backwards, flung his rider from the saddle. At this moment, with loud screams, the wizard ravens took flight. Sir Piers was somewhat hurt by

the fall, but he was more frightened than hurt; and though he tried to put a bold face on the matter, it was plain that his efforts to recover himself were fruitless. Dr. Titus Tyrconnel and that wild fellow Jack Palmer—who has lately come to the hall, and of whom you know something—tried to rally him. But it would not do. He broke up the day's sport, and returned dejectedly to the hall. Before departing, however, he addressed a word to me in private, respecting you; and pointed, with a melancholy shake of the head, to the fatal branch. '*It is my death-warrant*,' said he, gloomily. And so it proved; two days afterwards his doom was accomplished."

"And do you place faith in this idle legend?" asked Luke, with affected indifference, although it was evident, from his manner, that he himself was not so entirely free from a superstitious feeling of credulity as he would have it appear.

"Certes," replied the sexton. "I were more difficult to be convinced than the unbelieving disciple else. Thrice hath it occurred to my own knowledge, and ever with the same result: first, with Sir Reginald; secondly, with thy own mother; and lastly, as I have just told thee, with Sir Piers."

"I thought you said, even now, that this death omen, if such it be, was always confined to the immediate family of Rookwood, and not to mere inmates of the mansion."

"To the heads only of that house, be they male or female."

"Then how could it apply to my mother? Was *she* of that house? Was *she* a wife?"

"Who shall say she was *not*?" rejoined the sexton.

"Who shall say she *was* so?" cried Luke, repeating the words with indignant emphasis—"who will avouch *that*?"

A smile, cold as a wintry sunbeam, played upon the sexton's rigid lips.

"I will bear this no longer," cried Luke; "anger me not, or look to yourself. In a word, have you anything to tell me respecting her? if not, let me begone."

"I have. But I will not be hurried by a boy like you," replied Peter, doggedly. "Go, if you will, and take the consequences. My lips are sealed forever, and I have much to say—much that it behoves you to know."

"Be brief, then. When you sought me out this morning, in my retreat with the gipsy gang at Davenham Wood, you bade me meet you in the porch of Rookwood Church at midnight. I was true to my appointment."

"And I will keep my promise," replied the sexton. "Draw closer, that I may whisper in thine ear. Of every Rookwood who lies around us—and all that ever bore the name, except Sir Piers himself—who lies in state at the hall—, are here—not one—mark what I say—not one male branch of the house but has been suspected–"

"Of what?"

"Of murder!" returned the sexton, in a hissing whisper.

"Murder!" echoed Luke, recoiling.

"There is one dark stain—one foul blot on all. Blood—blood

hath been spilt."

"By all?"

"Ay, and *such* blood! theirs was no common crime. Even murder hath its degrees. Theirs was of the first class."

"Their wives!—you cannot mean that?"

"Ay, their wives!—I do. You have heard it, then? Ha! ha! 'tis a trick they had. Did you ever hear the old saying?

> No mate ever brook would
> A Rook of the Rookwood!

A merry saying it is, and true. No woman ever stood in a Rookwood's way but she was speedily removed—that's certain. They had all, save poor Sir Piers, the knack of stopping a troublesome woman's tongue, and practised it to perfection. A rare art, eh?"

"What have the misdeeds of his ancestry to do with Sir Piers," muttered Luke, "much less with my mother?"

"Everything. If he could not rid himself of his wife—and she is a match for the devil himself—, the *mistress* might be more readily set aside."

"Have you absolute knowledge of aught?" asked Luke, his voice tremulous with emotion.

"Nay, I but hinted."

"Such hints are worse than open speech. Let me know the worst. Did he kill her?" And Luke glared at the sexton as if he

would have penetrated his secret soul.

But Peter was not easily fathomed. His cold, bright eye returned Luke's gaze steadfastly, as he answered, composedly:

"I have said all I know."

"But not all you *think*."

"Thoughts should not always find utterance, else we might often endanger our own safety, and that of others."

"An idle subterfuge—and, from you, worse than idle. I will have an answer, yea or nay. Was it poison—was it steel?"

"Enough—she died."

"No, it is not enough. When? Where?"

"In her sleep—in her bed."

"Why, that was natural."

A wrinkling smile crossed the sexton's brow.

"What means that horrible gleam of laughter?" exclaimed Luke, grasping the shoulder of the man of graves with such force as nearly to annihilate him. "Speak, or I will strangle you. She died, you say, in her sleep?"

"She did so," replied the sexton, shaking off Luke's hold.

"And was it to tell me that I had a mother's murder to avenge, that you brought me to the tomb of her destroyer—when he is beyond the reach of my vengeance?"

Luke exhibited so much frantic violence of manner and gesture, that the sexton entertained some little apprehension that his intellects were unsettled by the shock of the intelligence. It was, therefore, in what he intended for a soothing tone that he

attempted to solicit his grandson's attention.

"I will hear nothing more," interrupted Luke, and the vaulted chamber rang with his passionate lamentations. "Am I the sport of this mocking fiend?" cried he, "to whom my agony is derision —my despair a source of enjoyment—beneath whose withering glance my spirit shrinks—who, with half-expressed insinuations, tortures my soul, awakening fancies that goad me on to dark and desperate deeds? Dead mother! upon thee I call. If in thy grave thou canst hear the cry of thy most wretched son, yearning to avenge thee—answer me, if thou hast the power. Let me have some token of the truth or falsity of these wild suppositions, that I may wrestle against this demon. But no," added he, in accents of despair, "no ear listens to me, save his to whom my wretchedness is food for mockery."

"Could the dead hear thee, thy mother might do so," returned the sexton. "She lies within this space."

Luke staggered back, as if struck by a sudden shot. He spoke not, but fell with a violent shock against a pile of coffins, at which he caught for support.

"What have I done?" he exclaimed, recoiling.

A thundering crash resounded through the vault. One of the coffins, dislodged from its position by his fall, tumbled to the ground, and, alighting upon its side, split asunder.

"Great Heavens! what is this?" cried Luke, as a dead body, clothed in all the hideous apparel of the tomb, rolled forth to his feet.

"It is your mother's corpse," answered the sexton, coldly; "I brought you hither to behold it. But you have anticipated my intentions."

"*This* my mother?" shrieked Luke, dropping upon his knees by the body, and seizing one of its chilly hands, as it lay upon the floor, with the face upwards.

The sexton took the candle from the sconce.

"Can this be death?" shouted Luke. "Impossible! Oh, God! she stirs—she moves. The light!—quick. I see her stir! This is dreadful!"

"Do not deceive yourself," said the sexton, in a tone which betrayed more emotion than was his wont. "'Tis the bewilderment of fancy. She will never stir again."

And he shaded the candle with his hand, so as to throw the light full upon the face of the corpse. It was motionless, as that of an image carved in stone. No trace of corruption was visible upon the rigid, yet exquisite tracery of its features. A profuse cloud of raven hair, escaped from its swathements in the fall, hung like a dark veil over the bosom and person of the dead, and presented a startling contrast to the waxlike hue of the skin and the pallid cereclothes. Flesh still adhered to the hand, though it mouldered into dust within the gripe of Luke, as he pressed the fingers to his lips. The shroud was disposed like night-gear about her person, and from without its folds a few withered flowers had fallen. A strong aromatic odor, of a pungent nature, was diffused around; giving evidence that the

art by which the ancient Egyptians endeavored to rescue their kindred from decomposition had been resorted to, to preserve the fleeting charms of the unfortunate Susan Bradley.

A pause of awful silence succeeded, broken only by the convulsive respiration of Luke. The sexton stood by, apparently an indifferent spectator of the scene of horror. His eye wandered from the dead to the living, and gleamed with a peculiar and indefinable expression, half apathy, half abstraction. For one single instant, as he scrutinized the features of his daughter, his brow, contracted by anger, immediately afterwards was elevated in scorn. But otherwise you would have sought in vain to read the purport of that cold, insensible glance, which dwelt for a brief space on the face of the mother, and settled eventually upon her son. At length the withered flowers attracted his attention. He stooped to pick up one of them.

"Faded as the hand that gathered ye—as the bosom on which ye were strewn!" he murmured. "No sweet smell left—but—faugh!" Holding the dry leaves to the flame of the candle, they were instantly ignited, and the momentary brilliance played like a smile upon the features of the dead. Peter observed the effect. "Such was thy life," he exclaimed; "a brief, bright sparkle, followed by dark, utter extinction!"

Saying which, he flung the expiring ashes of the floweret from his hand.

CHAPTER II
THE SKELETON HAND

Duch. You are very cold.
I fear you are not well after your travel.
Ha! lights.–Oh horrible!

Fer. Let her have lights enough.

Duch. What witchcraft doth he practise, that he hath left
A dead hand here?

Duchess of Malfy.

The sexton's waning candle now warned him of the progress of time, and having completed his arrangements, he addressed himself to Luke, intimating his intention of departing. But receiving no answer, and remarking no signs of life about his grandson, he began to be apprehensive that he had fallen into a swoon. Drawing near to Luke, he took him gently by the arm. Thus disturbed, Luke groaned aloud.

"I am glad to find you can breathe, if it be only after that melancholy fashion," said the sexton; "but come, I have wasted time enough already. You must indulge your grief elsewhere."

"Leave me," sighed Luke.

"What, here? It were as much as my office is worth. You can

return some other night. But go you must, now—at least, if you take on thus. I never calculated upon a scene like this, or it had been long ere I brought you hither. So come away; yet, stay;—but first lend me a hand to replace the body in the coffin."

"Touch it not," exclaimed Luke; "she shall not rest another hour within these accursed walls. I will bear her hence myself." And, sobbing hysterically, he relapsed into his former insensibility.

"Poh! this is worse than midsummer madness," said Peter; "the lad is crazed with grief, and all about a mother who has been four-and-twenty years in her grave. I will e'en put her out of the way myself."

Saying which, he proceeded, as noiselessly as possible, to raise the corpse in his arms, and deposited it softly within its former tenement. Carefully as he executed his task, he could not accomplish it without occasioning a slight accident to the fragile frame. Insensible as he was, Luke had not relinquished the hold he maintained of his mother's hand. And when Peter lifted the body, the ligaments connecting the hand with the arm were suddenly snapped asunder. It would appear afterwards, that this joint had been tampered with, and partially dislocated. Without, however, entering into further particulars in this place, it may be sufficient to observe that the hand, detached from the socket at the wrist, remained within the gripe of Luke; while, ignorant of the mischief he had occasioned, the sexton continued his labors unconsciously, until the noise which he of necessity

made in stamping with his heel upon the plank, recalled his grandson to sensibility. The first thing that the latter perceived, upon collecting his faculties, were the skeleton fingers twined within his own.

"What have you done with the body? Why have you left this with me?" demanded he.

"It was not my intention to have done so," answered the sexton, suspending his occupation. "I have just made fast the lid, but it is easily undone. You had better restore it."

"Never," returned Luke, staring at the bony fragment.

"Pshaw! of what advantage is a dead hand? 'Tis an unlucky keepsake, and will lead to mischief. The only use I ever heard of such a thing being turned to, was in the case of Bow-legged Ben, who was hanged in irons for murder, on Hardchase Heath, on the York Road, and whose hand was cut off at the wrist the first night to make a Hand of Glory, or Dead Man's Candle. Hast never heard what the old song says?" And without awaiting his grandson's response, Peter broke into the following wild strain:

THE HAND OF GLORY [1]

From the corse that hangs on the roadside tree
—A murderer's corse it needs must be—,
Sever the right hand carefully:—

[1] See the celebrated recipe for the Hand of Glory in "*Les Secrets du Petit Albert*."

Sever the hand that the deed hath done,
Ere the flesh that clings to the bones be gone;
In its dry veins must blood be none.
Those ghastly fingers white and cold,
Within a winding-sheet enfold;
Count the mystic count of seven:
Name the Governors of Heaven.[2]
Then in earthen vessel place them,
And with dragon-wort encase them,
Bleach them in the noonday sun,
Till the marrow melt and run,
Till the flesh is pale and wan,
As a moon-ensilvered cloud,
As an unpolluted shroud.
Next within their chill embrace
The dead man's Awful Candle place;
Of murderer's fat must that candle be
—You may scoop it beneath the roadside tree—,
Of wax, and of Lapland sisame.
Its wick must be twisted of hair of the dead,
By the crow and her brood on the wild waste shed.
Wherever that terrible light shall burn
Vainly the sleeper may toss and turn;
His leaden lids shall he ne'er unclose
So long as that magical taper glows.
Life and treasures shall he command
Who knoweth the charm of the Glorious Hand!
But of black cat's gall let him aye have care,

[2] The seven planets, so called by Mercurius Trismegistus.

And of screech-owl's venomous blood beware!

"Peace!" thundered Luke, extending his mother's hand towards the sexton. "What seest thou?"

"I see something shine. Hold it nigher the light. Ha! that is strange, truly. How came that ring there?"

"Ask of Sir Piers! ask of her *husband*!" shouted Luke, with a wild burst of exulting laughter. "Ha! ha! ha! 'tis a wedding-ring! And look! the finger is bent. It must have been placed upon it in her lifetime. There is no deception in this—no trickery—ha!"

"It would seem not; the sinew must have been contracted in life. The tendons are pulled down so tightly, that the ring could not be withdrawn without breaking the finger."

"You are sure that coffin contains her body?"

"As sure as I am that this carcass is my own."

"The hand—'tis hers. Can any doubt exist?"

"Wherefore should it? It was broken from the arm by accident within this moment. I noticed not the occurrence, but it must have been so."

"Then it follows that she was wedded, and I am not–"

"Illegitimate. For your own sake I am glad of it."

"My heart will burst. Oh! could I but establish the fact of this marriage, her wrongs would be indeed avenged."

"Listen to me, Luke," said the sexton, solemnly. "I told you, when I appointed this midnight interview, I had a secret to communicate. That secret is now revealed—that secret was your

mother's marriage."

"And it was known to you during her lifetime?"

"It was. But I was sworn to secrecy."

"You have proofs then?"

"I have nothing beyond Sir Piers's word—and he is silent now."

"By whom was the ceremony performed?"

"By a Romish priest—a Jesuit—one Father Checkley, at that time an inmate of the hall; for Sir Piers, though he afterwards abjured it, at that time professed the Catholic faith, and this Checkley officiated as his confessor and counsellor; as the partner of his pleasures, and the prompter of his iniquities. He was your father's evil genius."

"Is he still alive?"

"I know not. After your mother's death he left the hall. I have said he was a Jesuit, and I may add, that he was mixed up in dark political intrigues, in which your father was too feeble a character to take much share. But though too weak to guide, he was a pliant instrument, and this Checkley knew. He moulded him according to his wishes. I cannot tell you what was the nature of their plots. Suffice it, they were such as, if discovered, would have involved your father in ruin. He was saved, however, by his wife."

"And her reward–" groaned Luke.

"Was death," replied Peter, coldly. "What Jesuit ever forgave a wrong—real or imaginary? Your mother, I ought to have said, was a Protestant. Hence there was a difference of religious

opinion—the worst of differences that can exist between husband and wife—. Checkley vowed her destruction, and he kept his vow. He was enamored of her beauty. But while he burnt with adulterous desire, he was consumed by fiercest hate —contending, and yet strangely-reconcilable passions—as you may have reason, hereafter, to discover."

"Go on," said Luke, grinding his teeth.

"I have done," returned Peter. "From that hour your father's love for his supposed mistress, and unacknowledged wife, declined; and with his waning love declined her health. I will not waste words in describing the catastrophe that awaited her union. It will be enough to say, she was found one morning a corpse within her bed. Whatever suspicions were attached to Sir Piers were quieted by Checkley, who distributed gold, largely and discreetly. The body was embalmed by Barbara Lovel, the Gipsy Queen."

"My foster-mother!" exclaimed Luke, in a tone of extreme astonishment.

"Ah," replied Peter, "from her you may learn all particulars. You have now seen what remains of your mother. You are in possession of the secret of your birth. The path is before you, and if you would arrive at honor you must pursue it steadily, turning neither to the right nor to the left. Opposition you will meet at each step. But fresh lights may be thrown upon this difficult case. It is in vain to hope for Checkley's evidence, even should the caitiff priest be living. He is himself too deeply implicated—ha!"

Peter stopped, for at this moment the flame of the candle suddenly expired, and the speakers were left in total darkness. Something like a groan followed the conclusion of the sexton's discourse. It was evident that it proceeded not from his grandson, as an exclamation burst from him at the same instant. Luke stretched out his arm. A cold hand seemed to press against his own, communicating a chill like death to his frame.

"Who is between us?" he ejaculated.

"The devil!" cried the sexton, leaping from the coffin-lid with an agility that did him honor. "Is aught between us?"

"I will discharge my gun. Its flash will light us."

"Do so," hastily rejoined Peter. "But not in this direction."

"Get behind me," cried Luke. And he pulled the trigger.

A blaze of vivid light illumined the darkness. Still nothing was visible, save the warrior figure, which was seen for a moment, and then vanished like a ghost. The buck-shot rattled against the further end of the vault.

"Let us go hence," ejaculated the sexton, who had rushed to the door, and thrown it wide open. "Mole! Mole!" cried he, and the dog sprang after him.

"I could have sworn I felt something," said Luke; "whence issued that groan?"

"Ask not whence," replied Peter. "Reach me my mattock, and spade, and the lantern; they are behind you. And stay, it were better to bring away the bottle."

"Take them, and leave me here."

"Alone in the vault?—no, no, Luke, I have not told you half I know concerning that mystic statue. It is said to move—to walk—to raise its axe—be warned, I pray."

"Leave me, or abide, if you will, my coming, in the church. If there is aught that may be revealed to my ear alone, I will not shrink from it, though the dead themselves should arise to proclaim the mystery. It may be—but—go—there are your tools." And he shut the door, with a jar that shook the sexton's frame.

Peter, after some muttered murmurings at the hardihood and madness, as he termed it, of his grandson, disposed his lanky limbs to repose upon a cushioned bench without the communion railing. As the pale moonlight fell upon his gaunt and cadaverous visage, he looked like some unholy thing suddenly annihilated by the presiding influence of that sacred spot. Mole crouched himself in a ring at his master's feet. Peter had not dozed many minutes, when he was aroused by Luke's return. The latter was very pale, and the damp stood in big drops upon his brow.

"Have you made fast the door?" inquired the sexton.

"Here is the key."

"What have you seen?" he next demanded.

Luke made no answer. At that moment, the church clock struck two, breaking the stillness with an iron clang. Luke raised his eyes. A ray of moonlight, streaming obliquely through the painted window, fell upon the gilt lettering of a black mural entablature. The lower part of the inscription was in the shade,

but the emblazonment, and the words—

Orate pro anima Reginaldi Rookwood equitis aurati,

were clear and distinct. Luke trembled, he knew not why, as the sexton pointed to it.

"You have heard of the handwriting upon the wall," said Peter. "Look there!—'His kingdom hath been taken from him.' Ha, ha! Listen to me. Of all thy monster race—of all the race of Rookwood I should say—no demon ever stalked the earth more terrible than him whose tablet you now behold. By him a brother was betrayed; by him a brother's wife was dishonored. Love, honor, friendship, were with him as words. He regarded no ties; he defied and set at naught all human laws and obligations—and yet he was religious, or esteemed so—received the *viaticum*, and died full of years and honors, hugging salvation to his sinful heart. And after death he has yon lying epitaph to record his virtues. *His* virtues! ha, ha! Ask him who preaches to the kneeling throng gathering within this holy place what shall be the murderer's portion—and he will answer—*Death!* And yet Sir Reginald was long-lived. The awful question, 'Cain, where is thy brother?' broke not his tranquil slumbers. Luke, I have told you much—but not all. You know not, as yet—nor shall you know your destiny; but you shall be the avenger of infamy and blood. I have a sacred charge committed to my keeping, which, hereafter, I may delegate to you. You *shall* be Sir Luke Rookwood, but the

conditions must be mine to propose."

"No more," said Luke; "my brain reels. I am faint. Let us quit this place, and get into the fresh air." And striding past his grandsire he traversed the aisles with hasty steps. Peter was not slow to follow. The key was applied, and they emerged into the churchyard. The grassy mounds were bathed in the moonbeams, and the two yew-trees, throwing their black jagged shadows over the grave hills, looked like evil spirits brooding over the repose of the righteous.

The sexton noticed the deathly paleness of Luke's countenance, but he fancied it might proceed from the tinge of the sallow moonlight.

"I will be with you at your cottage ere daybreak," said Luke. And turning an angle of the church, he disappeared from view.

"So," exclaimed Peter, gazing after him, "the train is laid; the spark has been applied; the explosion will soon follow. The hour is fast approaching when I shall behold this accursed house shaken to dust, and when my long-delayed vengeance will be gratified. In that hope I am content to drag on the brief remnant of my days. Meanwhile, I must not omit the stimulant. In a short time I may not require it." Draining the bottle to the last drop, he flung it from him, and commenced chanting, in a high key and cracked voice, a wild ditty, the words of which ran as follow:

THE CARRION CROW

The Carrion Crow is a sexton bold.
He raketh the dead from out the mould;
He delveth the ground like a miser old,
Stealthily hiding his store of gold.
Caw! Caw!

The Carrion Crow hath a coat of black,
Silky and sleek like a priest's to his back;
Like a lawyer he grubbeth—no matter what way—
The fouler the offal, the richer his prey.
Caw! Caw! the Carrion Crow!
Dig! Dig! in the ground below!

The Carrion Crow hath a dainty maw,
With savory pickings he crammeth his craw;
Kept meat from the gibbet it pleaseth his whim,
It can never *hang* too long for him!
Caw! Caw!

The Carrion Crow smelleth powder, 'tis said,
Like a soldier escheweth the taste of cold lead;
No jester, or mime, hath more marvellous wit,
For, wherever he lighteth, he maketh a hit!
Caw! Caw! the Carrion Crow!

Dig! Dig! in the ground below!

Shouldering his spade, and whistling to his dog, the sexton quitted the churchyard.

Peter had not been gone many seconds, when a dark figure, muffled in a wide black mantle, emerged from among the tombs surrounding the church; gazed after him for a few seconds, and then, with a menacing gesture, retreated behind the ivied buttresses of the gray old pile.

CHAPTER III
THE PARK

Brian. Ralph! hearest thou any stirring?
Ralph. I heard one speak here, hard by, in the hollow. Peace! master, speak low. Nouns! if I do not hear a bow go off, and the buck bray, I never heard deer in my life.
Bri. Stand, or I'll shoot.
Sir Arthur. Who's there?
Bri. I am the keeper, and do charge you stand. You have stolen my deer.
Merry Devil of Edmonton.

Luke's first impulse had been to free himself from the restraint imposed by his grandsire's society. He longed to commune with himself. Leaping the small boundary-wall, which defended the churchyard from a deep green lane, he hurried along in a direction contrary to that taken by the sexton, making the best of his way until he arrived at a gap in the high-banked hazel hedge which overhung the road. Heedless of the impediments thrown in his way by the undergrowth of a rough ring fence, he struck through the opening that presented itself, and, climbing over the moss-grown paling, trod presently upon the elastic sward of Rookwood Park.

A few minutes' rapid walking brought him to the summit of a rising ground crowned with aged oaks and, as he passed beneath

their broad shadows, his troubled spirit, soothed by the quietude of the scene, in part resumed its serenity.

Luke yielded to the gentle influence of the time and hour. The stillness of the spot allayed the irritation of his frame, and the dewy chillness cooled the fever of his brow. Leaning for support against the gnarled trunk of one of the trees, he gave himself up to contemplation. The events of the last hour—of his whole existence—passed in rapid review before him. The thought of the wayward, vagabond life he had led; of the wild adventures of his youth; of all he had been; of all he had *done*, of all he had endured—crowded his mind; and then, like the passing of a cloud flitting across the autumnal moon, and occasionally obscuring the smiling landscape before him, his soul was shadowed by the remembrance of the awful revelations of the last hour, and the fearful knowledge he had acquired of his mother's fate—of his father's guilt.

The eminence on which he stood was one of the highest points of the park, and commanded a view of the hall, which might be a quarter of a mile distant, discernible through a broken vista of trees, its whitened walls glimmering in the moonlight, and its tall chimney spiring far from out the round masses of wood in which it lay embosomed. The ground gradually sloped in that direction, occasionally rising into swells, studded with magnificent timber—dipping into smooth dells, or stretching out into level glades, until it suddenly sank into a deep declivity, that formed an effectual division, without the intervention of a haw-

haw, or other barrier, between the chase and the home-park. A slender stream strayed through this ravine, having found its way thither from a small reservoir, hidden in the higher plantations to the left; and further on, in the open ground, and in a line with the hall, though, of course, much below the level of the building, assisted by many local springs, and restrained by a variety of natural and artificial embankments, this brook spread out into an expansive sheet of water. Crossed by a rustic bridge, the only communication between the parks, the pool found its outlet into the meads below; and even at that distance, and in that still hour, you might almost catch the sound of the brawling waters, as they dashed down the weir in a foaming cascade; while, far away, in the spreading valley, the serpentine meanderings of the slender current might be traced, glittering like silvery threads in the moonshine. The mild beams of the queen of night, then in her meridian, trembled upon the topmost branches of the tall timber, quivering like diamond spray upon the outer foliage; and, penetrating through the interstices of the trees, fell upon the light wreaths of vapor then beginning to arise from the surface of the pool, steeping them in misty splendor, and lending to this part of the picture a character of dreamy and unearthly beauty.

All else was in unison. No sound interrupted the silence of Luke's solitude, except the hooting of a large gray owl, that, scared at his approach, or in search of prey, winged its spectral flight in continuous and mazy circles round his head, uttering at each wheel its startling whoop; or a deep, distant bay, that

ever and anon boomed upon the ear, proceeding from a pack of hounds kennelled in a shed adjoining the pool before mentioned, but which was shrouded from view by the rising mist. No living objects presented themselves, save a herd of deer, crouched in a covert of brown fern beneath the shadow of a few stunted trees, immediately below the point of land on which Luke stood; and although their branching antlers could scarcely be detected from the ramifications of the wood itself, they escaped not his practised ken.

"How often," murmured Luke, "in years gone by, have I traversed these moonlit glades, and wandered amidst these woodlands, on nights heavenly as this—ay, and to some purpose, as yon thinned herd might testify! Every dingle, every dell, every rising brow, every bosky vale and shelving covert, have been as familiar to my track as to that of the fleetest and freest of their number: scarce a tree amidst the thickest of yon outstretching forest with which I cannot claim acquaintance; 'tis long since I have seen them. By Heavens! 'tis beautiful! and it is all my own! Can I forget that it was here I first emancipated myself from thraldom? Can I forget the boundless feeling of delight that danced within my veins when I first threw off the yoke of servitude, and roved unshackled, unrestrained, amidst these woods? The wild intoxicating bliss still tingles to my heart. And they are all my own—my own! Softly, what have we there?"

Luke's attention was arrested by an object which could not fail to interest him, sportsman as he was. A snorting bray was

heard, and a lordly stag stalked slowly and majestically from out the copse. Luke watched the actions of the noble animal with great interest, drawing back into the shade. A hundred yards, or thereabouts, might be between him and the buck. It was within range of ball. Luke mechanically grasped his gun; yet his hand had scarcely raised the piece half way to his shoulder, when he dropped it again to its rest.

"What am I about to do?" he mentally ejaculated. "Why, for mere pastime, should I take away yon noble creature's life, when his carcass would be utterly useless to me? Yet such is the force of habit, that I can scarce resist the impulse that tempted me to fire; and I have known the time, and that not long since, when I should have shown no such self-control."

Unconscious of the danger it had escaped, the animal moved forward with the same stately step. Suddenly it stopped, with ears pricked, as if some sound had smote them. At that instant the click of a gun-lock was heard, at a little distance to the right. The piece had missed fire. An instantaneous report from another gun succeeded; and, with a bound high in air, the buck fell upon his back, struggling in the agonies of death. Luke had at once divined the cause; he was aware that poachers were at hand. He fancied that he knew the parties; nor was he deceived in his conjecture. Two figures issued instantly from a covert on the right, and making to the spot, the first who reached it put an end to the animal's struggles by plunging a knife into its throat. The affrighted herd took to their heels, and were seen darting swiftly

down the chase.

One of the twain, meantime, was occupied in feeling for the deer's fat, when he was approached by the other, who pointed in the direction of the house. The former raised himself from his kneeling posture, and both appeared to listen attentively. Luke fancied he heard a slight sound in the distance; whatever the noise proceeded from, it was evident the deer-stealers were alarmed. They laid hold of the buck, and, dragging it along, concealed the carcass among the tall fern; they then retreated, halting for an instant to deliberate, within a few yards of Luke, who was concealed from their view by the trunk of the tree, behind which he had ensconced his person. They were so near, that he lost not a word of their muttered conference.

"The game's spoiled this time, Rob Rust, any how," growled one, in an angry tone; "the hawks are upon us, and we must leave this brave buck to take care of himself. Curse him!—who'd 'a' thought of Hugh Badger's quitting his bed to-night? Respect for his late master might have kept him quiet the night before the funeral. But look out, lad. Dost see 'em?"

"Ay, thanks to old Oliver—yonder they are," returned the other. "One—two—three—and a muzzled bouser to boot. There's Hugh at the head on 'em. Shall we stand and show fight? I have half a mind for it."

"No, no," replied the first speaker; "that will never do, Rob—no fighting. Why run the risk of being grabb'd for a haunch of venison? Had Luke Bradley or Jack Palmer been with us, it

might have been another affair. As it is, it won't pay. Besides, we've that to do at the hall to-morrow night that may make men of us for the rest of our nat'ral lives. We've pledged ourselves to Jack Palmer, and we can't be off in honor. It won't do to be snabbled in the nick of it. So let's make for the prad in the lane. Keep in the shade as much as you can. Come along, my hearty." And away the two worthies scampered down the hill-side.

"Shall I follow," thought Luke, "and run the risk of falling into the keeper's hand, just at this crisis, too? No, but if I am found here, I shall be taken for one of the gang. Something must be done—ha!—devil take them, here they are already."

Further time was not allowed him for reflection. A hoarse baying was heard, followed by a loud cry from the keepers. The dog had scented out the game; and, as secrecy was no longer necessary, his muzzle had been removed. To rush forth now were certain betrayal; to remain was almost equally assured detection; and, doubting whether he should obtain credence if he delivered himself over in that garb and armed, Luke at once rejected the idea. Just then it flashed across his recollection that his gun had remained unloaded, and he applied himself eagerly to repair this negligence, when he heard the dog in full cry, making swiftly in his direction. He threw himself upon the ground, where the fern was thickest; but this seemed insufficient to baffle the sagacity of the hound—the animal had got his scent, and was baying close at hand. The keepers were drawing nigh. Luke gave himself up for lost. The dog, however, stopped where the two poachers had

halted, and was there completely at fault: snuffing the ground, he bayed, wheeled round, and then set off with renewed barking upon their track. Hugh Badger and his comrades loitered an instant at the same place, looked warily round, and then, as Luke conjectured, followed the course taken by the hound.

Swift as thought, Luke arose, and keeping as much as possible under cover of the trees, started in a cross line for the lane. Rapid as was his flight, it was not without a witness: one of the keeper's assistants, who had lagged behind, gave the view-halloo in a loud voice. Luke pressed forward with redoubled energy, endeavoring to gain the shelter of the plantation, and this he could readily have accomplished, had no impediment been in his way. But his rage and vexation were boundless, when he heard the keeper's cry echoed by shouts immediately below him, and the tongue of the hound resounding in the hollow. He turned sharply round, steering a middle course, and still aiming at the fence. It was evident, from the cheers of his pursuers, that he was in full view, and he heard them encouraging and directing the dog.

Luke had gained the park palings, along which he rushed, in the vain quest of some practicable point of egress, for the fence was higher in this part of the park than elsewhere, owing to the inequality of the ground. He had cast away his gun as useless. But even without that incumbrance, he dared not hazard the delay of climbing the palings. At this juncture a deep breathing was heard close behind him. He threw a glance over his shoulder. Within a few yards was a ferocious bloodhound, with whose savage nature

Luke was well acquainted; the breed, some of which he had already seen, having been maintained at the hall ever since the days of grim old Sir Ranulph. The eyes of the hound were glaring, blood-red; his tongue was hanging out, and a row of keen white fangs was displayed, like the teeth of a shark. There was a growl —a leap—and the dog was close upon him.

Luke's courage was undoubted. But his heart failed him as he heard the roar of the remorseless brute, and felt that he could not avoid an encounter with the animal. His resolution was instantly taken: he stopped short with such suddenness, that the dog, when in the act of springing, flew past him with great violence, and the time, momentary as it was, occupied by the animal in recovering himself, enabled Luke to drop on his knee, and to place one arm, like a buckler, before his face, while he held the other in readiness to grapple his adversary. Uttering a fierce yell, the hound returned to the charge, darting at Luke, who received the assault without flinching; and in spite of a severe laceration of the arm, he seized his foe by the throat, and hurling him upon the ground, jumped with all his force upon his belly. There was a yell of agony—the contest was ended, and Luke was at liberty to pursue his flight unmolested.

Brief as had been the interval required for this combat, it had been sufficient to bring the pursuers within sight of the fugitive. Hugh Badger, who from the acclivity had witnessed the fate of his favorite, with a loud oath discharged the contents of his gun at the head of its destroyer. It was fortunate for Luke that at this

instant he stumbled over the root of a tree—the shot rattled in the leaves as he fell, and the keeper, concluding that he had at least winged his bird, descended more leisurely towards him. As he lay upon the ground, Luke felt that he was wounded; whether by the teeth of the dog, from a stray shot, or from bruises inflicted by the fall, he could not determine. But, smarting with pain, he resolved to wreak his vengeance upon the first person who approached him. He vowed not to be taken with life—to strangle any who should lay hands upon him. At that moment he felt a pressure at his breast. It was the dead hand of his mother!

Luke shuddered. The fire of revenge was quenched. He mentally cancelled his rash oath; yet he could not bring himself to surrender at discretion, and without further effort. The keeper and his assistants were approaching the spot where he lay, and searching for his body. Hugh Badger was foremost, and within a yard of him.

"Confound the rascal!" cried Hugh, "he's not half killed; he seems to breathe."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth ere the speaker was dashed backwards, and lay sprawling upon the sod. Suddenly and unexpectedly, as an Indian chief might rush upon his foes, Luke arose, dashing himself with great violence against Hugh, who happened to stand in his way, and before the startled assistants, who were either too much taken by surprise, or unwilling to draw a trigger, could in any way lay hands upon him, exerting all the remarkable activity which he possessed, he caught hold

of a projecting branch of a tree, and swung himself, at a single bound, fairly over the paling.

Hugh Badger was shortly on his legs, swearing lustily at his defeat. Directing his men to skirt alongside the fence, and make for a particular part of the plantation which he named, and snatching a loaded fowling-piece from one of them, he clambered over the pales, and guided by the crashing branches and other sounds conveyed to his quick ear, he was speedily upon Luke's track.

The plantation through which the chase now took place was not, as might be supposed, a continuation of the ring fence which Luke had originally crossed on his entrance into the park, though girded by the same line of paling, but, in reality, a close pheasant preserve, occupying the banks of a ravine, which, after a deep and tortuous course, terminated in the declivity heretofore described as forming the park boundary. Luke plunged into the heart of this defile, fighting his way downwards, in the direction of the brook. His progress was impeded by a thick undergrowth of brier, and other matted vegetation, as well as by the entanglements thrown in his way by the taller bushes of thorn and hazel, the entwined and elastic branches of which, in their recoil, galled and fretted him, by inflicting smart blows on his face and hands. This was a hardship he usually little regarded. But, upon the present occasion, it had the effect, by irritating his temper, of increasing the thirst of vengeance raging in his bosom.

Through the depths of the ravine welled the shallow stream

before alluded to, and Hugh Badger had no sooner reached its sedgy margin than he lost all trace of the fugitive. He looked cautiously round, listened intently, and inclined his ear to catch the faintest echo. All was still: not a branch shook, not a leaf rustled. Hugh looked aghast. He had made sure of getting a glimpse, and, perhaps, a stray shot at the "poaching rascal," as he termed him, "in the open space, which he was sure the fellow was aiming to reach; and now, all at once, he had disappeared, like a will-o'-the-wisp or a boggart of the clough." However, he could not be far off, and Hugh endeavored to obtain some clue to guide him in his quest. He was not long in detecting recent marks deeply indented in the mud on the opposite bank. Hugh leaped thither at once. Further on, some rushes were trodden down, and there were other indications of the course the fugitive had taken.

"Hark forward!" shouted Hugh, in the joy of his heart at this discovery; and, like a well-trained dog, he followed up with alacrity the scent he had opened. The brook presented still fewer impediments to expedition than the thick copse, and the keeper pursued the wanderings of the petty current, occasionally splashing into the stream. Here and there, the print of a foot on the soil satisfied him he was in the right path. At length he became aware, from the crumbling soil, that the object of his pursuit had scaled the bank, and he forthwith moderated his pace. Halting, he perceived what he took to be a face peeping at him from behind a knot of alders that overhung the steep and shelving bank immediately above him. His gun was instantly at

his shoulder.

"Come down, you infernal deer-stealing scoundrel," cried Hugh, "or I'll blow you to shivers."

No answer was returned: expostulation was vain; and, fearful of placing himself at a disadvantage if he attempted to scale the bank, Hugh fired without further parley. The sharp discharge rolled in echoes down the ravine, and a pheasant, scared by the sound, answered the challenge from a neighboring tree. Hugh was an unerring marksman, and on this occasion his aim had been steadily taken. The result was not precisely such as he had anticipated. A fur cap, shaken by the shot from the bough on which it hung, came rolling down the bank, proclaiming the *ruse* that had been practised upon the keeper. Little time was allowed him for reflection. Before he could reload, he felt himself collared by the iron arm of Luke.

Hugh Badger was a man of great personal strength—square-set, bandy-legged, with a prodigious width of chest, and a frame like a Hercules, and, energetic as was Luke's assault, he maintained his ground without flinching. The struggle was desperate. Luke was of slighter proportion, though exceeding the keeper in stature by the head and shoulders. This superiority availed him little. It was rather a disadvantage in the conflict that ensued. The gripe fastened upon Hugh's throat was like that of a clenched vice. But Luke might as well have grappled the neck of a bull, as that of the stalwart keeper. Defending himself with his hobnail boots, with which he inflicted several

severe blows upon Luke's shins, and struggling vehemently, Hugh succeeded in extricating himself from his throttling grasp; he then closed with his foe, and they were locked together, like a couple of bears at play. Straining, tugging, and practising every sleight and stratagem coming within the scope of feet, knees, and thighs—now tripping, now jerking, now advancing, now retreating, they continued the strife, but all with doubtful result. Victory, at length, seemed to declare itself in favor of the sturdy keeper. Aware of his opponent's strength, it was Luke's chief endeavor to keep his lower limbs disengaged, and to trust more to skill than force for ultimate success. To prevent this was Hugh's grand object. Guarding himself against every feint, he ultimately succeeded in firmly grappling his agile assailant. Luke's spine was almost broken by the shock, when he suddenly gave way; and, without losing his balance, drew his adversary forward, kicking his right leg from under him. With a crash like that of an uprooted oak, Hugh fell, with his foe upon him, into the bed of the rivulet.

Not a word had been spoken during the conflict. A convulsive groan burst from Hugh's hardy breast. His hand sought his girdle, but in vain; his knife was gone. Gazing upwards, his dancing vision encountered the glimmer of the blade. The weapon had dropped from its case in the fall. Luke brandished it before his eyes.

"Villain!" gasped Hugh, ineffectually struggling to free himself, "you will not murder me?" And his efforts to release

himself became desperate.

"No," answered Luke, flinging the uplifted knife into the brook. "I will not do *that*, though thou hast twice aimed at my life to-night. But I will silence thee, at all events." Saying which, he dealt the keeper a blow on the head that terminated all further resistance on his part.

Leaving the inert mass to choke up the current, with whose waters the blood, oozing from the wound, began to commingle, Luke prepared to depart. His perils were not yet past. Guided by the firing, the report of which alarmed them, the keeper's assistants hastened in the direction of the sound, presenting themselves directly in the path Luke was about to take. He had either to retrace his steps, or face a double enemy. His election was made at once. He turned and fled.

For an instant the men tarried with their bleeding companion. They then dragged him from the brook, and with loud oaths followed in pursuit.

Threading, for a second time, the bosky labyrinth, Luke sought the source of the stream. This was precisely the course his enemies would have desired him to pursue; and when they beheld him take it, they felt confident of his capture.

The sides of the hollow became more and more abrupt as they advanced, though they were less covered with brushwood. The fugitive made no attempt to climb the bank, but still pressed forward. The road was tortuous, and wound round a jutting point of rock. Now he was a fair mark—no, he had swept swiftly

by, and was out of sight before a gun could be raised. They reached the same point. He was still before them, but his race was nearly run. Steep, slippery rocks, shelving down to the edges of a small, deep pool of water, the source of the stream, formed an apparently insurmountable barrier in that direction. Rooted—Heaven knows how!—in some reft or fissure of the rock, grew a wild ash, throwing out a few boughs over the solitary pool; this was all the support Luke could hope for, should he attempt to scale the rock. The rock was sheer—the pool deep—yet still he hurried on. He reached the muddy embankment; mounted its sides; and seemed to hesitate. The keepers were now within a hundred yards of him. Both guns were discharged. And, sudden as the reports, with a dead, splashless plunge, like a diving otter, the fugitive dropped into the water.

The pursuers were at the brink. They gazed at the pool. A few bubbles floated upon its surface, and burst. The water was slightly discolored with sand. No ruddier stain crimsoned the tide; no figure rested on the naked rock; no hand clung to the motionless tree.

"Devil take the rascal!" growled one; "I hope he harn't escaped us, arter all."

"Noa, noa, he be fast enough, never fear," rejoined the other; "sticking like a snig at the bottom o' the pond; and, dang him! he deserves it, for he's slipped out of our fingers like a snig often enough to-night. But come, let's be stumping, and give poor Hugh Badger a helping hand."

Whereupon they returned to the assistance of the wounded and discomfited keeper.

CHAPTER IV
THE HALL

I am right against my house—seat of my ancestors.
Yorkshire Tragedy.

Rookwood Place was a fine, old, irregular pile, of considerable size, presenting a rich, picturesque outline, with its innumerable gable-ends, its fantastical coigns, and tall crest of twisted chimneys. There was no uniformity of style about the building, yet the general effect was pleasing and beautiful. Its very irregularity constituted a charm. Nothing except convenience had been consulted in its construction: additions had from time to time been made to it, but everything dropped into its proper place, and, without apparent effort or design, grew into an ornament, and heightened the beauty of the whole. It was, in short, one of those glorious manorial houses that sometimes unexpectedly greet us in our wanderings, and gladden us like the discovery of a hidden treasure. Some such ancestral hall we have occasionally encountered, in unlooked-for quarters, in our native county of Lancaster, or in its smiling sister shire; and never without feelings of intense delight, rejoicing to behold the freshness of its antiquity, and the greenness of its old age. For, be it observed in passing, a Cheshire or Lancashire hall, time-honored though it be, with its often renovated black and

white squares, fancifully filled up with trefoils and quatrefoils, rosettes, and other figures, seems to bear its years so lightly, that its age, so far from detracting from its beauty, only lends it a grace; and the same mansion, to all outward appearance, fresh and perfect as it existed in the days of good Queen Bess, may be seen in admirable preservation in the days of the youthful Victoria. Such is Bramall—such Moreton, and many another we might instance; the former of these houses may, perhaps, be instanced as the best specimen of its class,—and its class in our opinion, *is* the best—to be met with in Cheshire, considered with reference either to the finished decoration of its exterior, rich in the chequered coloring we have alluded to, preserved with a care and neatness almost Dutch, or to the consistent taste exhibited by its possessor to the restoration and maintenance of all its original and truly national beauty within doors. As an illustration of old English hospitality—that real, hearty hospitality for which the squirearchy of this country was once so famous—Ah! why have they bartered it for other customs less substantially *English*?—it may be mentioned, that a road conducted the passenger directly through the great hall of this house, literally "of entertainment," where, if he listed, strong ale, and other refreshments, awaited his acceptance and courted his stay. Well might old King, the Cheshire historian, in the pride of his honest heart, exclaim, "*I know divers men, who are but farmers, that in their housekeeping may compare with a lord or baron, in some countries beyond the seas;—yea, although I named a higher degree, I were able to*

justify it." We have no such "golden farmers" in these degenerate days!

The mansion, was originally built by Sir Ranulph de Rookwood—or, as it was then written, Rokewode—the first of the name, a stout Yorkist, who flourished in the reign of Edward IV., and received the fair domain and broad lands upon which the edifice was raised, from his sovereign, in reward for good service; retiring thither in the decline of life, at the close of the Wars of the Roses, to sequestrate himself from scenes of strife, and to consult his spiritual weal in the erection and endowment of the neighboring church. It was of mixed architecture, and combined the peculiarities of each successive era. Retaining some of the sterner features of earlier days, the period ere yet the embattled manor-house peculiar to the reigns of the later Henrys had been merged into the graceful and peaceable hall, the residence of the Rookwoods had early anticipated the gentler characteristics of a later day, though it could boast little of that exuberance of external ornament, luxuriance of design, and prodigality of beauty, which, under the sway of the Virgin Queen, distinguished the residence of the wealthier English landowner; and rendered the hall of Elizabeth, properly so called, the pride and boast of our domestic architecture.

The site selected by Sir Ranulph for his habitation had been already occupied by a vast fabric of oak, which he in part removed, though some vestiges might still be traced of that ancient pile. A massive edifice succeeded, with gate

and tower, court and moat complete; substantial enough, one would have thought, to have endured for centuries. But even this ponderous structure grew into disuse, and Sir Ranulph's successors, remodelling, repairing, almost rebuilding the whole mansion, in the end so metamorphosed its aspect, that at last little of its original and distinctive character remained. Still, as we said before, it was a fine old house, though some changes had taken place for the worse, which could not be readily pardoned by the eye of taste: as, for instance, the deep embayed windows had dwindled into modernized casements, of lighter construction; the wide porch, with its flight of steps leading to the great hall of entrance, had yielded to a narrow door; and the broad quadrangular court was succeeded by a gravel drive. Yet, despite all these changes, the house of the Rookwoods, for an old house —and, after all, what is like an old house?—was no undesirable or uncongenial abode for any worshipful country gentleman "who had a great estate."

The hall was situated near the base of a gently declining hill, terminating a noble avenue of limes, and partially embosomed in an immemorial wood of the same timber, which had given its name to the family that dwelt amongst its rook-haunted shades. Descending the avenue, at the point of access afforded by a road that wound down the hill-side, towards a village distant about half a mile, as you advanced, the eye was first arrested by a singular octagonal turret of brick, of more recent construction than the house; and in all probability occupying

the place where the gateway stood of yore. This tower rose to a height corresponding with the roof of the mansion; and was embellished on the side facing the house with a flamingly gilt dial, peering, like an impudent observer, at all that passed within doors. Two apartments, which it contained, were appropriated to the house-porter. Despoiled of its martial honors, the gateway still displayed the achievements of the family—the rook and the fatal branch—carved in granite, which had resisted the storms of two centuries, though stained green with moss, and mapped over with lichens. To the left, overgrown with ivy, and peeping from out a tuft of trees, appeared the hoary summit of a dovecot, indicating the near neighborhood of an ancient barn, contemporary with the earliest dwelling-house, and of a little world of offices and outbuildings buried in the thickness of the foliage. To the right was the garden—the pleasaunce of the place—formal, precise, old-fashioned, artificial, yet exquisite!—for commend us to the bygone, beautiful English garden—*really a garden*—not that mixture of park, meadow, and wilderness[3], brought up to one's very windows—which, since the days of the innovators, Kent, and his "bold associates," Capability Brown

[3] Payne Knight, the scourge of Repton and his school, speaking of the license indulged in by the modern landscape-gardeners, thus vents his indignation:But here, once more, ye rural muses weepThe ivy'd balustrade, and terrace steep;Walls, mellowed into harmony by time,On which fantastic creepers used to climb;While statues, labyrinths, and alleys pentWithin their bounds, at least were innocent!—Our modern taste—alas!—no limit knows;O'er hill, o'er dale, through wood and field it flows;Spreading o'er all its unprolific spawn,In never-ending sheets of vapid lawn.The Landscape, a didactic Poem,addressed to Uvedale Price, Esq.

and Co., has obtained so largely—this *was* a garden! There might be seen the stately terraces, such as Watteau, and our own Wilson, in his earlier works, painted—the trim alleys exhibiting all the triumphs of topiarian art—

> *The sidelong walls*
> *Of shaven yew; the holly's prickly arms,*
> *Trimm'd into high arcades; the tonsile box,*
> *Wove in mosaic mode of many a curl,*
> *Around the figured carpet of the lawn;* [4]

the gayest of parterres and greenest of lawns, with its admonitory sun-dial, its marble basin in the centre, its fountain, and conched water-god; the quaint summer-house, surmounted with its gilt vane; the statue, glimmering from out its covert of leaves; the cool cascade, the urns, the bowers, and a hundred luxuries besides, suggested and contrived by Art to render Nature most enjoyable, and to enhance the recreative delights of home-out-of-doors—for such a garden should be—, with least sacrifice of indoor comfort and convenience.

> *When Epicurus to the world had taught,*
> *That pleasure was the chiefest good;*
> *—And was perhaps i' th' right, if rightly understood,*
> *His life he to his doctrine brought—*

[4] Mason's English Garden.

And in his garden's shade that sovereign pleasure sought. [5]

All these delights might once have been enjoyed. But at the time of which we write, this fair garden was for the most part a waste. Ill-kept, and unregarded, the gay parterres were disfigured with weeds; grass grew on the gravel walk; several of the urns were overthrown; the hour upon the dial was untold; the fountain was choked up, and the smooth-shaven lawn only rescued, it would seem, from the general fate, that it might answer the purpose of a bowling-green, as the implements of that game, scattered about, plainly testified.

Diverging from the garden to the house, we have before remarked that the more ancient and characteristic features of the place had been, for the most part, destroyed; less by the hand of time than to suit the tastes of different proprietors. This, however, was not so observable in the eastern wing, which overlooked the garden. Here might be discerned many indications of its antiquity. The strength and solidity of the walls, which had not been, as elsewhere, masked with brickwork; the low, Tudor arches; the mullioned bars of the windows—all attested its age. This wing was occupied by an upper and lower gallery, communicating with suites of chambers, for the most part deserted, excepting one or two, which were used as dormitories; and another little room on the ground-floor, with an oriel window opening upon the lawn, and commanding the

[5] Cowley.

prospect beyond—a favorite resort of the late Sir Piers. The interior was curious for his honeycomb ceiling, deeply moulded in plaster, with the arms and alliances of the Rookwoods. In the centre was the royal blazon of Elizabeth, who had once honored the hall with a visit during a progress, and whose cipher ***E. R.*** was also displayed upon the immense plate of iron which formed the fire-grate.

To return, for a moment, to the garden, which we linger about as a bee around a flower. Below the lawn there was another terrace, edged by a low balustrade of stone, commanding a lovely view of park, water, and woodland. High hanging-woods waved in the foreground, and an extensive sweep of flat champaign country stretched out to meet a line of blue, hazy hills bounding the distant horizon.

CHAPTER V
SIR REGINALD ROOKWOOD

A king who changed his wives as easily as a woman changes her dress. He threw aside the first, cut off the second's head, the third he disemboweled: as for the fourth, he pardoned her, and simply turned her out of doors, but to make matters even, cut off the head of number five.—Victor Hugo: Marie Tudor.

From the house to its inhabitants the transition is natural. Besides the connexion between them, there were many points of resemblance; many family features in common; there was the same melancholy grandeur, the same character of romance, the same fantastical display. Nor were the secret passages, peculiar to the one, wanting to the history of the other. Both had their mysteries. One blot there was in the otherwise proud escutcheon of the Rookwoods, that dimmed its splendor, and made pale its pretensions: their sun was eclipsed in blood from its rising to its meridian; and so it seemed would be its setting. This foul reproach attached to all the race; none escaped it. Traditional rumors were handed down from father to son, throughout the county, and, like all other rumors, had taken to themselves wings, and flown abroad; their crimes became a by-word. How was it they escaped punishment? How came they to evade the hand of justice? Proof was ever wanting; justice was ever baffled. They

were a stern and stiff-necked people, of indomitable pride and resolution, with, for the most part, force of character sufficient to enable them to breast difficulties and dangers that would have overwhelmed ordinary individuals. No quality is so advantageous to its possessor as firmness; and the determined energy of the Rookwoods bore them harmless through a sea of trouble. Besides, they were wealthy; lavish even to profusion; and gold will do much, if skilfully administered. Yet, despite all this, a dark, ominous cloud settled over their house, and men wondered when the vengeance of Heaven, so long delayed, would fall and consume it.

Possessed of considerable landed property, once extending over nearly half the West Riding of Yorkshire, the family increased in power and importance for an uninterrupted series of years, until the outbreak of that intestine discord which ended in the civil wars, when the espousal of the royalist party, with sword and substance, by Sir Ralph Rookwood, the then lord of the mansion—a dissolute, depraved personage, who, however, had been made a Knight of the Bath at the coronation of Charles I.—, ended in his own destruction at Naseby, and the wreck of much of his property; a loss which the gratitude of Charles II., on his restoration, did not fail to make good to Sir Ralph's youthful heir, Reginald.

Sir Ralph Rookwood left two sons, Reginald and Alan. The fate of the latter was buried in obscurity. It was even a mystery to his family. He was, it was said, a youth of much promise,

and of gentle manners; who, having made an imprudent match, from jealousy, or some other motive, deserted his wife, and fled his country. Various reasons were assigned for his conduct. Amongst others, it was stated that the object of Alan's jealous suspicions was his elder brother, Reginald; and that it was the discovery of his wife's infidelity in this quarter which occasioned his sudden disappearance with his infant daughter. Some said he died abroad. Others, that he had appeared again for a brief space at the hall. But all now concurred in a belief of his decease. Of his child nothing was known. His inconstant wife, after enduring for some years the agonies of remorse, abandoned by Sir Reginald, and neglected by her own relatives, put an end to her existence by poison. This is all that could be gathered of the story, or the misfortunes of Alan Rookwood.

The young Sir Reginald had attended Charles, in the character of page, during his exile; and if he could not requite the devotion of the son, by absolutely reinstating the fallen fortunes of the father, the monarch could at least accord him the fostering influence of his favor and countenance; and bestow upon him certain lucrative situations in his household, as an earnest of his good-will. And thus much he did. Remarkable for his personal attractions in youth, it is not to be wondered at that we should find the name of Reginald Rookwood recorded in the scandalous chronicles of the day, as belonging to a cavalier of infinite address and discretion, matchless wit, and marvellous pleasantry; and eminent beyond his peers for his successes with some of the

most distinguished beauties who ornamented that brilliant and voluptuous court.

A career of elegant dissipation ended in matrimony. His first match was unpropitious. Foiled in his attempts upon the chastity of a lady of great beauty and high honor, he was rash enough to marry her; rash, we say, for from that fatal hour all became as darkness; the curtain fell upon the comedy of his life, to rise to tragic horrors. When, passion subsided, repentance awoke, and he became anxious for deliverance from the fetters he had so heedlessly imposed on himself, and on his unfortunate dame.

The hapless lady of Sir Reginald was a fair and fragile creature, floating on the eddying current of existence, and hurried in destruction as the summer gossamer is swept away by the rude breeze, and lost forever. So beautiful, so gentle was she, that if,

Sorrow had not made

Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self,

it would have been difficult to say whether the charm of softness and sweetness was more to be admired than her faultless personal attractions. But when a tinge of melancholy came, saddening and shading the once smooth and smiling brow; when

tears dimmed the blue beauty of those deep and tender eyes; when hot, hectic flushes supplied the place of healthful bloom, and despair took possession of her heart, then was it seen *what* was the charm of Lady Rookwood, if charm that could be called which was a saddening sight to see, and melted the beholder's soul within him. All acknowledged, that exquisite as she had been before, the sad, sweet lady was now more exquisite still.

Seven moons had waned and flown—seven bitter, tearful moons—and each day Lady Rookwood's situation claimed more soothing attention at the hand of her lord. About this time his wife's brother, whom he hated, returned from the Dutch wars. Struck with his sister's altered appearance, he readily divined the cause; indeed, all tongues were eager to proclaim it to him. Passionately attached to her, Lionel Vavasour implored an explanation of the cause of his sister's griefs. The bewildered lady answered evasively, attributing her woe-begone looks to any other cause than her husband's cruelty; and pressing her brother, as he valued her peace, her affection, never to allude to the subject again. The fiery youth departed. He next sought out his brother-in-law, and taxed him sharply with his inhumanity, adding threats to his upbraidings. Sir Reginald listened silently and calmly. When the other had finished, with a sarcastic obeisance, he replied: "Sir, I am much beholden for the trouble you have taken in your sister's behalf. But when she entrusted herself to my keeping, she relinquished, I conceive, all claim on *your* guardianship: however, I thank you for the trouble you have

taken; but, for your own sake, I would venture to caution you against a repetition of interference like the present."

"And I, sir, caution *you*. See that you give heed to my words, or, by the heaven above us! I will enforce attention to them."

"You will find me, sir, as prompt at all times to defend my conduct, as I am unalterable in my purposes. Your sister is my wife. What more would you have? Were she a harlot, you should have her back and welcome. The tool is virtuous. Devise some scheme, and take her with you hence—so you rid *me* of her I am content."

"Rookwood, you are a villain." And Vavasour spat upon his brother's cheek.

Sir Reginald's eyes blazed. His sword started from its scabbard. "Defend yourself!" he exclaimed, furiously attacking Vavasour. Pass after pass was exchanged. Fierce thrusts were made and parried. Feint and appeal, the most desperate and dexterous, were resorted to. Their swords glanced like lightning flashes. In the struggle, the blades became entangled. There was a moment's cessation. Each glanced at the other with deadly, inextinguishable hate. Both were admirable masters of the art of defence. Both were so brimful of wrath as to be regardless of consequences. They tore back their weapons. Vavasour's blade shivered. He was at the mercy of his adversary—an adversary who knew no mercy. Sir Reginald passed his rapier through his brother's body. The hilt struck against his ribs.

Sir Reginald's ire was kindled, not extinguished, by the deed

he had done. Like the tiger, he had tasted blood—like the tiger, he thirsted for more. He sought his home. He was greeted by his wife. Terrified by his looks, she yet summoned courage sufficient to approach him. She embraced his arm—she clasped his hand. Sir Reginald smiled. His smile was cutting as his dagger's edge.

"What ails you, sweetheart?" said he.

"I know not; your smile frightens me."

"My smile frightens you—fool! be thankful that I frown not."

"Oh! do not frown. Be gentle, my Reginald, as you were when first I knew you. Smile not so coldly, but as you did then, that I may, for one instant, dream you love me."

"Silly wench! There—I *do* smile."

"That smile freezes me. Oh, Reginald, could you but know what I have endured this morning, on your account. My brother Lionel has been here."

"Indeed!"

"Nay, look not so. He insisted on knowing the reason of my altered appearance."

"And no doubt you made him acquainted with the cause. You told him *your* version of the story."

"Not a word, as I hope to live."

"A lie!"

"By my truth, no."

"A lie, I say. He avouched it to me himself."

"Impossible! He could not—would not disobey me."

Sir Reginald laughed bitterly.

"He would not, I am sure, give utterance to any scandal," continued Lady Rookwood. "You say this but to try me, do you not?—ha! what is this? Your hand is bloody. You have not harmed him? Whose blood is this?"

"Your brother spat upon my check. I have washed out the stain," replied Sir Reginald, coldly.

"Then it *is* his blood!" shrieked Lady Rookwood, pressing her hand shuddering before her eyes. "Is he dead?"

Sir Reginald turned away.

"Stay," she cried, exerting her feeble strength to retain him, and becoming white as ashes, "abide and hear me. You have killed me, I feel, by your cruelty. I am sinking fast—dying. I, who loved you, only you; yes, one besides—my brother, and you have slain *him*. Your hands are dripping in his blood, and I have kissed them—have clasped them! And now," continued she, with an energy that shook Sir Reginald, "I hate you—I renounce you—forever! May my dying words ring in your ears on your death-bed, for that hour *will* come. You cannot shun *that*. Then think of *him*! think of *me*!"

"Away!" interrupted Sir Reginald, endeavoring to shake her off.

"I will *not* away! I will cling to you—will curse you. My unborn child shall live to curse you—to requite you—to visit my wrongs on you and yours. Weak as I am, you shall not cast me off. You shall learn to fear even *me*."

"I fear nothing living, much less a frantic woman."

"Fear the *dead*, then."

There was a struggle—a blow—and the wretched lady sank, shrieking, upon the floor. Convulsions seized her. A mother's pains succeeded fierce and fast. She spoke no more, but died within the hour, giving birth to a female child.

Eleanor Rookwood became her father's idol—her father's bane. All the love he had to bestow was centred in her. She returned it not. She fled from his caresses. With all her mother's beauty, she had all her father's pride. Sir Reginald's every thought was for his daughter—for her aggrandizement. In vain. She seemed only to endure him, and while his affection waxed stronger, and entwined itself round her alone, she withered beneath his embraces as the shrub withers in the clasping folds of the parasite plant.

She grew towards womanhood. Suitors thronged around her—gentle and noble ones. Sir Reginald watched them with a jealous eye. He was wealthy, powerful, high in royal favor; and could make his own election. He did so. For the first time, Eleanor promised obedience to his wishes. They accorded with her own humor. The day was appointed. It came. But with it came not the bride. She had fled, with the humblest and the meanest of the pretenders to her hand—with one upon whom Sir Reginald supposed she had not deigned to cast her eyes. He endeavored to forget her, and, to all outward seeming, was successful in the effort. But he felt that the curse was upon him; the undying flame scorched his heart.

Once, and once only, they met again, in France, whither she had wandered. It was a dread encounter—terrible to both; but most so to Sir Reginald. He spoke not of her afterwards.

Shortly after the death of his first wife, Sir Reginald had made proposals to a dowager of distinction, with a handsome jointure, one of his early attachments, and was, without scruple, accepted. The power of the family might then be said to be at its zenith; and but for certain untoward circumstances, and the growing influence of his enemies, Sir Reginald would have been elevated to the peerage. Like most reformed spend-thrifts, he had become proportionately avaricious, and his mind seemed engrossed in accumulating wealth. In the meantime, his second wife followed her predecessor, dying, it was said, of vexation and disappointment.

The propensity to matrimony, always a distinguishing characteristic of the Rookwoods, largely displayed itself in Sir Reginald. Another dame followed—equally rich, younger, and far more beautiful than her immediate predecessor. She was a prodigious flirt, and soon set her husband at defiance. Sir Reginald did not condescend to expostulate. It was not his way. He effectually prevented any recurrence of her indiscretions. She was removed, and with her expired Sir Reginald's waning popularity. So strong was the expression of odium against him, that he thought it prudent to retire to his mansion, in the country, and there altogether seclude himself. One anomaly in Sir Reginald's otherwise utterly selfish character was

uncompromising devotion to the house of Stuart; and shortly after the abdication of James II., he followed that monarch to Saint Germain, having previously mixed largely in secret political intrigues; and only returned from the French court to lay his bones with those of his ancestry, in the family vault at Rookwood.

CHAPTER VI
SIR PIERS ROOKWOOD

My old master kept a good house, and twenty or thirty tall sword-and-buckler men about him; and in faith his son differs not much; he will have metal too; though he has no store of cutler's blades, he will have plenty of vintners' pots. His father kept a good house for honest men, his tenants that brought him in part; and his son keeps a bad house with knaves that help to consume all: 'tis but the change of time: why should any man repine at it? Crickets, good, loving, and lucky worms, were wont to feed, sing, and rejoice in the father's chimney; and now carrion crows build in the son's kitchen.
Wilkins: Miseries of Enforced Marriage.

Sir Reginald died, leaving issue three children: a daughter, the before-mentioned Eleanor—who, entirely discountenanced by the family, had been seemingly forgotten by all but her father —, and two sons by his third wife. Reginald, the eldest, whose military taste had early procured him the command of a company of horse, and whose politics did not coalesce with those of his sire, fell, during his father's lifetime, at Killiecrankie, under the banners of William. Piers, therefore, the second son, succeeded to the title.

A very different character, in many respects, from his father and brother, holding in supreme dislike courts and courtiers,

party warfare, political intrigue, and all the subtleties of Jesuitical diplomacy, neither having any inordinate relish for camps or campaigns, Sir Piers Rookwood yet displayed in early life one family propensity, viz., unremitting devotion to the sex. Among his other mistresses was the unfortunate Susan Bradley, in whom by some he was supposed to have been clandestinely united. In early youth, as has been stated, Sir Piers professed the faith of Rome, but shortly after the death of his beautiful mistress—or wife, as it might be—, having quarreled with his father's confessor, Checkley, he publicly abjured his heresies. Sir Piers subsequently allied himself to Maud, only daughter of Sir Thomas D'Aubeny, the last of a line as proud and intolerant as his own. The tables were then turned. Lady Rookwood usurped sovereign sway over her lord and Sir Piers, a cipher in his own house, scarce master of himself, much less of his dame, endured an existence so miserable, that he was often heard to regret, in his cups, that he had not inherited, with the estate of his forefathers, the family secret of shaking off the matrimonial yoke, when found to press too hardly.

At the onset, Sir Piers struggled hard to burst his bondage. But in vain—he was fast fettered; and only bruised himself, like the caged lark, against the bars of his prison-house. Abandoning all further effort at emancipation, he gave himself up to the usual resource of a weak mind, debauchery; and drank so deeply to drown his cares, that, in the end, his hale constitution yielded to his excesses. It was even said, that remorse at his abandonment

of the faith of his fathers had some share in his misery; and that his old spiritual, and if report spoke truly, sinful adviser, Father Checkley, had visited him secretly at the hall. Sir Piers was observed to shudder whenever the priest's name was mentioned.

Sir Piers Rookwood was a good-humored man in the main, had little of the old family leaven about him, and was esteemed by his associates. Of late, however, his temper became soured, and his friends deserted him; for, between his domestic annoyances, remorseful feelings, and the inroads already made upon his constitution by constant inebriety, he grew so desperate and insane in his revels, and committed such fearful extravagances, that even his boon companions shrank from his orgies. Fearful were the scenes between him and Lady Rookwood upon these occasions—appalling to the witnesses, dreadful to themselves. And it was, perhaps, their frequent recurrence, that, more than anything else, banished all decent society from the hall.

At the time of Sir Piers's decease, which brings us down to the date of our story, his son and successor, Ranulph, was absent on his travels. Shortly after the completion of his academical education, he had departed to make the tour of the Continent, and had been absent rather better than a year. He had quitted his father in displeasure, and was destined never again to see his face while living. The last intelligence received of young Rookwood was from Bordeaux, whence it was thought he had departed for the Pyrenees. A special messenger had been despatched in search of him, with tidings of the melancholy event. But, as

it was deemed improbable by Lady Rookwood that her son could return within any reasonable space, she gave directions for the accomplishment of the funeral rites of her husband on the sixth night after his decease—it being the custom of the Rookwoods ever to inter their dead at midnight,—intrusting their solemnization entirely to the care of one of Sir Piers's hangers-on —Dr. Titus Tyrconnel,—for which she was greatly scandalized in the neighborhood.

Ranulph Rookwood was a youth of goodly promise. The stock from which he sprang would on neither side warrant such conclusion. But it sometimes happens that from the darkest elements are compounded the brightest and subtlest substances; and so it occurred in this instance. Fair, frank, and free—generous, open, unsuspicious—he seemed the very opposite of all his race—their antagonizing principle. Capriciously indulgent, his father had allowed him ample means, neither curbing nor restraining his expenditure; acceding at one moment to every inclination, and the next irresolutely opposing it. It was impossible, therefore, for him, in such a state of things, to act decidedly, without incurring his father's displeasure; and the only measure he resolved upon, which was to absent himself for a time, was conjectured to have brought about the result he had endeavored to avoid. Other reasons, however, there were, which secretly influenced him, which it will be our business in due time to detail.

CHAPTER VII
THE RETURN

Flam. How croaks the raven?
Is our good Duchess dead?

Lod. Dead.

Webster.

The time of the sad ceremonial drew nigh. The hurrying of the domestics to and fro; the multifarious arrangements for the night; the distribution of the melancholy trappings, and the discussion of the "funeral-baked meats," furnished abundant occupation within doors. Without, there was a constant stream of the tenantry, thronging down the avenue, mixed with an occasional horseman, once or twice intercepted by a large lumbering carriage, bringing friends of the deceased, some really anxious to pay the last tribute of regard, but the majority attracted by the anticipated spectacle of a funeral by torchlight. There were others, indeed, to whom it was not matter of choice; who were compelled, by a vassal tenure of their lands, held of the house of Rookwood, to lend a shoulder to the coffin, and a hand to the torch, on the burial of its lord. Of these there was a plentiful muster collected in the hall; they were to be

marshalled by Peter Bradley, who was deemed to be well skilled in the proceedings, having been present at two solemnities of the kind. That mysterious personage, however, had not made his appearance—to the great dismay of the assemblage. Scouts were sent in search of him, but they returned with the intelligence that the door of his habitation was fastened, and its inmate apparently absent. No other tidings of the truant sexton could be obtained.

It was a sultry August evening. No breeze was stirring in the garden; no cool dews refreshed the parched and heated earth; yet from the languishing flowers rich sweets exhaled. The plash of a fountain fell pleasantly upon the ear, conveying in its sound a sense of freshness to the fervid air; while deep and drowsy murmurs hummed heavily beneath the trees, making the twilight slumberously musical. The westering sun, which filled the atmosphere with flame throughout the day, was now wildly setting; and, as he sank behind the hall, its varied and picturesque tracery became each instant more darkly and distinctly defined against the crimson sky.

At this juncture a little gate, communicating with the chase, was thrown open, and a young man entered the garden, passing through the shrubbery, and hurrying rapidly forward till he arrived at a vista opening upon the house. The spot at which the stranger halted was marked by a little basin, scantily supplied with water, streaming from a lion's kingly jaws. His dress was travel-soiled, and dusty; and his whole appearance betokened great exhaustion from heat and fatigue. Seating himself upon

an adjoining bench, he threw off his riding-cap, and unclasped his collar, displaying a finely-turned head and neck; and a countenance which, besides its beauty, had that rare nobility of feature which seldom falls to the lot of the aristocrat, but is never seen in one of an inferior order. A restless disquietude of manner showed that he was suffering from over-excitement of mind, as well as from bodily exertion. His look was wild and hurried; his black ringlets were dashed heedlessly over a pallid, lofty brow, upon which care was prematurely written; while his large melancholy eyes were bent, with a look almost of agony, upon the house before him.

After a short pause, and as if struggling against violent emotions, and some overwhelming remembrance, the youth arose, and plunged his hand into the basin, applying the moist element to his burning brow. Apparently becoming more calm, he bent his steps towards the hall, when two figures, suddenly issuing from an adjoining copse, arrested his progress; neither saw him. Muttering a hurried farewell, one of the figures disappeared within the shrubbery, and the other, confronting the stranger, displayed the harsh features and gaunt form of Peter Bradley. Had Peter encountered the dead Sir Piers in corporeal form, he could not have manifested more surprise than he exhibited, for an instant or two, as he shrunk back from the stranger's path.

CHAPTER VIII
AN IRISH ADVENTURER

Scapin. A most outrageous, roaring fellow, with a swelled red face inflamed with brandy.—Cheats of Scapin.

An hour or two prior to the incident just narrated, in a small, cosy apartment of the hall, nominally devoted to justiciary business by its late owner, but, in reality, used as a sanctum, snuggery, or smoking-room, a singular trio were assembled, fraught with the ulterior purpose of attending the obsequies of their deceased patron and friend, though immediately occupied in the discussion of a magnum of excellent claret, the bouquet of which perfumed the air, like the fragrance of a bed of violets.

This little room had been poor Sir Piers's favorite retreat. It was, in fact, the only room in the house that he could call his own; and thither would he often, with pipe and punch, beguile the flagging hours, secure from interruption. A snug, old-fashioned apartment it was; wainscoted with rich black oak; with a fine old cabinet of the same material, and a line or two of crazy, worm-eaten bookshelves, laden with sundry dusty, unconsulted law tomes, and a light sprinkling of the elder divines, equally neglected. The only book, indeed, Sir Piers ever read, was the "Anatomie of Melancholy;" and he merely studied Burton

because the quaint, racy style of the learned old hypochondriac suited his humor at seasons, and gave a zest to his sorrows, such as the olives lent to his wine.

Four portraits adorned the walls: those of Sir Reginald Rookwood and his wives. The ladies were attired in the flowing drapery of Charles the Second's day, the snow of their radiant bosoms being somewhat sullied by over-exposure, and the vermeil tinting of their cheeks darkened by the fumes of tobacco. There was a shepherdess, with her taper crook, whose large, languishing eyes, ripe pouting lips, ready to melt into kisses, and air of voluptuous abandonment, scarcely suited the innocent simplicity of her costume. She was portrayed tending a flock of downy sheep, with azure ribbons round their necks, accompanied by one of those invaluable little dogs whose length of ear and silkiness of skin evinced him perfect in his breeding, but whose large-eyed indifference to his charge proved him to be as much out of character with his situation as the refined and luxuriant charms of his mistress were out of keeping with her artless attire. This was Sir Piers's mother, the third wife, a beautiful woman, answering to the notion of one who had been somewhat of a flirt in her day. Next to her was a magnificent dame, with the throat and arm of a Juno, and a superb bust—the bust was then what the bustle is now—a paramount attraction; whether the modification be an improvement, we leave to the consideration of the lovers of the beautiful—this was the dowager. Lastly, there was the lovely and ill-fated Eleanor. Every gentle grace

belonging to this unfortunate lady had been stamped in undying beauty on the canvas by the hand of Lely, breathing a spell on the picture, almost as powerful as that which had dwelt around the exquisite original. Over the high carved mantelpiece was suspended the portrait of Sir Reginald. It had been painted in early youth; the features were beautiful, disdainful,—with a fierceness breaking through the courtly air. The eyes were very fine, black as midnight, and piercing as those of Cæsar Borgia, as seen in Raphael's wonderful picture in the Borghese Palace at Rome. They seemed to fascinate the gazer—to rivet his glances—to follow him whithersoever he went—and to search into his soul, as did the dark orbs of Sir Reginald in his lifetime. It was the work likewise of Lely, and had all the fidelity and graceful refinement of that great master; nor was the haughty countenance of Sir Reginald unworthy the patrician painter.

No portrait of Sir Piers was to be met with. But in lieu thereof, depending from a pair of buck's horns, hung the worthy knight's stained scarlet coat—the same in which he had ridden forth, with the intent to hunt, on the eventful occasion detailed by Peter Bradley,—his velvet cap, his buck-handled whip, and the residue of his equipment for the chase. This attire was reviewed with melancholy interest and unaffected emotion by the company, as reminding them forcibly of the departed, of which it seemed a portion.

The party consisted of the vicar of Rookwood, Dr. Polycarp Small; Dr. Titus Tyrconnel, an emigrant, and empirical professor

of medicine, from the sister isle, whose convivial habits had first introduced him to the hall, and afterwards retained him there; and Mr. Codicil Coates, clerk of the peace, attorney-at-law, bailiff, and receiver. We were wrong in saying that Tyrconnel was retained. He was an impudent, intrusive fellow, whom, having once gained a footing in the house, it was impossible to dislodge. He cared for no insult; perceived no slight; and professed, in her presence, the profoundest respect for Lady Rookwood: in short, he was ever ready to do anything but depart.

Sir Piers was one of those people who cannot dine alone. He disliked a solitary repast almost as much as a *tête-à-tête* with his lady. He would have been recognized at once as the true Amphitryon, had any one been hardy enough to play the part of Jupiter. Ever ready to give a dinner, he found a difficulty arise, not usually experienced on such occasions—there was no one upon whom to bestow it. He had the best of wine; kept an excellent table; was himself no niggard host; but his own merits, and those of his *cuisine*, were forgotten in the invariable *pendant* to the feast; and the best of wine lost its flavor when the last bottle found its way to the guest's head. Dine alone Sir Piers would not. And as his old friends forsook him, he plunged lower in his search of society; collecting within his house a class of persons whom no one would have expected to meet at the hall, nor even its owner have chosen for his companions, had any choice remained to him. He did not endure this state of things without much outward show of discontent. "Anything for a quiet life,"

was his constant saying; and, like the generality of people with whom those words form a favorite maxim, he led the most uneasy life imaginable. Endurance, to excite commiseration, must be uncomplaining—an axiom the aggrieved of the gentle sex should remember. Sir Piers endured, but he grumbled lustily, and was on all hands voted a bore; domestic grievances, especially if the husband be the plaintiff, being the most intolerable of all mentionable miseries. No wonder that his friends deserted him; still there was Titus Tyrconnel; his ears and lips were ever open to pathos and to punch; so Titus kept his station. Immediately after her husband's demise, it had been Lady Rookwood's intention to clear the house of all the "vermin," so she expressed herself, that had so long infested it; and forcibly to eject Titus, and one or two other intruders of the same class. But in consequence of certain hints received from Mr. Coates, who represented the absolute necessity of complying with Sir Piers's testamentary instructions, which were particular in that respect, she thought proper to defer her intentions until after the ceremonial of interment should be completed, and, in the mean time, strange to say, committed its arrangement to Titus Tyrconnel; who, ever ready to accommodate, accepted, nothing loth, the charge, and acquitted himself admirably well in his undertaking: especially, as he said, "in the aiting and drinking department—the most essential part of it all." He kept open house—open dining-room —open cellar; resolved that his patron's funeral should emulate as much as possible an Irish burial on a grand scale, "the finest

sight," in his opinion, "in the whole world."

Inflated with the importance of his office, inflamed with heat, sat Titus, like a "robustious periwig-pated" alderman after a civic feast. The natural rubicundity of his countenance was darkened to a deep purple tint, like that of a full-blown peony, while his ludicrous dignity was augmented by a shining suit of sables, in which his portly person was invested.

The first magnum had been discussed in solemn silence; the cloud, however, which hung over the conclave, disappeared under the genial influence of "another and a better" bottle, and gave place to a denser vapor, occasioned by the introduction of the pipe and its accompaniments.

Ensconced in a comfortable old chair—it is not every old chair that *is* comfortable,—with pipe in mouth, and in full unbuttoned ease, his bushy cauliflower wig laid aside, by reason of the heat, reposed Dr. Small. Small, indeed, was somewhat of a misnomer, as applied to the worthy doctor, who, besides being no diminutive specimen of his kind, entertained no insignificant opinion of himself. His height was certainly not remarkable; but his width of shoulder—his sesquipedality of stomach—and obesity of calf—these were unique! Of his origin we know nothing; but presume he must, in some way or other, have been connected with the numerous family of "the Smalls," who, according to Christopher North, form the predominant portion of mankind. In appearance, the doctor was short-necked and puffy, with a sodden, pasty face, wherein were set eyes whose obliquity of vision was, in

some measure, redeemed by their expression of humor. He was accounted a man of parts and erudition, and had obtained high honors at his university. Rigidly orthodox, he abominated the very names of Papists and Jacobites, amongst which heretical herd he classed his companion, Mr. Titus Tyrconnel—Ireland being with him synonymous with superstition and Catholicism—and every Irishman rebellious and schismatical. On this head he was inclined to be disputatious. His prejudices did not prevent him from passing the claret, nor from laughing, as heartily as a plethoric asthma and sense of the decorum due to the occasion would permit, at the quips and quirks of the Irishman, who, he admitted, notwithstanding his heresies, was a pleasant fellow in the main. And when, in addition to the flattery, a pipe had been insinuated by the officious Titus, at the precise moment that Small yearned for his afternoon's solace, yet scrupled to ask for it; when the door had been made fast, and the first whiff exhaled, all his misgivings vanished, and he surrendered himself to the soft seduction. In this Elysian state we find him.

"Ah! you may say that, Dr. Small," said Titus, in answer to some observation of the vicar, "that's a most original apothegm. We all of us hould our lives by a thrid. Och! many's the sudden finale I have seen. Many's the fine fellow's heels tripped up unawares, when least expected. Death hangs over our heads by a single hair, as your reverence says, precisely like the sword of Dan Maclise,[6] the flatterer of Dinnish what-do-you-call-him,

[6] Query, Damocles?—*Printer's Devil.*

ready to fall at a moment's notice, or no notice at all—eh?—Mr. Coates. And that brings me back again to Sir Piers—poor gentleman—ah! we sha'n't soon see the like of him again!"

"Poor Sir Piers!" said Mr. Coates, a small man, in a scratch wig, with a face red and round as an apple, and almost as diminutive. "It is to be regretted that his over-conviviality should so much have hastened his lamented demise."

"Conviviality!" replied Titus; "no such thing—it was apoplexy—extravasation of *sarum*."

"Extra vase-ation of rum and water, you mean," replied Coates, who, like all his tribe, rejoiced in a quibble.

"The squire's ailment," continued Titus, "was a sanguineous effusion, as we call it—positive determination of blood to the head, occasioned by a low way he got into, just before his attack—a confirmed case of hypochondriasis, as that *ould* book Sir Piers was so fond of terms the blue devils. He neglected the bottle, which, in a man who has been a hard drinker all his life, is a bad sign. The lowering system never answers—never. Doctor, I'll just trouble you"—for Small, in a fit of absence, had omitted to pass the bottle, though not to help himself. "Had he stuck to *this*"—holding up a glass, ruby bright—"the elixir vitæ—the grand panacea—he might have been hale and hearty at this present moment, and as well as any of us. But he wouldn't be advised. To my thinking, as that was the case, he'd have been all the better for a little of your reverence's sperretual advice; and his conscience having been relieved by confession and absolution, he

might have opened a fresh account with an aisy heart and clane breast."

"I trust, sir," said Small, gravely withdrawing his pipe from his lips, "that Sir Piers Rookwood addressed himself to a higher source than a sinning creature of clay like himself for remission of his sins; but, if there was any load of secret guilt that might have weighed heavy upon his conscience, it is to be regretted that he refused the last offices of the church, and died incommunicate. I was denied all admittance to his chamber."

"Exactly my case," said Mr. Coates, pettishly. "I was refused entrance, though my business was of the utmost importance—certain dispositions—special bequests—matter connected with his sister—for though the estate is entailed, yet still there are charges—you understand me—very strange to refuse to see *me*. Some people may regret it—may live to regret it, I say—that's all. I've just sent up a package to Lady Rookwood, which was not to be delivered till after Sir Piers's death. Odd circumstance that—been in my custody a long while—some reason to think Sir Piers meant to alter his will—ought to have seen *me*—sad neglect!"

"More's the pity. But it was none of poor Sir Piers's doing!" replied Titus; "he had no will of his own, poor fellow, during his life, and the devil a will was he likely to have after his death. It was all Lady Rookwood's doing," added he, in a whisper. "I, his medical adviser and confidential friend, was ordered out of the room; and, although I knew it was as much as his life was worth

to leave him for a moment in that state, I was forced to comply: and, would you believe it, as I left the room, I heard high words. Yes, doctor, as I hope to be saved, words of anger from her at that awful juncture."

The latter part of this speech was uttered in a low tone, and very mysterious manner. The speakers drew so closely together, that the bowls of their pipes formed a common centre, whence the stems radiated. A momentary silence ensued, during which each man puffed for very life. Small next knocked the ashes from his tube, and began to replenish it, coughing significantly. Mr. Coates expelled a thin, curling stream of vapor from a minute orifice in the corner of his almost invisible mouth, and arched his eyebrows in a singular manner, as if he dared not trust the expression of his thoughts to any other feature. Titus shook his huge head, and, upon the strength of a bumper which he swallowed, mustered resolution enough to unburden his bosom.

"By my sowl," said he, mysteriously, "I've seen enough lately to frighten any quiet gentleman out of his senses. I'll not get a wink of sleep, I fear, for a week to come. There must have been something dreadful upon Sir Piers's mind; sure—nay, there's no use in mincing the matter with *you*—in a word, then, some crime too deep to be divulged."

"Crime!" echoed Coates and Small, in a breath.

"Ay, crime!" repeated Titus. "Whist! not so loud, lest any one should overhear us. Poor Sir Piers, he's dead now. I'm sure you both loved him as I did, and pity and pardon him if he was

guilty; for certain am I that no soul ever took its flight more heavily laden than did that of our poor friend. Och! it was a terrible ending. But you shall hear *how* he died, and judge for yourselves. When I returned to his room after Lady Rookwood's departure, I found him quite delirious. I knew death was not far off then. One minute he was in the chase, cheering on the hounds. 'Halloo! tallyho!' cried he: 'who clears that fence?—who swims that stream?' The next, he was drinking, carousing, and hurrahing, at the head of his table. 'Hip! hip! hip!'—as mad, and wild, and frantic as ever he used to be when wine had got the better of him; and then all of a sudden, in the midst of his shouting, he stopped, exclaiming, 'What! here again?—who let her in?—the door is fast—I locked it myself. Devil! why did you open it?—you have betrayed me—she will poison me—and I cannot resist. Ha! another! Who—who is that?—her face is white—her hair hangs about her shoulders. Is she alive again? Susan! Susan! why that look? You loved me well—too well. You will not drag me to perdition! You will not appear against me! No, no, no—it is not in your nature—you whom I doted on, whom I loved—whom I—but I repented—I sorrowed—I prayed—prayed! Oh! oh! no prayers would avail. Pray for me, Susan—for ever! *Your* intercession may avail. It is not too late. I will do justice to all. Bring me pen and ink—paper—I will confess—*he* shall have all. Where is my sister? I would speak with her—would tell her—tell her. Call Alan Rookwood—I shall die before I can tell it. Come hither,' said he to me. 'There is a dark, dreadful

secret on my mind—it must forth. Tell my sister—no, my senses swim—Susan is near me—fury in her eyes—avenging fury—keep her off. What is this white mass in my arms? what do I hold? is it the corpse by my side, as it lay that long, long night? It is—it is. Cold, stiff, stirless as then. White—horribly white—as when the moon, that would not set, showed all its ghastliness. Ah! it moves, embraces me, stifles, suffocates me. Help! remove the pillow. I cannot breathe—I choke—oh!' And now I am coming to the strangest part of my story—and, strange as it may sound, every word is as true as Gospel."

"Ahem!" coughed Small.

"Well, at this moment—this terrible moment—what should I hear but a tap against the wainscot. Holy Virgin! how it startled me. My heart leapt to my mouth in an instant, and then went thump, thump, against my ribs. But I said nothing, though you may be sure I kept my ears wide open—and then presently I heard the tap repeated somewhat louder, and shortly afterwards a third—I should still have said nothing, but Sir Piers heard the knock, and raised himself at the summons, as if it had been the last trumpet. 'Come in,' cried he, in a dying voice; and Heaven forgive me if I confess that I expected a certain person, whose company one would rather dispense with upon such an occasion, to step in. However, though it wasn't the ould gentleman, it was somebody near akin to him; for a door I had never seen, and never even dreamed of, opened in the wall, and in stepped Peter Bradley—ay, you may well stare, gentlemen; but it was Peter,

looking as stiff as a crowbar, and as blue as a mattock. Well, he walked straight up to the bed of the dying man, and bent his great, diabolical gray eyes upon him, laughing all the while—yes, laughing—you know the cursed grin he has. To proceed. 'You have called me,' said he to Sir Piers; 'I am here. What would you with me?'—'We are not alone,' groaned the dying man. 'Leave us, Mr. Tyrconnel—leave me for five minutes—only five, mark me.'—'I'll go,' thinks I, 'but I shall never see you again alive.' And true enough it was—I never did see him again with breath in his body. Without more ado, I left him, and I had scarcely reached the corridor when I heard the door bolted behind me. I then stopped to listen: and I'm sure you'll not blame me when I say I clapped my eye to the keyhole; for I suspected something wrong. But, Heaven save us! that crafty gravedigger had taken his precautions too well. I could neither see nor hear anything, except after a few minutes, a wild unearthly screech. And then the door was thrown open, and I, not expecting it, was precipitated head foremost into the room, to the great damage of my nose. When I got up, Peter had vanished, I suppose, as he came; and there was poor Sir Piers leaning back upon the pillow with his hands stretched out as if in supplication, his eyes unclosed and staring, and his limbs stark and stiff!"

A profound silence succeeded this narrative. Mr. Coates would not venture upon a remark. Dr. Small seemed, for some minutes, lost in painful reflection; at length he spoke: "You have described a shocking scene, Mr. Tyrconnel, and in a manner that

convinces me of its fidelity. But I trust you will excuse me, as a friend of the late Sir Piers, in requesting you to maintain silence in future on the subject. Its repetition can be productive of no good, and may do infinite harm by giving currency to unpleasant reports, and harrowing the feelings of the survivors. Every one acquainted with Sir Piers's history must be aware, as I dare say you are already, of an occurrence which cast a shade over his early life, blighted his character, and endangered his personal safety. It was a dreadful accusation. But I believe, nay, I am sure, it was unfounded. Dark suspicions attach to a Romish priest of the name of Checkley. He, I believe, is beyond the reach of human justice. Erring Sir Piers was, undoubtedly. But I trust he was more weak than sinful. I have reason to think he was the tool of others, especially of the wretch I have named. And it is easy to perceive how that incomprehensible lunatic, Peter Bradley, has obtained an ascendancy over him. His daughter, you are aware, was Sir Piers's mistress. Our friend is now gone, and with him let us bury his offences, and the remembrance of them. That his soul was heavily laden, would appear from your account of his last moments; yet I fervently trust that his repentance was sincere, in which case there is hope of forgiveness for him. 'At what time soever a sinner shall repent him of his sins, from the bottom of his heart, I will blot out all his wickedness out of my remembrance, saith the Lord.' Heaven's mercy is greater than man's sins. And there is hope of salvation even for Sir Piers."

"I trust so, indeed," said Titus, with emotion; "and as to

repeating a syllable of what I have just said, devil a word more will I utter on the subject. My lips shall be shut and sealed, as close as one of Mr. Coates's bonds, for ever and a day: but I thought it just right to make you acquainted with the circumstances. And now, having dismissed the bad for ever, I am ready to speak of Sir Piers's good qualities, and not few they were. What was there becoming a gentleman that he couldn't do, I'd like to know? Couldn't he hunt as well as ever a one in the county? and hadn't he as good a pack of hounds? Couldn't he shoot as well, and fish as well, and drink as well, or better?—only he couldn't carry his wine, which was his misfortune, not his fault. And wasn't he always ready to ask a friend to dinner with him? and didn't he give him a good dinner when he came, barring the cross-cups afterwards? And hadn't he everything agreeable about him, except his wife? which was a great drawback. And with all his peculiarities and humors, wasn't he as kind-hearted a man as needs be? and an Irishman at the core? And so, if he wern't dead, I'd say long life to him! But as he is, here's peace to his memory!"

At this juncture, a knocking was heard at the door, which some one without had vainly tried to open. Titus rose to unclose it, ushering in an individual known at the hall as Jack Palmer.

CHAPTER IX
AN ENGLISH ADVENTURER

Mrs. Peachem. Sure the captain's the finest gentleman on the road.
Beggar's Opera.

Jack Palmer was a good-humored, good-looking man, with immense bushy, red whiskers, a freckled, florid complexion, and sandy hair, rather inclined to scantiness towards the scalp of the head, which garnished the nape of his neck with a ruff of crisp little curls, like the ring on a monk's shaven crown. Notwithstanding this tendency to baldness, Jack could not be more than thirty, though his looks were some five years in advance. His face was one of those inexplicable countenances, which appear to be proper to a peculiar class of men—a regular Newmarket physiognomy—compounded chiefly of cunning and assurance; not low cunning, nor vulgar assurance, but crafty sporting subtlety, careless as to results, indifferent to obstacles, ever on the alert for the main chance, game and turf all over, eager, yet easy, keen, yet quiet. He was somewhat showily dressed, in such wise that he looked half like a fine gentleman of that day, half like a jockey of our own. His nether man appeared in well-fitting, well-worn buckskins, and boots with tops, not unconscious of the saddle; while the airy extravagance of his

broad-skirted, sky-blue riding coat, the richness of his vest—the pockets of which were beautifully exuberant, according to the mode of 1737—the smart luxuriance of his cravat, and a certain curious taste in the size and style of his buttons, proclaimed that, in his own esteem at least, his person did not appear altogether unworthy of decoration; nor, in justice to Jack, can we allow that he was in error. He was a model of a man for five feet ten; square, compact, capitally built in every particular, excepting that his legs were slightly imbowed, which defect probably arose from his being almost constantly on horseback; a sort of exercise in which Jack greatly delighted, and was accounted a superb rider. It was, indeed, his daring horsemanship, upon one particular occasion, when he had outstripped a whole field, that had procured him the honor of an invitation to Rookwood. Who he was, or whence he came, was a question not easily answered—Jack, himself, evading all solution to the inquiry. Sir Piers never troubled his head about the matter: he was a "deuced good fellow—rode well, and stood on no sort of ceremony;" that was enough for him. Nobody else knew anything about him, save that he was a capital judge of horseflesh, kept a famous black mare, and attended every hunt in the West Riding—that he could sing a good song, was a choice companion, and could drink three bottles without feeling the worse for them.

Sensible of the indecorum that might attach to his appearance, Dr. Small had hastily laid down his pipe, and arranged his wig. But when he saw who was the intruder, with a grunt of

defiance he resumed his occupation, without returning the bow of the latter, or bestowing further notice upon him. Nothing discomposed at the churchman's displeasure, Jack greeted Titus cordially, and carelessly saluting Mr. Coates, threw himself into a chair. He next filled a tumbler of claret, and drained it at a draught.

"Have you ridden far, Jack?" asked Titus, noticing the dusty state of Palmer's azure attire.

"Some dozen miles," replied Palmer; "and that, on such a sultry afternoon as the present, makes one feel thirstyish. I'm as dry as a sandbed. Famous wine this—beautiful tipple—better than all your red fustian. Ah, how poor Sir Piers used to like it! Well, that's all over—a glass like this might do him good in his present quarters! I'm afraid I'm intruding. But the fact is, I wanted a little information about the order of the procession, and missing you below, came hither in search of you. You're to be chief mourner, I suppose, Titus—*rehearsing* your part, eh?"

"Come, come, Jack, no joking," replied Titus; "the subject's too serious. I am to be chief mourner—and I expect you to be a mourner—and everybody else to be mourners. We must all mourn at the proper time. There'll be a power of people at the church."

"There *are* a power of people here already," returned Jack, "if they all attend."

"And they all *will* attend, or what is the eating and drinking to go for? I sha'n't leave a soul in the house."

"Excepting one," said Jack, archly. "Lady Rookwood won't attend, I think."

"Ay, excepting her ladyship and her ladyship's abigail. All the rest go with me, and form part of the procession. You go too."

"Of course. At what time do you start?"

"Twelve precisely. As the clock strikes, we set out—all in a line, and a long line we'll make. I'm waiting for that ould coffin-faced rascal, Peter Bradley, to arrange the order."

"How long will it all occupy, think you?" asked Jack, carelessly.

"That I can't say," returned Titus; "possibly an hour, more or less. But we shall start to the minute—that is, if we can get all together, so don't be out of the way. And hark ye, Jack, you must contrive to change your toggery. That sky-blue coat won't do. It's not the thing at all, at all."

"Never fear that," replied Palmer. "But who were those in the carriages?"

"Is it the last carriage you mean? Squire Forester and his sons. They're dining with the other gentlefolk, in the great room up-stairs, to be out of the way. Oh, we'll have a grand *berrin'*. And, by St. Patrick! I must be looking after it."

"Stay a minute," said Jack; "let's have a cool bottle first. They are all taking care of themselves below, and Peter Bradley has not made his appearance, so you need be in no hurry. I'll go with you presently. Shall I ring for the claret?"

"By all means," replied Titus.

Jack accordingly arose; and a butler answering the summons, a long-necked bottle was soon placed before them.

"You heard of the affray last night, I presume?" said Jack, renewing the conversation.

"With the poachers? To be sure I did. Wasn't I called in to examine Hugh Badger's wounds the first thing this morning; and a deep cut there was, just over the eye, besides other bruises."

"Is the wound dangerous?" inquired Palmer.

"Not exactly mortal, if you mean that," replied the Irishman; "dangerous, certainly."

"Humph!" exclaimed Jack; "they'd a pretty hardish bout of it, I understand. Anything been heard of the body?"

"What body?" inquired Small, who was half-dozing.

"The body of the drowned poacher," replied Jack; "they were off to search for it this morning."

"Found it—not they!" exclaimed Titus. "Ha, ha!—I can't help laughing, for the life and *sowl* of me; a capital trick he played 'em, —capital—ha, ha! What do you think the fellow did? Ha, ha!—after leading 'em the devil's dance, all around the park, killing a hound as savage as a wolf, and breaking Hugh Badger's head, which is as hard and thick as a butcher's block, what does the fellow do but dive into a pool, with a great rock hanging over it, and make his way to the other side, through a subterranean cavern, which nobody knew anything about, till they came to drag it, thinking him snugly drowned all the while—ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorused Jack; "bravo! he's a lad of the right

sort—ha, ha!"

"He! who?" inquired the attorney.

"Why, the poacher, to be sure," replied Jack; "who else were we talking about?"

"Beg pardon," returned Coates; "I thought you might have heard some intelligence. We've got an eye upon him. We know who it was."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Jack; "and who was it?"

"A fellow known by the name of Luke Bradley."

"Zounds!" cried Titus, "you don't say it was he? Murder in Irish! that bates everything; why, he was Sir Piers's–"

"Natural son," replied the attorney; "he has not been heard of for some time—shockingly incorrigible rascal—impossible to do anything with him."

"You don't say so?" observed Jack. "I've heard Sir Piers speak of the lad; and, by his account, he's as fine a fellow as ever crossed tit's back; only a little wildish and unreasonable, as the best of us may be; wants breaking, that's all. Your skittish colt makes the best horse, and so would he. To speak the truth, I'm glad he escaped."

"So am I," rejoined Titus; "for, in the first place, I've a foolish partiality for poachers, and am sorry when any of 'em come to hurt; and, in the second, I'd be mighty displeased if any ill had happened to one of Sir Piers's flesh and blood, as this young chap appears to be."

"Appears to be!" repeated Palmer; "there's no *appearing* in

the case, I take it. This Bradley's an undoubted offshoot of the old squire. His mother was a servant-maid at the hall, I rather think. You sir," continued he, addressing Coates, "perhaps, can inform us of the real facts of the case."

"She was something better than a servant," replied the attorney, with a slight cough and a knowing wink. "I remember her quite well, though I was but a boy then; a lovely creature, and so taking, I don't wonder that Sir Piers was smitten with her. He was mad after the women in those days, and pretty Sue Bradley above all others. She lived with him quite like his lady."

"So I've heard," returned Jack; "and she remained with him till her death. Let me see, wasn't there something rather odd in the way in which she died, rather suddenish and unexpected,—a noise made about it at the time, eh?"

"Not that I ever heard," replied Coates, shaking his head, and appearing to be afflicted with an instantaneous ignorance; while Titus affected not to hear the remark, but occupied himself with his wine-glass. Small snored audibly. "I was too young, then, to pay any attention to idle rumors," continued Coates. "It's a long time ago. May I ask the reason of your inquiry?"

"Nothing further than simple curiosity," replied Jack, enjoying the consternation of his companions. "It is, as you say, a long while since. But it's singular how that sort of thing is remembered. One would think people had something else to do than talk of one's private affairs for ever. For my part, I despise such tattle. But there *are* persons in the neighborhood who still

say it was an awkward business. Amongst others, I've heard that this very Luke Bradley talks in pretty plain terms about it."

"Does he, indeed?" said Coates. "So much the worse for him. Let me once lay hands upon him, and I'll put a gag in his mouth that shall spoil his talking in the future."

"That's precisely the point I desire to arrive at," replied Jack; "and I advise you by all means to accomplish that, for the sake of the family. Nobody likes his friends to be talked about. So I'd settle the matter amicably, were I you. Just let the fellow go his way; he won't return here again in a hurry, I'll be bound. As to clapping him in quod, he might prattle—turn stag."

"Turn stag!" replied Coates, "what the deuce is that? In my opinion, he has 'turned stag' already. At all events, he'll pay *deer* for his night's sport, you may depend upon it. What signifies it what *he* says? Let me lay hands upon him, that's all."

"Well, well," said Jack, "no offence. I only meant to offer a suggestion. I thought the family, young Sir Ranulph, I mean, mightn't like the story to be revived. As to Lady Rookwood, she don't, I suppose, care much about idle reports. Indeed, if I've been rightly informed, she bears this youngster no particular good-will to begin with, and has tried hard to get him out of the country. But, as you say, what *does* it signify what he says? he can *only* talk. Sir Piers is dead and gone."

"Humph!" muttered Coates, peevishly.

"But it does seem a little hard, that a lad should swing for killing a bit of venison in his own father's park."

"Which he'd a *nat'ral* right to do," cried Titus.

"He had no natural right to bruise, violently assault, and endanger the life of his father's, or anybody else's gamekeeper," retorted Coates. "I tell you, sir, he's committed a capital offence, and if he's taken–"

"No chance of that, I hope," interrupted Jack.

"That's a wish I can't help wishing myself," said Titus: "on my conscience, these poachers are fine boys, when all's said and done."

"The finest of all boys," exclaimed Jack, with a kindred enthusiasm, "are those birds of the night, and minions of the moon, whom we call, most unjustly, poachers. They are, after all, only *professional sportsmen*, making a business of what we make a pleasure; a nightly pursuit of what is to us a daily relaxation; there's the main distinction. As to the rest, it's all in idea; they merely thin an overstocked park, as *you* would reduce a plethoric patient, doctor; or as *you* would work a moneyed client, if you got him into Chancery, Mister Attorney. And then how much more scientifically and systematically they set to work than we amateurs do! how noiselessly they bag a hare, smoke a pheasant, or knock a buck down with an air-gun! how independent are they of any license, except that of a good eye, and a swift pair of legs! how unnecessary is it for them to ask permission to shoot over Mr. So-and-so's grounds, or my Lord That's preserves! they are free of every cover, and indifferent to any alteration in the game laws. I've some thoughts, when everything else fails, of taking to

poaching myself. In my opinion, a poacher's a highly respectable character. What say you, Mr. Coates?" turning very gravely to that gentleman.

"Such a question, sir," replied Coates, bridling up, "scarcely deserves a serious answer. I make no doubt you will next maintain that a highwayman is a gentleman."

"Most undoubtedly," replied Palmer, in the same grave tone, which might have passed for banter, had Jack ever bantered. "I'll maintain and prove it. I don't see how he can be otherwise. It is as necessary for a man to be a gentleman before he can turn highwayman, as it is for a doctor to have his diploma, or an attorney his certificate. Some of the finest gentlemen of their day, as Captain Lovelace, Hind, Hannum, and Dudley, were eminent on the road, and they set the fashion. Ever since their day a real highwayman would consider himself disgraced, if he did not conduct himself in every way like a gentleman. Of course, there are pretenders in this line, as in everything else. But these are only exceptions, and prove the rule. What are the distinguishing characteristics of a fine gentleman?—perfect knowledge of the world—perfect independence of character—notoriety—command of cash—and inordinate success with the women. You grant all these premises? First, then, it is part of a highwayman's business to be thoroughly acquainted with the world. He is the easiest and pleasantest fellow going. There is Tom King, for example: he is the handsomest man about town, and the best-bred fellow on the road. Then whose inclinations

are so uncontrolled as the highwayman's, so long as the mopuses last? who produces so great an effect by so few words?—'Stand and deliver!' is sure to arrest attention. Every one is captivated by an address so *taking*. As to money, he wins a purse of a hundred guineas as easily as you would the same sum from the faro table. And wherein lies the difference? only in the name of the game. Who so little need of a banker as he? all he has to apprehend is a check—all he has to draw is a trigger. As to the women, they dote upon him: not even your red-coat is so successful. Look at a highwayman mounted on his flying steed, with his pistols in his holsters, and his mask upon his face. What can be a more gallant sight? The clatter of his horse's heels is like music to his ear—he is in full quest—he shouts to the fugitive horseman to stay—the other flies all the faster—what chase can be half so exciting as that? Suppose he overtakes his prey, which ten to one he will, how readily his summons to deliver is obeyed! how satisfactory is the appropriation of a lusty purse or corpulent pocket-book!—getting the brush is nothing to it. How tranquilly he departs, takes off his hat to his accommodating acquaintance, wishes him a pleasant journey, and disappears across the heath! England, sir, has reason to be proud of her highwaymen. They are peculiar to her clime, and are as much before the brigand of Italy, the contrabandist of Spain, or the cut-purse of France—as her sailors are before all the rest of the world. The day will never come, I hope, when we shall degenerate into the footpad, and lose our *Night Errantry*. Even the French borrow from us—

they have only one highwayman of eminence, and he learnt and practised his art in England."

"And who was he, may I ask?" said Coates.

"Claude Du-Val," replied Jack; "and though a Frenchman, he was a deuced fine fellow in his day—quite a tip-top macaroni—he could skip and twirl like a figurant, warble like an opera-singer, and play the flageolet better than any man of his day—he always carried a lute in his pocket, along with his snappers. And then his dress—it was quite beautiful to see how smartly he was rigg'd out, all velvet and lace; and even with his vizard on his face, the ladies used to cry out to see him. Then he took a purse with the air and grace of a receiver-general. All the women adored him—and that, bless their pretty faces! was the best proof of his gentility. I wish he'd not been a Mounseer. The women never mistake. *They* can always discover the true gentlemen, and they were all, of every degree, from the countess to the kitchen-maid, over head and ears in love with him."

"But he was taken, I suppose?" asked Coates.

"Ay," responded Jack, "the women were his undoing, as they've been many a brave fellow's before, and will be again." Touched by which reflection, Jack became for once in his life sentimental, and sighed. "Poor Du-Val! he was seized at the Hole-in-the-Wall in Chandos-street by the bailiff of Westminster, when dead drunk, his liquor having been drugged by his dells—and was shortly afterwards hanged at Tyburn."

"It was thousand pities," said Mr. Coates, with a sneer, "that

so fine a gentleman should come to so ignominious an end!"

"Quite the contrary," returned Jack. "As his biographer, Doctor Pope, properly remarks, 'Who is there worthy of the name of man, that would not prefer such a death before a mean, solitary, inglorious life?' By-the-by, Titus, as we're upon the subject, if you like I'll sing you a song about highwaymen."

"I should like it of all things," replied Titus, who entertained a very favorable opinion of Jack's vocal powers, and was by no means an indifferent performer; "only let it be in a minor key."

Jack required no further encouragement, but disregarding the hints and looks of Coates, sang with much unction the following ballad to a good old tune, then very popular—the merit of which "nobody can deny."

A CHAPTER OF HIGHWAYMEN

Of every rascal of every kind,
The most notorious to my mind,
Was the Cavalier Captain, gay Jemmy Hind![7]
Which nobody can deny.

But the pleasantest coxcomb among them all

[7] James Hind—the "Prince of Prigs"—a royalist captain of some distinction, was hanged, drawn, and quartered, in 1652. Some good stories are told of him. He had the credit of robbing Cromwell, Bradshaw, and Peters. His discourse to Peters is particularly edifying.

For lute, coranto, and madrigal,
Was the galliard Frenchman, Claude Du-Val![8]
Which nobody can deny.

And Tobygloak never a coach could rob,
Could lighten a pocket, or empty a fob,
With a neater hand than Old Mob, Old Mob![9]
Which nobody can deny.

Nor did housebreaker ever deal harder knocks
On the stubborn lid of a good strong box,
Than that prince of good fellows, Tom Cox, Tom Cox![10]
Which nobody can deny.

A blither fellow on broad highway,
Did never with oath bid traveller stay,
Than devil-may-care Will Holloway![11]

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[8] See Du-Val's life by Doctor Pope, or Leigh Hunt's brilliant sketch of him in *The Indicator*.

[9] We cannot say much in favor of this worthy, whose name was Thomas Simpson. The reason of his *sobriquet* does not appear. He was not particularly scrupulous as to his mode of appropriation. One of his sayings is, however, on record. He told a widow whom he robbed, "that the end of a woman's husband begins in tears, but the end of her tears is another husband." "Upon which," says his chronicler, "the gentlewoman gave him about fifty guineas."

[10] Tom was a sprightly fellow, and carried his sprightliness to the gallows; for just before he was turned off he kicked Mr. Smith, the ordinary, and the hangman out of the cart—a piece of pleasantry which created, as may be supposed, no small sensation.

[11] Many agreeable stories are related of Holloway. His career, however, closed with a murder. He contrived to break out of Newgate but returned to witness the trial of

Which nobody can deny.

And in roguery naught could exceed the tricks
Of Gettings and Grey, and the five or six
Who trod in the steps of bold Neddy Wicks![12]
Which nobody can deny.

Nor could any so handily break a lock
As Sheppard, who stood on the Newgate dock,
And nicknamed the jailers around him "*his flock*!"[13]
Which nobody can deny.

Nor did highwaymen ever before possess
For ease, for security, danger, distress,
Such a mare as Dick Turpin's Black Bess! Black Bess!
Which nobody can deny.

"A capital song, by the powers!" cried Titus, as Jack's ditty came to a close. "But your English robbers are nothing at all,

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one of his associates; when, upon the attempt of a turnkey, one Richard Spurling, to seize him, Will knocked him on the head in the presence of the whole court. For this offence he suffered the extreme penalty of the law in 1712.

[12] Wicks's adventures with Madame Toly are highly diverting. It was this hero—not Turpin, as has been erroneously stated—who stopped the celebrated Lord Mohun. Of Gettings and Grey, and "the five or six," the less said the better.

[13] One of Jack's recorded *mots*. When a Bible was pressed upon his acceptance by Mr. Wagstaff, the chaplain, Jack refused it, saying, "that in his situation one file would be worth all the Bibles in the world." A gentleman who visited Newgate asked him to dinner; Sheppard replied, "that he would take an early opportunity of waiting upon him." And we believe he kept his word.

compared with our Tories[14] and Rapparees—nothing at all. They were the *raal* gentlemen—they were the boys to cut a throat *aisily*."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Jack, in disgust, "the gentlemen I speak of never maltreated any one, except in self-defence."

"Maybe not," replied Titus; "I'll not dispute the point—but these Rapparees were true brothers of the blade, and gentlemen every inch. I'll just sing you a song I made about them myself. But meanwhile don't let's forget the bottle—talking's dry work. My service to you, doctor!" added he, winking at the somnolent Small. And tossing off his glass, Titus delivered himself with much joviality of the following ballad; the words of which he adapted to the tune of the *Groves of the Pool*:

THE RAPPAREES

Let the Englishman boast of his Turpins and Sheppards, as cocks of the walk,
His Mulsacks, and Cheneys, and Swiftnecks[15]—it's all

[14] The word Tory, as here applied, must not be confounded with the term of party distinction now in general use in the political world. It simply means a thief on a grand scale, something more than "a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles," or petty-larceny rascal. We have classical authority for this:—Tory: "An advocate for absolute monarchy; *also, an Irish vagabond, robber, or rapparee*."—Grose's *Dictionary*.

[15] A trio of famous High-Tobygloaks. Swiftneck was a captain of *Irish* dragoons, by-the-bye.

botheration and talk;
Compared with the robbers of Ireland, they don't come within half a mile,
There never were yet any rascals like those of my own native isle!

First and foremost comes Redmond O'Hanlon, allowed the first thief of the world,[16]

[16] Redmond O'Hanlon was the Rob Roy of Ireland, and his adventures, many of which are exceedingly curious, would furnish as rich *materials* for the novelist, as they have already done for the ballad-mongers: some of them are, however, sufficiently well narrated in a pleasant little tome, published at Belfast, entitled *The History of the Rapparees*. We are also in possession of a funeral discourse, preached at the obsequies of the "noble and renowned" Henry St. John, Esq., who was unfortunately killed by the *Tories*—the *Destructives* of those days—in the induction to which we find some allusion to Redmond. After describing the thriving condition of the north of Ireland, about 1680, the Rev. Lawrence Power, the author of the sermon, says, "One mischief there was, which indeed in a great measure destroyed all, and that was a pack of insolent bloody outlaws, whom they here call *Tories*. These had so riveted themselves in these parts, that by the interest they had among the natives, and some English, too, *to their shame be it spoken*, they exercise a kind of separate sovereignty in three or four counties in the north of Ireland. Redmond O'Hanlon is their chief, and has been these many years; a cunning, dangerous fellow, who, though proclaimed an outlaw with the rest of his crew, and sums of money set upon their heads, yet he reigns still, and keeps all in subjection, so far that 'tis credibly reported *he raises more in a year by contributions à-la-mode de France than the king's land taxes and chimney-money come to, and thereby is enabled to bribe clerks and officers*, if not their masters, (!) *and makes all too much truckle to him*." Agitation, it seems, was not confined to our own days—but the "finest country in the world" has been, and ever will be, the same. The old game is played under a new color—the only difference being, that had Redmond lived in our time, he would, in all probability, not only have pillaged a county, but *represented* it in parliament. The spirit of the Rapparee is still abroad—though we fear there is little of the *Tory* left about it. We recommend this note to the serious consideration of the

That o'er the broad province of Ulster the Rapparee banner unfurled;
Och! he was an elegant fellow, as ever you saw in your life,
At fingering the blunderbuss trigger, or handling the throat-cutting knife.

And then such a dare-devil squadron as that which composed Redmond's *tail*!
Meel, Mactigh, Jack Reilly, Shan Bernagh, Phil Galloge, and Arthur O'Neal;
Shure never were any boys like 'em for rows, *agitations*, and sprees,
Not a *rap* did they leave in the country, and hence they were called *Rap*parees.[17]

Next comes Power, the great Tory[18] of Munster, a gentleman born every inch,
And strong Jack Macpherson of Leinster, a horse-shoe who broke at a pinch;
The last was a fellow so *lively*, not death e'en his courage could damp,
For as he was led to the gallows, he played his own "march to the camp."[19]

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declaimers against the sufferings of the "six millions."

[17] Here Titus was slightly in error. He mistook the cause for the effect. "They were called Rapparees," Mr. Malone says, "from being armed with a half-pike, called by the Irish a *rapparee*."—Todd's Johnson.

[18] *Tory*, so called from the Irish word *Toree*, give me your money.—Todd's Johnson.

[19] As he was carried to the gallows, Jack played a fine tune of his own composing

Paddy Fleming, Dick Balf, and Mulhoni, I think are the next on my list,
All adepts in the beautiful science of giving a pocket a twist;
Jemmy Carrick must follow his leaders, *ould* Purney who put in a huff,
By dancing a hornpipe at Tyburn, and bothering the hangman for snuff.

There's Paul Liddy, the curly-pate Tory, whose noddle was stuck on a spike,
And Billy Delaney, the "*Songster*,"[20] we never shall meet with

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on the bagpipe, which retains the name of Macpherson's tune to this day.—*History of the Rapparees.*

[20] "Notwithstanding he was so great a rogue, Delany was a handsome, portly man, extremely diverting in company, and could behave himself before gentlemen very agreeably. *He had a political genius*—not altogether surprising in so eminent a *Tory*—and would have made great proficiency in learning if he had rightly applied his time. He composed several songs, and put tunes to them; and by his skill in music gained the favor of some of the leading musicians in the country, who endeavored to get him reprieved."—*History of the Rapparees.* The particulars of the *Songster's* execution are singular:—"When he was brought into court to receive sentence of death, the judge told him that he was informed he should say 'that there was not a rope in Ireland sufficient to hang him. But,' says he, 'I'll try if Kilkenny can't afford one strong enough to do your business; and if that will not do, you shall have another, and another.' Then he ordered the sheriff to choose a rope, and Delany was ordered for execution the next day. The sheriff having notice of his mother's boasting that no rope could hang her son—and pursuant to the judge's desire—provided two ropes, but Delany broke them one after the other! The sheriff was then in a rage, and went for three bed-cords, which he plaited threefold together, *and they did his business*! Yet the sheriff was afraid he was not dead; and in a passion, to make trial, stabbed him with his sword in the soles of his feet, and at last cut the rope. After he was cut down, his body was carried into the

his like;
For his neck by a witch was anointed, and warranted safe by her charm,
No hemp that was ever yet twisted his wonderful throttle could harm.

And lastly, there's Cahir na Cappul, the handiest rogue of them all,
Who only need whisper a word, and your horse will trot out of his stall;
Your tit is not safe in your stable, though you or your groom should be near,
And devil a bit in the paddock, if Cahir gets *hould* of his ear.

Then success to the Tories of Ireland, the generous, the gallant, the gay!
With them the best *Rumpads*[21] of England are not to be named the same day!
And were further proof wanting to show what precedence we take with our *prigs*,
Recollect that *our* robbers are Tories, while those of *your* country are Whigs.

"Bravissimo!" cried Jack, drumming upon the table.

"Well," said Coates, "we've had enough about the Irish

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courthouse, where it remained in the coffin for two days, standing up, till the judge and all the spectators were fully satisfied that he was stiff and dead, and then permission was given to his friends to remove the corpse and bury it."-*History of the Rapparees*.

[21] Highwaymen, as contradistinguished from footpads.

highwaymen, in all conscience. But there's a rascal on our side of the Channel, whom you have only incidentally mentioned, and who makes more noise than them all put together."

"Who's that?" asked Jack, with some curiosity.

"Dick Turpin," replied the attorney: "he seems to me quite as worthy of mention as any of the Hinds, the Du-Vals, or the O'Hanlons, you have either of you enumerated."

"I did not think of him," replied Palmer, smiling; "though, if I had, he scarcely deserves to be ranked with those illustrious heroes."

"Gads bobs!" cried Titus; "they tell me Turpin keeps the best nag in the United Kingdom, and can ride faster and further in a day than any other man in a week."

"So I've heard," said Palmer, with a glance of satisfaction. "I should like to try a run with him. I warrant me, I'd not be far behind."

"I should like to get a peep at him," quoth Titus.

"So should I," added Coates. "Vastly!"

"You may both of you be gratified, gentlemen," said Palmer. "Talking of Dick Turpin, they say, is like speaking of the devil, he's at your elbow ere the word's well out of your mouth. He may be within hearing at this moment, for anything we know to the contrary."

"Body o' me!" ejaculated Coates, "you don't say so? Turpin in Yorkshire! I thought he confined his exploits to the neighborhood of the metropolis, and made Epping Forest his headquarters."

"So he did," replied Jack, "but the cave is all up now. The whole of the great North Road, from Tottenham Cross to York gates, comes within Dick's present range; and Saint Nicholas only knows in which part of it he is most likely to be found. He shifts his quarters as often and as readily as a Tartar; and he who looks for him may chance to catch a Tartar—ha!—ha!"

"It's a disgrace to the country that such a rascal should remain unhanged," returned Coates, peevishly. "Government ought to look to it. Is the whole kingdom to be kept in a state of agitation by a single highwayman?—Sir Robert Walpole should take the affair into his own hands."

"Fudge!" exclaimed Jack, emptying his glass.

"I have already addressed a letter to the editor of the *Common Sense* on the subject," said Coates, "in which I have spoken my mind pretty plainly: and I repeat, it is perfectly disgraceful that such a rascal should be suffered to remain at large."

"You don't happen to have that letter by you, I suppose," said Jack, "or I should beg the favor to hear it?—I am not acquainted with the newspaper to which you allude;—I read *Fog's Journal*."

"So I thought," replied Coates, with a sneer; "that's the reason you are so easily mystified. But luckily I have the paper in my pocket; and you are quite welcome to my opinions. Here it is," added he, drawing forth a newspaper. "I shall waive my preliminary remarks, and come to the point at once."

"By all means," said Jack.

"'I thank God,'" began Coates, in an authoritative tone, "'that

I was born in a country that hath formerly emulated the Romans in their public spirit; as is evident from their conquests abroad, and their struggles for liberty at home.'"

"What has all this got to do with Turpin?" interposed Jack.

"You will hear," replied the attorney—"no interruptions if you please. 'But this noble principle,'" continued he, with great emphasis, "'though not utterly lost, I cannot think at present so active as it ought to be in a nation so jealous of her liberty.'"

"Good!" exclaimed Jack. "There is more than '*common sense*' in that observation, Mr. Coates."

"'My suspicion,'" proceeded Coates, "'is founded on a late instance. I mean the flagrant, undisturbed success of the notorious Turpin, who hath robb'd in a manner scarce ever known before for several years, and is grown so insolent and impudent as to threaten particular persons, and become openly dangerous to the lives as well as fortunes of the people of England.'"

"Better and better," shouted Jack, laughing immoderately. "Pray go on, sir."

"'That a fellow,'" continued Coates, "'who is known to be a thief by the whole kingdom, shall for so long a time continue to rob us, and not only rob us, but make a jest of us–'"

"Ha—ha—ha—capital! Excuse me, sir," roared Jack, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks—"pray, pray, go on."

"I see nothing to laugh at," replied Coates, somewhat offended; "however, I will conclude my letter, since I have begun

it—'not only rob us, but make a jest of us, shall defy the laws, and laugh at justice, argues a want of public spirit, which should make every particular member of the community sensible of the public calamity, and ambitious of the honor of extirpating such a notorious highwayman from society, since he owes his long successes to no other cause than his immoderate impudence, and the sloth and pusillanimity of those who ought to bring him to justice.' I will not deny," continued Coates, "that, professing myself, as I do, to be a staunch new Whig, I had not some covert political object in penning this epistle.[22] Nevertheless, setting aside my principles–"

"Right," observed Jack; "you Whigs, new or old, always set aside your principles."

"Setting aside any political feeling I may entertain," continued Coates, disregarding the interruption, "I repeat, I am ambitious of extirpating this modern Cacus—this Autolycus of the eighteenth century."

"And what course do you mean to pursue?" asked Jack, "for I suppose you do not expect to catch this '*ought-to-lick-us*,' as you call him, by a line in the newspapers."

"I am in the habit of keeping my own counsel, sir," replied Coates, pettishly; "and to be plain with you, I hope to finger all

[22] Since Mr. Coates here avows himself the writer of this diatribe against Sir Robert Walpole, attacked under the guise of *Turpin* in the *Common Sense* of July 30, 1737, it is useless to inquire further into its authorship. And it remains only to refer the reader to the *Gents. Mag.*, vol. vii. p. 438, for the article above quoted; and for a reply to it from the *Daily Gazetteer* contained in p. 499 of the same volume.

the reward myself."

"Oons, is there a reward offered for Turpin's apprehension?" asked Titus.

"No less than two hundred pounds," answered Coates, "and that's no trifle, as you will both admit. Have you not seen the king's proclamation, Mr. Palmer?"

"Not I," replied Jack, with affected indifference.

"Nor I," added Titus, with some appearance of curiosity; "do you happen to have *that* by you too?"

"I always carry it about with me," replied Coates, "that I may refer to it in case of emergency. My father, Christopher, or Kit Coates, as he was familiarly called, was a celebrated thief-taker. He apprehended Spicket, and Child, and half a dozen others, and always kept their descriptions in his pocket. I endeavor to tread in my worthy father's footsteps. I hope to signalize myself by capturing a highwayman. By-the-by," added he, surveying Jack more narrowly, "it occurs to me that Turpin must be rather like you, Mr. Palmer?"

"Like me," said Jack, regarding Coates askance; "like me—how am I to understand you, sir, eh?"

"No offence; none whatever, sir. Ah! stay, you won't object to my comparing the description. That *can* do no harm. Nobody would take you for a highwayman—nobody whatever—ha! ha! Singular resemblance—he—he. These things *do* happen sometimes: not very often, though. But here is Turpin's description in the *Gazette*, *June 28th*, a.d. 1737:—'*It having been*

represented to the King that Richard Turpin did, on Wednesday, the 4th of May last, rob on his Majesty's highway Vavasour Mowbray, Esq., Major of the 2d troop of Horse Grenadiers'—that Major Mowbray, by-the-by, is a nephew of the late Sir Piers, and cousin of the present baronet—'*and commit other notorious felonies and robberies near London, his Majesty is pleased to promise his most gracious pardon to any of his accomplices, and a reward of two hundred pounds to any person or persons who shall discover him, so as he may be apprehended and convicted*.'"

"Odsbodikins!" exclaimed Titus, "a noble reward! I should like to lay hands upon Turpin," added he, slapping Palmer's shoulder: "I wish he were in your place at this moment, Jack."

"Thank you!" replied Palmer, shifting his chair.

"'*Turpin*,'" continued Coates, "'*was born at Thacksted, in Essex; is about thirty*'—you, sir, I believe, are about thirty?" added he, addressing Palmer.

"Thereabouts," said Jack, bluffly. "But what has my age to do with that of Turpin?"

"Nothing—nothing at all," answered Coates; "suffer me, however, to proceed:—'*Is by trade a butcher*,'—you, sir, I believe, never had any dealings in that line?"

"I have some notion how to dispose of a troublesome calf," returned Jack. "But Turpin, though described as a butcher, is, I understand, a lineal descendant of a great French archbishop of the same name."

"Who wrote the chronicles of that royal robber Charlemagne;

I know him," replied Coates—"a terrible liar!—The modern Turpin '*is about five feet nine inches high*'—exactly your height, sir—exactly!"

"I am five feet ten," answered Jack, standing bolt upright.

"You have an inch, then, in your favor," returned the unperturbed attorney, deliberately proceeding with his examination—"'*he has a brown complexion, marked with the smallpox*.'"

"My complexion is florid—my face without a seam," quoth Jack.

"Those whiskers would conceal anything," replied Coates, with a grin. "Nobody wears whiskers nowadays, except a highwayman."

"Sir!" said Jack, sternly. "You are personal."

"I don't mean to be so," replied Coates; "but you must allow the description tallies with your own in a remarkable manner. Hear me out, however—'*his cheek bones are broad—his face is thinner towards the bottom—his visage short—pretty upright—and broad about the shoulders*.' Now I appeal to Mr. Tyrconnel if all this does not sound like a portrait of yourself."

"Don't appeal to me," said Titus, hastily, "upon such a delicate point. I can't say that I approve of a gentleman being likened to a highwayman. But if ever there was a highwayman I'd wish to resemble, it's either Redmond O'Hanlon or Richard Turpin; and may the devil burn me if I know which of the two is the greater rascal!"

"Well, Mr. Palmer," said Coates, "I repeat, I mean no offence. Likenesses are unaccountable. I am said to be like my Lord North; whether I am or not, the Lord knows. But if ever I meet with Turpin I shall bear you in mind—he—he! Ah! if ever I *should* have the good luck to stumble upon him, I've a plan for his capture which couldn't fail. Only let me get a glimpse of him, that's all. You shall see how I'll dispose of him."

"Well, sir, we *shall* see," observed Palmer. "And for your own sake, I wish you may never be nearer to him than you are at this moment. With his friends, they say Dick Turpin can be as gentle as a lamb; with his foes, especially with a limb of the law like yourself, he's been found but an ugly customer. I once saw him at Newmarket, where he was collared by two constable culls, one on each side. Shaking off one, and dealing the other a blow in the face with his heavy-handled whip, he stuck spurs into his mare, and though the whole field gave chase, he distanced them all, easily."

"And how came you not to try your pace with him, if you were there, as you boasted a short time ago?" asked Coates.

"So I did, and stuck closer to him than any one else. We were neck and neck. I was the only person who could have delivered him to the hands of justice, if I'd felt inclined."

"Zounds!" cried Coates; "If I had a similar opportunity, it should be neck or nothing. Either he or I should reach the scragging-post first. I'd take him, dead or alive."

"*You* take Turpin?" cried Jack, with a sneer.

"I'd engage to do it," replied Coates. "I'll bet you a hundred guineas I take him, if I ever have the same chance."

"Done!" exclaimed Jack, rapping the table at the same time, so that the glasses danced upon it.

"That's right," cried Titus. "I'll go you halves."

"What's the matter—what's the matter?" exclaimed Small, awakened from his doze.

"Only a trifling bet about a highwayman," replied Titus.

"A highwayman!" echoed Small. "Eh! what? there are none in the house, I hope."

"I hope not," answered Coates. "But this gentleman has taken up the defence of the notorious Dick Turpin in so singular a manner, that–"

"*Quod factu fœdum est, idem est et Dictu Turpe*," returned Small. "The less said about that rascal the better."

"So I think," replied Jack. "The fact is as you say, sir—were Dick here, he would, I am sure, take the *freedom to hide 'em*."

Further discourse was cut short by the sudden opening of the door, followed by the abrupt entrance of a tall, slender young man, who hastily advanced towards the table, around which the company were seated. His appearance excited the utmost astonishment in the whole group: curiosity was exhibited in every countenance—the magnum remained poised midway in the hand of Palmer—Dr. Small scorched his thumb in the bowl of his pipe; and Mr. Coates was almost choked, by swallowing an inordinate whiff of vapor.

"Young Sir Ranulph!" ejaculated he, as soon as the syncope would permit him.

"Sir Ranulph here?" echoed Palmer, rising.

"Angels and ministers!" exclaimed Small.

"Odsbodikins!" cried Titus, with a theatrical start; "this is more than I expected."

"Gentlemen," said Ranulph, "do not let my unexpected arrival here discompose you. Dr. Small, you will excuse the manner of my greeting; and you, Mr. Coates. One of the present party, I believe, was my father's medical attendant, Dr. Tyrconnel."

"I had that honor," replied the Irishman, bowing profoundly —"I am Dr. Tyrconnel, Sir Ranulph, at your service."

"When, and at what hour, did my father breathe his last, sir?" inquired Ranulph.

"Poor Sir Piers," answered Titus, again bowing, "departed this life on Thursday last."

"The hour?—the precise minute?" asked Ranulph, eagerly.

"Troth, Sir Ranulph, as nearly as I can recollect, it might be a few minutes before midnight."

"The very hour!" exclaimed Ranulph, striding towards the window. His steps were arrested as his eye fell upon the attire of his father, which, as we have before noticed, hung at that end of the room. A slight shudder passed over his frame. There was a momentary pause, during which Ranulph continued gazing intently at the apparel. "The very dress, too!" muttered he; then turning to the assembly, who were watching his movements with

surprise; "Doctor," said he, addressing Small, "I have something for your private ear. Gentlemen, will you spare us the room for a few minutes?"

"On my conscience," said Tyrconnel to Jack Palmer, as they quitted the sanctum, "a mighty fine boy is this young Sir Ranulph!—and a chip of the ould block!—he'll be as good a fellow as his father."

"No doubt," replied Palmer, shutting the door. "But what the devil brought him back, just in the nick of it?"

CHAPTER X
RANULPH ROOKWOOD

Fer. Yes, Francisco,
He hath left his curse upon me.

Fran. How?

Fer. His curse I dost comprehend what that word carries?
Shot from a father's angry breath? Unless
I tear poor Felisarda from my heart,
He hath pronounced me heir to all his curses.

Shirley: The Brothers.

"There is nothing, I trust, my dear young friend, and quondam pupil," said Dr. Small, as the door was closed, "that weighs upon your mind, beyond the sorrow naturally incident to an affliction, severe as the present. Forgive my apprehensions if I am wrong. You know the affectionate interest I have ever felt for you—an interest which, I assure you, is nowise diminished, and which will excuse my urging you to unburden your mind to me; assuring yourself, that whatever may be your disclosure, you will have my sincere sympathy and commiseration. I may be better able to advise with you, should counsel be necessary, than others, from my knowledge of your character and temperament. I would

not anticipate evil, and am, perhaps, unnecessarily apprehensive. But I own, I am startled at the incoherence of your expressions, coupled with your sudden and almost mysterious appearance at this distressing conjuncture. Answer me: has your return been the result of mere accident? is it to be considered one of those singular circumstances which almost look like fate, and baffle our comprehension? or were you nearer home than we expected, and received the news of your father's demise through some channel unknown to us? Satisfy my curiosity, I beg of you, upon this point."

"Your curiosity, my dear sir," replied Ranulph, gravely and sadly, "will not be decreased, when I tell you, that my return has neither been the work of chance,—for I came, fully anticipating the dread event, which I find realized,—nor has it been occasioned by any intelligence derived from yourself, or others. It was only, indeed, upon my arrival here that I received full confirmation of my apprehensions. I had another, a more terrible summons to return."

"What summons? you perplex me!" exclaimed Small, gazing with some misgiving into the face of his young friend.

"I am myself perplexed—sorely perplexed," returned Ranulph. "I have much to relate; but I pray you bear with me to the end. I have that on my mind which, like guilt, must be revealed."

"Speak, then, fearlessly to me," said Small, affectionately pressing Ranulph's hand, "and assure yourself, beforehand, of

my sympathy."

"It will be necessary," said Ranulph, "to preface my narrative by some slight allusion to certain painful events—and yet I know not why I should call them painful, excepting in their consequences—which influenced my conduct in my final interview between my father and myself—an interview which occasioned my departure for the Continent—and which was of a character so dreadful, that I would not even revert to it, were it not a necessary preliminary to the circumstance I am about to detail.

"When I left Oxford, I passed a few weeks alone, in London. A college friend, whom I accidentally met, introduced me, during a promenade in St. James's Park, to some acquaintances of his own, who were taking an airing in the Mall at the same time—a family whose name was Mowbray, consisting of a widow lady, her son, and daughter. This introduction was made in compliance with my own request. I had been struck by the singular beauty of the younger lady, whose countenance had a peculiar and inexpressible charm to me, from its marked resemblance to the portrait of the Lady Eleanor Rookwood, whose charms and unhappy fate I have so often dwelt upon and deplored. The picture is there," continued Ranulph, pointing to it: "look at it, and you have the fair creature I speak of before you; the color of the hair—the tenderness of the eyes. No—the expression is not so sad, except when–but no matter! I recognized her features at once.

"It struck me, that upon the mention of my name, the party betrayed some surprise, especially the elder lady. For my own part, I was so attracted by the beauty of the daughter, the effect of which upon me seemed rather the fulfilment of a predestined event, originating in the strange fascination which the family portrait had wrought in my heart, than the operation of what is called 'love at first sight,' that I was insensible to the agitation of the mother. In vain I endeavored to rally myself; my efforts at conversation were fruitless; I could not talk—all I could do was silently to yield to the soft witchery of those tender eyes; my admiration increasing each instant that I gazed upon them.

"I accompanied them home. Attracted as by some irresistible spell, I could not tear myself away; so that, although I fancied I could perceive symptoms of displeasure in the looks of both the mother and the son, yet, regardless of consequences, I ventured, uninvited, to enter the house. In order to shake off the restraint which I felt my society imposed, I found it absolutely necessary to divest myself of bashfulness, and to exert such conversational powers as I possessed. I succeeded so well that the discourse soon became lively and animated; and what chiefly delighted me was, that *she*, for whose sake I had committed my present rudeness, became radiant with smiles. I had been all eagerness to seek for some explanation of the resemblance to which I have just alluded, and the fitting moment had, I conceived, arrived. I called attention to a peculiar expression in the features of Miss Mowbray, and then instanced the likeness that subsisted between

her and my ancestress. 'It is the more singular,' I said, turning to her mother, 'because there could have been no affinity, that I am aware of, between them, and yet the likeness is really surprising.'—'It is not so singular as you imagine,' answered Mrs. Mowbray; 'there *is* a close affinity. That Lady Rookwood was my mother. Eleanor Mowbray *does* resemble her ill-fated ancestress.'

"Words cannot paint my astonishment. I gazed at Mrs. Mowbray, considering whether I had not misconstrued her speech—whether I had not so shaped the sounds as to suit my own quick and passionate conceptions. But no! I read in her calm, collected countenance—in the downcast glance, and sudden sadness of Eleanor, as well as in the changed and haughty demeanor of the brother, that I had heard her rightly. Eleanor Mowbray was my cousin—the descendant of that hapless creature whose image I had almost worshipped.

"Recovering from my surprise, I addressed Mrs. Mowbray, endeavoring to excuse my ignorance of our relationship, on the plea that I had not been given to understand that such had been the name of the gentleman she had espoused. 'Nor was it,' answered she, 'the name he bore at Rookwood; circumstances forbade it then. From the hour I quitted that house until this moment, excepting one interview with my—with Sir Reginald Rookwood—I have seen none of my family—have held no communication with them. My brothers have been strangers to me; the very name of Rookwood has been unheard, unknown;

nor would you have been admitted here, had not accident occasioned it.' I ventured now to interrupt her, and to express a hope that she would suffer an acquaintance to be kept up, which had so fortunately commenced, and which might most probably bring about an entire reconciliation between the families. I was so earnest in my expostulations, my whole soul being in them, that she inclined a more friendly ear to me. Eleanor, too, smiled encouragement. Love lent me eloquence; and at length, as a token of my success, and her own relenting, Mrs. Mowbray held forth her hand: I clasped it eagerly. It was the happiest moment of my life.

"I will not trouble you with any lengthened description of Eleanor Mowbray. I hope, at some period or other, you may still be enabled to see her, and judge for yourself; for though adverse circumstances have hitherto conspired to separate us, the time for a renewal of our acquaintance is approaching, I trust, for I am not yet altogether without hope. But this much I may be allowed to say, that her rare endowments of person were only equalled by the graces of her mind.

"Educated abroad, she had all the vivacity of our livelier neighbors, combined with every solid qualification which we claim as more essentially our own. Her light and frolic manner was French, certainly; but her gentle, sincere heart was as surely English. The foreign accent that dwelt upon her tongue communicated an inexpressible charm, even to the language which she spoke.

"I will not dwell too long upon this theme. I feel ashamed of my own prolixity. And yet I am sure you will pardon it. Ah, those bright brief days! too quickly were they fled! I could expatiate upon each minute—recall each word—revive each look. It may not be. I must hasten on. Darker themes await me.

"My love made rapid progress—I became each hour more enamored of my new-found cousin. My whole time was passed near her; indeed, I could scarcely exist in absence from her side. Short, however, was destined to be my indulgence in this blissful state. One happy week was its extent. I received a peremptory summons from my father to return home.

"Immediately upon commencing this acquaintance, I had written to my father, explaining every particular attending it. This I should have done of my own free will, but I was urged to it by Mrs. Mowbray. Unaccustomed to disguise, I had expatiated upon the beauty of Eleanor, and in such terms, I fear, that I excited some uneasiness in his breast. His letter was laconic. He made no allusion to the subject upon which I had expatiated when writing to him. He commanded me to return.

"The bitter hour was at hand. I could not hesitate to comply. Without my father's sanction, I was assured Mrs. Mowbray would not permit any continuance of my acquaintance. Of Eleanor's inclinations I fancied I had some assurance; but without her mother's consent, to whose will she was devoted, I felt, had I even been inclined to urge it, that my suit was hopeless. The letter which I had received from my father made me more than

doubt whether I should not find him utterly adverse to my wishes. Agonized, therefore, with a thousand apprehensions, I presented myself on the morning of my departure. It was then I made the declaration of my passion to Eleanor; it was then that every hope was confirmed, every apprehension realized. I received from her lips a confirmation of my fondest wishes; yet were those hopes blighted in the bud, when I heard, at the same time, that their consummation was dependent on the will of two others, whose assenting voices, she feared, could never be obtained. From Mrs. Mowbray I received a more decided reply. All her haughtiness was aroused. Her farewell words assured me, that it was indifferent to her whether we met again as relatives or as strangers. Then was it that the native tenderness of Eleanor displayed itself, in an outbreak of feeling peculiar to a heart keenly sympathetic as hers. She saw my suffering—the reserve natural to her sex gave way—she flung herself into my arms—and so we parted.

"With a heavy foreboding I returned to Rookwood, and, oppressed with the gloomiest anticipations, endeavored to prepare myself for the worst. I arrived. My reception was such as I had calculated upon; and, to increase my distress, my parents had been at variance. I will not pain you and myself with any recital of their disagreement. My mother had espoused my cause, chiefly, I fear, with the view of thwarting my poor father's inclinations. He was in a terrible mood, exasperated by the fiery stimulants he had swallowed, which had not indeed, drowned

his reason, but roused and inflamed every dormant emotion to violence. He was as one insane. It was evening when I arrived. I would willingly have postponed the interview till the morrow. It could not be. He insisted upon seeing me.

"My mother was present. You know the restraint she usually had over my father, and how she maintained it. On this occasion she had none. He questioned me as to every particular; probed my secret soul; dragged forth every latent feeling, and then thundered out his own determination that Eleanor never should be bride of mine; nor would he receive, under his roof, her mother, the discountenanced daughter of his father. I endeavored to remonstrate with him. He was deaf to my entreaties. My mother added sharp and stinging words to my expostulations. 'I had her consent,' she said; 'what more was needed? The lands were entailed. I should at no distant period be their master, and might then please myself.' This I mention in order to give you my father's strange answer.

"'Have a care, madam,' replied he, 'and bridle your tongue; they *are* entailed, 'tis true, but I need not ask *his* consent to cut off that entail. Let him dare to disobey me in this particular, and I will so divert the channel of my wealth, that no drop shall reach him. I will—but why threaten?—let him do it, and approve the consequences.'

"On the morrow I renewed my importunities, with no better success. We were alone.

"'Ranulph,' said he, 'you waste time in seeking to change my

resolution. It is unalterable. I have many motives which influence me; they are inexplicable, but imperative. Eleanor Mowbray never can be yours. Forget her as speedily as may be, and I pledge myself, upon whomsoever else your choice may fix, I will offer no obstacle.'

"'But why,' exclaimed I, with vehemence, 'do you object to one whom you have never beheld? At least, consent to see her.'

"'Never!' he replied, 'The tie is sundered, and cannot be reunited; my father bound me by an oath never to meet in friendship with my sister; I will not break my vow, I will not violate its conditions, even in the second degree. We never can meet again. An idle prophecy which I have heard has said "*that when a Rookwood shall marry a Rookwood the end of the house draweth nigh*." That I regard not. It may have no meaning, or it may have much. To me it imports nothing further, than that, if you wed Eleanor, every acre I possess shall depart from you. And assure yourself this is no idle threat. I can, and will do it. My curse shall be your sole inheritance.'

"I could not avoid making some reply, representing to him how unjustifiable such a procedure was to me, in a case where the happiness of my life was at stake; and how inconsistent it was with the charitable precepts of our faith, to allow feelings of resentment to influence his conduct. My remonstrances, as in the preceding meeting, were ineffectual. The more I spoke, the more intemperate he grew. I therefore desisted, but not before he had ordered me to quit the house. I did not leave the neighborhood,

but saw him again on the same evening.

"Our last interview took place in the garden. I then told him that I had determined to go abroad for two years, at the expiration of which period I proposed returning to England; trusting that his resolution might then be changed, and that he would listen to my request, for the fulfilment of which I could never cease to hope. Time, I hoped, might befriend me. He approved of my plan of travelling, requesting me not to see Eleanor before I set out; adding, in a melancholy tone—'We may never meet again, Ranulph, in this life; in that case, farewell forever. Indulge no vain hopes. Eleanor never can be yours, but upon one condition, and to that you would never consent!'—'Propose it!' I cried; 'there is no condition I could not accede to.'—'Rash boy!' he replied, 'you know not what you say; that pledge you would never fulfil, were I to propose it to you; but no—should I survive till you return, you shall learn it then—and now, farewell.'—'Speak now, I beseech you!' I exclaimed; 'anything, everything—what you will!'—'Say no more,' replied he, walking towards the house; 'when you return we will renew this subject; farewell—perhaps forever!' His words were prophetic—that parting *was* forever. I remained in the garden till nightfall. I saw my mother, but *he* came not again. I quitted England without beholding Eleanor."

"Did you not acquaint her by letter with what had occurred, and your consequent intentions?" asked Small.

"I did," replied Ranulph; "but I received no reply. My earliest inquiries will be directed to ascertain whether the family are still

in London. It will be a question for our consideration, whether I am not justified in departing from my father's expressed wishes, or whether I should violate his commands in so doing."

"We will discuss that point hereafter," replied Small; adding, as he noticed the growing paleness of his companion, "you are too much exhausted to proceed—you had better defer the remainder of your story to a future period."

"No," replied Ranulph, swallowing a glass of water; "I am exhausted, yet I cannot rest—my blood is in a fever, which nothing will allay. I shall feel more easy when I have made the present communication. I am approaching the sequel of my narrative. You are now in possession of the story of my love—of the motive of my departure. You shall learn what was the occasion of my return.

"I had wandered from city to city during my term of exile—consumed by hopeless passion—with little that could amuse *me*, though surrounded by a thousand objects of interest to others, and only rendering life endurable by severest study or most active exertion. My steps conducted me to Bordeaux;—there I made a long halt, enchanted by the beauty of the neighboring scenery. My fancy was smitten by the situation of a villa on the banks of the Garonne, within a few leagues of the city. It was an old château, with fine gardens bordering the blue waters of the river, and commanding a multitude of enchanting prospects. The house, which had in part gone to decay, was inhabited by an aged couple, who had formerly been servants to an English

family, the members of which had thus provided for them on their return to their own country. I inquired the name. Conceive my astonishment to find that this château had been the residence of the Mowbrays. This intelligence decided me at once—I took up my abode in the house; and a new and unexpected source of solace and delight was opened to me, I traced the paths she had traced; occupied the room she had occupied; tended the flowers she had tended; and, on the golden summer evenings, would watch the rapid waters, tinged with all the glorious hues of sunset, sweeping past my feet, and think how *she* had watched them. Her presence seemed to pervade the place. I was now comparatively happy, and, anxious to remain unmolested, wrote home that I was leaving Bordeaux for the Pyrenees, on my way to Spain."

"That account arrived," observed Small.

"One night," continued Ranulph—"'tis now the sixth since the occurrence I am about to relate—I was seated in a bower that overlooked the river. It had been a lovely evening—so lovely, that I lingered there, wrapped in the heavenly contemplation of its beauties. I watched each rosy tint reflected upon the surface of the rapid stream—now fading into yellow—now shining silvery white. I noticed the mystic mingling of twilight with darkness—of night with day, till the bright current on a sudden became a black mass of waters. I could scarcely discern a leaf—all was darkness—when lo! another change! The moon was up—a flood of light deluged all around—the stream was dancing again in reflected radiance, and I still lingering at its brink.

"I had been musing for some moments, with my head resting upon my hand, when, happening to raise my eyes, I beheld a figure immediately before me. I was astonished at the sight, for I had perceived no one approach—had heard no footstep advance towards me, and was satisfied that no one besides myself could be in the garden. The presence of the figure inspired me with an undefinable awe! and, I can scarce tell why, but a thrilling presentiment convinced me that it was a supernatural visitant. Without motion—without life—without substance, it seemed; yet still the outward character of life was there. I started to my feet. God! what did I behold? The face was turned to me—my father's face! And what an aspect, what a look! Time can never efface that terrible expression; it is graven upon my memory—I cannot describe it. It was not anger—it was not pain: it was as if an eternity of woe were stamped upon its features. It was too dreadful to behold, I would fain have averted my gaze—my eyes were fascinated—fixed—I could not withdraw them from the ghastly countenance. I shrank from it, yet stirred not—I could not move a limb. Noiselessly gliding towards me, the apparition approached. I could not retreat. It stood obstinately beside me. I became as one half-dead. The phantom shook its head with the deepest despair; and as the word 'Return!' sounded hollowly in my ears, it gradually melted from my view. I cannot tell how I recovered from the swoon into which I fell, but daybreak saw me on my way to England. I am here. On that night—at that same hour, my father died."

"It was, after all, then, a supernatural summons that you received?" said Small.

"Undoubtedly," replied Ranulph.

"Humph!—the coincidence, I own, is sufficiently curious," returned Small, musingly; "but it would not be difficult, I think, to discover a satisfactory explanation of the delusion."

"There was no delusion," replied Ranulph, coldly; "the figure was as palpable as your own. Can I doubt, when I behold this result? Could any deceit have been practised upon me, at that distance?—the precise time, moreover, agreeing. Did not the phantom bid me return?—I *have* returned—he is dead. I have gazed upon a being of another world. To doubt were impious, after that look."

"Whatever my opinions may be, my dear young friend," returned Small, gravely, "I will suspend them for the present. You are still greatly excited. Let me advise you to seek some repose."

"I am easier," replied Ranulph; "but you are right, I will endeavor to snatch a little rest. Something within tells me all is not yet accomplished. What remains?—I shudder to think of it. I will rejoin you at midnight. I shall myself attend the solemnity. Adieu!"

Ranulph quitted the room. Small sighingly shook his head, and having lighted his pipe, was presently buried in a profundity of smoke and metaphysical speculation.

CHAPTER XI
LADY ROOKWOOD

Fran. de Med. Your unhappy husband
Is dead.

Vit. Cor.Oh, he's a happy husband!
Now he owes nature nothing.

Mon.And look upon this creature as his wife.
She comes not like a widow—she comes armed
With scorn and impudence. Is this a mourning habit?

The White Devil.

The progress of our narrative demands our presence in another apartment of the hall—a large, lonesome chamber, situate in the eastern wing of the house, already described as the most ancient part of the building—the sombre appearance of which was greatly increased by the dingy, discolored tapestry that clothed its walls; the record of the patience and industry of a certain Dame Dorothy Rookwood, who flourished some centuries ago, and whose skilful needle had illustrated the slaughter of the Innocents, with a severity of *gusto*, and sanguinary minuteness of detail, truly surprising in a lady so amiable as she was represented to have been. Grim-visaged Herod glared from the ghostly woof, with his shadowy legions,

executing their murderous purposes, grouped like a troop of Sabbath-dancing witches around him. Mysterious twilight, admitted through the deep, dark, mullioned windows, revealed the antique furniture of the room, which still boasted a sort of mildewed splendor, more imposing, perhaps, than its original gaudy magnificence; and showed the lofty hangings, and tall, hearse-like canopy of a bedstead, once a couch of state, but now destined for the repose of Lady Rookwood. The stiff crimson hangings were embroidered in gold, with the arms and cipher of Elizabeth, from whom the apartment, having once been occupied by that sovereign, obtained the name of the "Queen's Room."

The sole tenant of this chamber was a female, in whose countenance, if time and strong emotion had written strange defeatures, they had not obliterated its striking beauty and classical grandeur of expression. It was a face majestical and severe. Pride was stamped in all its lines; and though each passion was, by turns, developed, it was evident that all were subordinate to the sin by which the angels fell. The contour of her face was formed in the purest Grecian mould, and might have been a model for Medea; so well did the gloomy grandeur of the brow, the severe chiselling of the lip, the rounded beauty of the throat, and the faultless symmetry of her full form, accord with the beau ideal of antique perfection. Shaded by smooth folds of raven hair, which still maintained its jetty dye, her lofty forehead would have been displayed to the greatest advantage, had it not been at this moment knit and deformed by excess

of passion, if that passion can be said to deform which only calls forth strong and vehement expression. Her figure, which wanted only height to give it dignity, was arrayed in the garb of widowhood; and if she exhibited none of the desolation of heart which such a bereavement might have been expected to awaken, she was evidently a prey to feelings scarcely less harrowing. At the particular time of which we speak, Lady Rookwood, for she it was, was occupied in the investigation of the contents of an escritoire. Examining the papers which it contained with great deliberation, she threw each aside, as soon as she had satisfied herself of its purport, until she arrived at a little package, carefully tied up with black ribbon, and sealed. This, Lady Rookwood hastily broke open, and drew forth a small miniature. It was that of a female, young and beautiful, rudely, yet faithfully, executed—faithfully, we say, for there was an air of sweetness and simplicity—and, in short, a look of reality and nature about the picture (it is seldom, indeed, that we mistake a likeness, even if we are unacquainted with the original) that attested the artist's fidelity. The face was as radiant with smiles as a bright day with sunbeams. The portrait was set in gold, and behind it was looped a lock of the darkest and finest hair. Underneath the miniature was written, in Sir Piers's hand, the words "*Lady Rookwood*." A slip of folded paper was also attached to it.

Lady Rookwood scornfully scrutinized the features for a few moments, and then unfolded the paper, at the sight of which she started, and turned pale. "Thank God!" she cried, "this is

in my possession—while I hold this, we are safe. Were it not better to destroy this evidence at once? No, no, not *now*—it shall not part from me. I will abide Ranulph's return. This document will give me a power over him such as I could never otherwise obtain." Placing the marriage certificate, for such it was, within her breast, and laying the miniature upon the table, she next proceeded, deliberately, to arrange the disordered contents of the box.

All outward traces of emotion had, ere this, become so subdued in Lady Rookwood, that although she had, only a few moments previously, exhibited the extremity of passionate indignation, she now, apparently without effort, resumed entire composure, and might have been supposed to be engaged in a matter of little interest to herself. It was a dread calm, which they who knew her would have trembled to behold. "From these letters I gather," exclaimed she, "that their wretched offspring knows not of his fortune. So far, well. There is no channel whence he can derive information, and my first care shall be to prevent his obtaining any clue to the secret of his birth. I am directed to provide for him—ha! ha! I will provide—a grave! There will I bury him and his secret. My son's security and my own wrong demand it. I must choose surer hands—the work must not be half-done, as heretofore. And now, I bethink me, he is in the neighborhood, connected with a gang of poachers—'tis as I could wish it."

At this moment a knock at the chamber-door broke upon her

meditations. "Agnes, is it you?" demanded Lady Rookwood.

Thus summoned, the old attendant entered the room.

"Why are my orders disobeyed?" asked the lady, in a severe tone of voice. "Did I not say, when you delivered me this package from Mr. Coates, which he himself wished to present, that I would not be disturbed?"

"You did, my lady, but–"

"Speak out," said Lady Rookwood, somewhat more mildly, perceiving, from Agnes's manner, that she had something of importance to communicate. "What is it brings you hither?"

"I am sorry," returned Agnes, "to disturb your ladyship, but —but–"

"But what?" interrupted Lady Rookwood, impatiently.

"I could not help it, my lady—he would have me come; he said he was resolved to see your ladyship, whether you would or not."

"Would see me, ha! is it so? I guess his errand, and its object —he has some suspicion. No, that cannot be; he would not dare to tamper with these seals. Agnes, I will *not* see him."

"But he swears, my lady, that he will not leave the house without seeing you—he would have forced his way into your presence, if I had not consented to announce him."

"Insolent!" exclaimed Lady Rookwood, with a glance of indignation; "force his way! I promise you he shall not display an equal anxiety to repeat the visit. Tell Mr. Coates I will see him."

"Mr. Coates! Mercy on us, my lady, it's not he. He'd never have intruded upon you unasked. No such thing. He knows his

place too well. No, no; it's not Mr. Coates–"

"If not he, who is it?"

"Luke Bradley; your ladyship knows whom I mean."

"He here—now?–"

"Yes, my lady; and looking so fierce and strange, I was quite frightened to see him. He looked so like his—his–"

"His father, you would say. Speak out."

"No, my lady, his grandfather—old Sir Reginald. He's the very image of him. But had not your ladyship better ring the alarm-bell? and when he comes in, I'll run and fetch the servants—he's dangerous, I'm sure."

"I have no fears of him. He *will* see me, you say–"

"Ay, *will*!" exclaimed Luke, as he threw open the door, and shut it forcibly after him, striding towards Lady Rookwood, "nor abide longer delay."

It was an instant or two ere Lady Rookwood, thus taken by surprise, could command speech. She fixed her eyes with a look of keen and angry inquiry upon the bold intruder, who, nothing daunted, confronted her glances with a gaze as stern and steadfast as her own.

"Who are you, and what seek you?" exclaimed Lady Rookwood, after a brief pause, and, in spite of herself, her voice sounded tremulously. "What would you have, that you venture to appear before me at this season and in this fashion?"

"I might have chosen a fitter opportunity," returned Luke, "were it needed. My business will not brook delay—you must

be pleased to overlook this intrusion on your privacy, at a season of sorrow like the present. As to the fashion of my visit, you must be content to excuse it. I cannot help myself. I may amend hereafter. Who I am, you are able, I doubt not, to divine. What I seek, you shall hear, when this old woman has left the room, unless you would have a witness to a declaration that concerns you as nearly as myself."

An indefinite feeling of apprehension had, from the first instant of Luke's entrance crossed Lady Rookwood's mind. She, however, answered, with some calmness:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.