

Stevenson Robert Louis

**The Works of
Robert Louis Stevenson –
Swanston Edition. Volume...**



Роберт Льюис Стивенсон

**The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson
– Swanston Edition. Volume 20**

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Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	12
CHAPTER III	15
CHAPTER IV	20
CHAPTER V	24
CHAPTER VI	28
CHAPTER VII	33
CHAPTER VIII	37
CHAPTER IX	41
CHAPTER X	47
CHAPTER XI	52
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	53

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CHAPTER I

A TALE OF A LION RAMPANT

It was in the month of May 1813 that I was so unlucky as to fall at last into the hands of the enemy. My knowledge of the English language had marked me out for a certain employment. Though I cannot conceive a soldier refusing to incur the risk, yet to be hanged for a spy is a disgusting business; and I was relieved to be held a prisoner of war. Into the Castle of Edinburgh, standing in the midst of that city on the summit of an extraordinary rock, I was cast with several hundred fellow-sufferers, all privates like myself, and the more part of them, by an accident, very ignorant, plain fellows. My English, which had brought me into that scrape, now helped me very materially to bear it. I had a thousand advantages. I was often called to play the part of an interpreter, whether of orders or complaints, and thus brought in relations, sometimes of mirth, sometimes almost of friendship, with the officers in charge. A young lieutenant singled me out to be his adversary at chess, a game in which I was extremely proficient, and would reward me for my gambits with excellent cigars. The major of the battalion took lessons of French from me while at breakfast, and was sometimes so obliging as to have me join him at the meal. Chevenix was his name. He was stiff as a drum-major and selfish as an Englishman, but a fairly conscientious pupil and a fairly upright man. Little did I suppose that his ramrod body and frozen face would, in the end, step in between me and all my dearest wishes; that upon this precise, regular, icy soldier-man my fortunes should so nearly shipwreck! I never liked, but yet I trusted him; and though it may seem but a trifle, I found his snuff-box with the bean in it come very welcome.

For it is strange how grown men and seasoned soldiers can go back in life; so that after but a little while in prison, which is after all the next thing to being in the nursery, they grow absorbed in the most pitiful, childish interests, and a sugar-biscuit or a pinch of snuff become things to follow after and scheme for!

We made but a poor show of prisoners. The officers had been all offered their parole, and had taken it. They lived mostly in suburbs of the city, lodging with modest families, and enjoyed their freedom and supported the almost continual evil tidings of the Emperor as best they might. It chanced I was the only gentleman among the privates who remained. A great part were ignorant Italians, of a regiment that had suffered heavily in Catalonia. The rest were mere diggers of the soil, treaders of grapes, or hewers of wood, who had been suddenly and violently preferred to the glorious state of soldiers. We had but the one interest in common: each of us who had any skill with his fingers passed the hours of his captivity in the making of little toys and *articles of Paris*; and the prison was daily visited at certain hours by a concourse of people of the country, come to exult over our distress, or – it is more tolerant to suppose – their own vicarious triumph. Some moved among us with a decency of shame or sympathy. Others were the most offensive personages in the world, gaped at us as if we had been baboons, sought to evangelise us to their rustic, northern religion, as though we had been savages, or tortured us with intelligence of disasters to the arms of France. Good, bad, and indifferent, there was one alleviation to the annoyance of these visitors; for it was the practice of almost all to purchase some specimen of our rude handiwork. This led, amongst the prisoners, to a strong spirit of competition. Some were neat of hand, and (the genius of the French being always distinguished) could place upon sale little miracles of dexterity and taste. Some had a more engaging appearance;

fine features were found to do as well as fine merchandise, and an air of youth in particular (as it appealed to the sentiment of pity in our visitors) to be a source of profit. Others, again, enjoyed some acquaintance with the language, and were able to recommend the more agreeably to purchasers such trifles as they had to sell. To the first of these advantages I could lay no claim, for my fingers were all thumbs. Some at least of the others I possessed; and finding much entertainment in our commerce, I did not suffer my advantages to rust. I have never despised the social arts, in which it is a national boast that every Frenchman should excel. For the approach of particular sorts of visitors I had a particular manner of address, and even of appearance, which I could readily assume and change on the occasion rising. I never lost an opportunity to flatter either the person of my visitor, if it should be a lady, or, if it should be a man, the greatness of his country in war. And in case my compliments should miss their aim, I was always ready to cover my retreat with some agreeable pleasantry, which would often earn me the name of an “oddity” or a “droll fellow.” In this way, although I was so left-handed a toy-maker, I made out to be rather a successful merchant; and found means to procure many little delicacies and alleviations, such as children or prisoners desire.

I am scarcely drawing the portrait of a very melancholy man. It is not indeed my character; and I had, in a comparison with my comrades, many reasons for content. In the first place, I had no family: I was an orphan and a bachelor; neither wife nor child awaited me in France. In the second, I had never wholly forgot the emotions with which I first found myself a prisoner; and although a military prison be not altogether a garden of delights, it is still preferable to a gallows. In the third, I am almost ashamed to say it, but I found a certain pleasure in our place of residence: being an obsolete and really mediæval fortress, high placed and commanding extraordinary prospects, not only over sea, mountain, and champaign, but actually over the thoroughfares of a capital city, which we could see blackened by day with the moving crowd of the inhabitants, and at night shining with lamps. And lastly, although I was not insensible to the restraints of prison or the scantiness of our rations, I remembered I had sometimes eaten quite as ill in Spain, and had to mount guard and march perhaps a dozen leagues into the bargain. The first of my troubles, indeed, was the costume we were obliged to wear. There is a horrible practice in England to trick out in ridiculous uniforms, and as it were to brand in mass, not only convicts but military prisoners, and even the children in charity schools. I think some malignant genius had found his masterpiece of irony in the dress which we were condemned to wear: jacket, waistcoat, and trousers of a sulphur or mustard yellow, and a shirt of blue-and-white striped cotton. It was conspicuous, it was cheap, it pointed us out to laughter – we, who were old soldiers, used to arms, and some of us showing noble scars, – like a set of lugubrious zanies at a fair. The old name of that rock on which our prison stood was (I have heard since then) the “Painted Hill.” Well, now it was all painted a bright yellow with our costumes; and the dress of the soldiers who guarded us being of course the essential British red rag, we made up together the elements of a lively picture of hell. I have again and again looked round upon my fellow-prisoners, and felt my anger rise, and choked upon tears, to behold them thus parodied. The more part, as I have said, were peasants; somewhat bettered perhaps by the drill-sergeant, but for all that ungainly, loutish fellows, with no more than a mere barrack-room smartness of address: indeed, you could have seen our army nowhere more discreditably represented than in this Castle of Edinburgh. And I used to see myself in fancy, and blush. It seemed that my more elegant carriage would but point the insult of the travesty. And I remembered the days when I wore the coarse but honourable coat of a soldier; and remembered further back how many of the noble, the fair, and the gracious had taken a delight to tend my childhood... But I must not recall these tender and sorrowful memories twice; their place is further on, and I am now upon another business. The perfidy of the Britannic Government stood nowhere more openly confessed than in one particular of our discipline: that we were shaved twice in the week. To a man who has loved all his life to be fresh shaven, can a more irritating indignity be devised? Monday and Thursday were the days. Take the Thursday, and conceive the picture I must present by Sunday evening! And Saturday, which was almost as bad, was the great day for visitors.

Those who came to our market were of all qualities, men and women, the lean and the stout, the plain and the fairly pretty. Sure, if people at all understood the power of beauty, there would be no prayers addressed except to Venus; and the mere privilege of beholding a comely woman is worth paying for. Our visitors, upon the whole, were not much to boast of; and yet, sitting in a corner and very much ashamed of myself and my absurd appearance, I have again and again tasted the finest, the rarest, and the most ethereal pleasures in a glance of an eye that I should never see again – and never wanted to. The flower of the hedgerow and the star in heaven satisfy and delight us: how much more the look of that exquisite being who was created to bear and rear, to madden and rejoice, mankind!

There was one young lady in particular, about eighteen or nineteen, tall, of a gallant carriage, and with a profusion of hair in which the sun found threads of gold. As soon as she came in the courtyard (and she was a rather frequent visitor) it seemed I was aware of it. She had an air of angelic candour, yet of a high spirit; she stepped like a Diana, every movement was noble and free. One day there was a strong east wind; the banner was straining at the flagstaff; below us the smoke of the city chimneys blew hither and thither in a thousand crazy variations; and away out on the Forth we could see the ships lying down to it and scudding. I was thinking what a vile day it was, when she appeared. Her hair blew in the wind with changes of colour; her garments moulded her with the accuracy of sculpture; the ends of her shawl fluttered about her ear and were caught in again with an inimitable deftness. You have seen a pool on a gusty day, how it suddenly sparkles and flashes like a thing alive? So this lady's face had become animated and coloured; and as I saw her standing, somewhat inclined, her lips parted, a divine trouble in her eyes, I could have clapped my hands in applause, and was ready to acclaim her a genuine daughter of the winds. What put it in my head, I know not: perhaps because it was a Thursday and I was new from the razor; but I determined to engage her attention no later than that day. She was approaching that part of the court in which I sat with my merchandise, when I observed her handkerchief to escape from her hands and fall to the ground; the next moment the wind had taken it up and carried it within my reach. I was on foot at once: I had forgot my mustard-coloured clothes, I had forgot the private soldier and his salute. Bowing deeply, I offered her the slip of cambric.

“Madam,” said I, “your handkerchief. The wind brought it me.”

I met her eyes fully.

“I thank you, sir,” said she.

“The wind brought it me,” I repeated. “May I not take it for an omen? You have an English proverb, ‘It’s an ill wind that blows nobody good.’”

“Well,” she said, with a smile, “‘One good turn deserves another.’ I will see what you have.”

She followed me to where my wares were spread out under lee of a piece of cannon.

“Alas, mademoiselle!” said I, “I am no very perfect craftsman. This is supposed to be a house, and you see the chimneys are awry. You may call this a box if you are very indulgent; but see where my tool slipped! Yes, I am afraid you may go from one to another, and find a flaw in everything. *Failures for Sale* should be on my signboard. I do not keep a shop; I keep a Humorous Museum.” I cast a smiling glance about my display, and then at her, and instantly became grave. “Strange, is it not,” I added, “that a grown man and a soldier should be engaged upon such trash, and a sad heart produce anything so funny to look at?”

An unpleasant voice summoned her at this moment by the name of Flora, and she made a hasty purchase and rejoined her party.

A few days after she came again. But I must first tell you how she came to be so frequent. Her aunt was one of those terrible British old maids of which the world has heard much; and having nothing whatever to do, and a word or two of French, she had taken what she called an *interest in the French prisoners*. A big, bustling, bold old lady, she flounced about our market-place with insufferable airs of patronage and condescension. She bought, indeed, with liberality, but her manner of studying us through a quizzing-glass, and playing cicerone to her followers, acquitted us of any

gratitude. She had a tail behind her of heavy, obsequious old gentlemen, or dull, giggling misses, to whom she appeared to be an oracle. “This one can really carve prettily: is he not a quiz with his big whiskers?” she would say. “And this one,” indicating myself with her gold eye-glass, “is, I assure you, quite an oddity.” The oddity, you may be certain, ground his teeth. She had a way of standing in our midst, nodding around, and addressing us in what she imagined to be French: “*Bienne, hommes! ça va bienne?*” I took the freedom to reply in the same lingo: “*Bienne, femme! ça va couci-couci tout d’même, la bourgeoise!*” And at that, when we had all laughed, with a little more heartiness than was entirely civil, “I told you he was quite an oddity!” says she in triumph. Needless to say, these passages were before I had remarked the niece.

The aunt came on the day in question with a following rather more than usually large, which she manœuvred to and fro about the market and lectured to at rather more than usual length, and with rather less than her accustomed tact. I kept my eyes down, but they were ever fixed in the same direction, quite in vain. The aunt came and went, and pulled us out, and showed us off, like caged monkeys; but the niece kept herself on the outskirts of the crowd, and on the opposite side of the courtyard, and departed at last as she had come, without a sign. Closely as I had watched her, I could not say her eyes had ever rested on me for an instant; and my heart was overwhelmed with bitterness and blackness. I tore out her detested image; I felt I was done with her for ever; I laughed at myself savagely, because I had thought to please; when I lay down at night sleep forsook me, and I lay, and rolled, and gloated on her charms, and cursed her insensibility, for half the night. How trivial I thought her! and how trivial her sex! A man might be an angel or an Apollo, and a mustard-coloured coat would wholly blind them to his merits. I was a prisoner, a slave, a contemned and despicable being, the butt of her sniggering countrymen. I would take the lesson: no proud daughter of my foes should have the chance to mock at me again; none in the future should have the chance to think I had looked at her with admiration. You cannot imagine any one of a more resolute and independent spirit, or whose bosom was more wholly mailed with patriotic arrogance, than I. Before I dropped asleep, I had remembered all the infamies of Britain, and debited them in an overwhelming column to Flora.

The next day, as I sat in my place, I became conscious there was some one standing near; and behold, it was herself! I kept my seat, at first in the confusion of my mind, later on from policy; and she stood, and leaned a little over me, as in pity. She was very still and timid; her voice was low. Did I suffer in my captivity? she asked me. Had I to complain of any hardship?

“Mademoiselle, I have not learned to complain,” said I. “I am a soldier of Napoleon.”

She sighed. “At least you must regret *La France*,” said she, and coloured a little as she pronounced the words, which she did with a pretty strangeness of accent.

“What am I to say?” I replied. “If you were carried from this country, for which you seem so wholly suited, where the very rains and winds seem to become you like ornaments, would you regret, do you think? We must surely all regret! the son to his mother, the man to his country; these are native feelings.”

“You have a mother?” she asked.

“In heaven, mademoiselle,” I answered. “She, and my father also, went by the same road to heaven as so many others of the fair and brave: they followed their queen upon the scaffold. So, you see, I am not so much to be pitied in my prison,” I continued: “there are none to wait for me; I am alone in the world. ’Tis a different case, for instance, with yon poor fellow in the cloth cap. His bed is next to mine, and in the night I hear him sobbing to himself. He has a tender character, full of tender and pretty sentiments; and in the dark at night, and sometimes by day when he can get me apart with him, he laments a mother and a sweetheart. Do you know what made him take me for a confidant?”

She parted her lips with a look, but did not speak. The look burned all through me with a sudden vital heat.

“Because I had once seen, in marching by, the belfry of his village!” I continued. “The circumstance is quaint enough. It seems to bind up into one the whole bundle of those human instincts that make life beautiful, and people and places dear – and from which it would seem I am cut off!”

I rested my chin on my knee and looked before me on the ground. I had been talking until then to hold her; but I was now not sorry she should go: an impression is a thing so delicate to produce and so easy to overthrow! Presently she seemed to make an effort.

“I will take this toy,” she said, laid a five-and-sixpenny piece in my hand, and was gone ere I could thank her.

I retired to a place apart near the ramparts and behind a gun. The beauty, the expression of her eyes, the tear that had trembled there, the compassion in her voice, and a kind of wild elegance that consecrated the freedom of her movements, all combined to enslave my imagination and inflame my heart. What had she said? Nothing to signify; but her eyes had met mine, and the fire they had kindled burned inextinguishably in my veins. I loved her; and I did not fear to hope. Twice I had spoken with her; and in both interviews I had been well inspired, I had engaged her sympathies, I had found words that she must remember, that would ring in her ears at night upon her bed. What mattered if I were half-shaved and my clothes a caricature? I was still a man, and I had drawn my image on her memory. I was still a man, and, as I trembled to realise, she was still a woman. Many waters cannot quench love; and love, which is the law of the world, was on my side. I closed my eyes, and she sprang up on the background of the darkness, more beautiful than in life. “Ah!” thought I, “and you too, my dear, you too must carry away with you a picture, that you are still to behold again and still to embellish. In the darkness of night, in the streets by day, still you are to have my voice and face, whispering, making love for me, encroaching on your shy heart. Shy as your heart is, *it* is lodged there — *I* am lodged there; let the hours do their office – let time continue to draw me ever in more lively, ever in more insidious colours.” And then I had a vision of myself, and burst out laughing.

A likely thing, indeed, that a beggar-man, a private soldier, a prisoner in a yellow travesty, was to awake the interest of this fair girl! I would not despair; but I saw the game must be played fine and close. It must be my policy to hold myself before her, always in a pathetic or pleasing attitude; never to alarm or startle her; to keep my own secret locked in my bosom like a story of disgrace, and let hers (if she could be induced to have one) grow at its own rate; to move just so fast, and not by a hair’s-breadth any faster, than the inclination of her heart. I was the man, and yet I was passive, tied by the foot in prison. I could not go to her; I must cast a spell upon her at each visit, so that she should return to me; and this was a matter of nice management. I had done it the last time – it seemed impossible she should not come again after our interview; and for the next I had speedily ripened a fresh plan. A prisoner, if he has one great disability for a lover, has yet one considerable advantage: there is nothing to distract him, and he can spend all his hours ripening his love and preparing its manifestations. I had been then some days upon a piece of carving – no less than the emblem of Scotland, the Lion Rampant. This I proceeded to finish with what skill I was possessed of; and when at last I could do no more to it (and, you may be sure, was already regretting I had done so much), added on the base the following dedication:

À LA BELLE FLORA

LE PRISONNIER RECONNAISSANT

A. d. St. Y. d. K

I put my heart into the carving of these letters. What was done with so much ardour, it seemed scarce possible that any should behold with indifference; and the initials would at least suggest to her my noble birth. I thought it better to suggest: I felt that mystery was my stock-in-trade; the contrast between my rank and manners, between my speech and my clothing, and the fact that she could only think of me by a combination of letters, must all tend to increase her interest and engage her heart.

This done, there was nothing left for me but to wait and to hope. And there is nothing further from my character: in love and in war, I am all for the forward movement; and these days of waiting made my purgatory. It is a fact that I loved her a great deal better at the end of them, for love comes, like bread, from a perpetual rehandling. And besides, I was fallen into a panic of fear. How, if she came no more, how was I to continue to endure my empty days? how was I to fall back and find my interest in the major's lessons, the lieutenant's chess, in a twopenny sale in the market, or a halfpenny addition to the prison fare?

Days went by, and weeks; I had not the courage to calculate, and to-day I have not the courage to remember; but at last she was there. At last I saw her approach me in the company of a boy about her own age, and whom I divined at once to be her brother.

I rose and bowed in silence.

"This is my brother, Mr. Ronald Gilchrist," said she. "I have told him of your sufferings. He is so sorry for you!"

"It is more than I have the right to ask," I replied; "but among gentlefolk these generous sentiments are natural. If your brother and I were to meet in the field, we should meet like tigers; but when he sees me here disarmed and helpless, he forgets his animosity." (At which, as I had ventured to expect, this beardless champion coloured to the ears for pleasure.) "Ah, my dear young lady," I continued, "there are many of your countrymen languishing in my country, even as I do here. I can but hope there is found some French lady to convey to each of them the priceless consolation of her sympathy. You have given me alms; and more than alms – hope; and while you were absent I was not forgetful. Suffer me to be able to tell myself that I have at least tried to make a return; and for the prisoner's sake deign to accept this trifle."

So saying, I offered her my lion, which she took, looked at in some embarrassment, and then, catching sight of the dedication, broke out with a cry —

"Why, how did you know my name?" she exclaimed.

"When names are so appropriate, they should be easily guessed," said I, bowing. "But indeed, there was no magic in the matter. A lady called you by name on the day I found your handkerchief, and I was quick to remark and cherish it."

"It is very, very beautiful," said she, "and I shall be always proud of the inscription. – Come, Ronald, we must be going." She bowed to me as a lady bows to her equal, and passed on (I could have sworn) with a heightened colour.

I was overjoyed: my innocent ruse had succeeded; she had taken my gift without a hint of payment, and she would scarce sleep in peace till she had made it up to me. No greenhorn in matters of the heart, I was besides aware that I had now a resident ambassador at the court of my lady. The

lion might be ill chiselled; it was mine. My hands had made and held it; my knife – or, to speak more by the mark, my rusty nail – had traced those letters; and simple as the words were, they would keep repeating to her that I was grateful and that I found her fair. The boy had looked like a gawky, and blushed at a compliment; I could see besides that he regarded me with considerable suspicion; yet he made so manly a figure of a lad, that I could not withhold from him my sympathy. And as for the impulse that had made her bring and introduce him, I could not sufficiently admire it. It seemed to me finer than wit, and more tender than a caress. It said (plain as language), “I do not and I cannot know you. Here is my brother – you can know him; this is the way to me – follow it.”

CHAPTER II

A TALE OF A PAIR OF SCISSORS

I was still plunged in these thoughts when the bell was rung that discharged our visitors into the street. Our little market was no sooner closed than we were summoned to the distribution, and received our rations, which we were then allowed to eat according to fancy in any part of our quarters.

I have said the conduct of some of our visitors was unbearably offensive; it was possibly more so than they dreamed – as the sightseers at a menagerie may offend in a thousand ways, and quite without meaning it, the noble and unfortunate animals behind the bars; and there is no doubt but some of my compatriots were susceptible beyond reason. Some of these old whiskerandos, originally peasants, trained since boyhood in victorious armies, and accustomed to move among subject and trembling populations, could ill brook their change of circumstance. There was one man of the name of Goguelat, a brute of the first water, who had enjoyed no touch of civilisation beyond the military discipline, and had risen by an extreme heroism of bravery to a grade for which he was otherwise unfitted – that of *maréchal des logis* in the 22nd of the line. In so far as a brute can be a good soldier, he was a good soldier; the Cross was on his breast, and gallantly earned; but in all things outside his line of duty the man was no other than a brawling, bruising, ignorant pillar of low pothouses. As a gentleman by birth, and a scholar by taste and education, I was the type of all that he least understood and most detested; and the mere view of our visitors would leave him daily in a transport of annoyance, which he would make haste to wreak on the nearest victim, and too often on myself.

It was so now. Our rations were scarce served out, and I had just withdrawn into a corner of the yard, when I perceived him drawing near. He wore an air of hateful mirth, a set of young fools, among whom he passed for a wit, followed him with looks of expectation; and I saw I was about to be the object of some of his insufferable pleasantries. He took a place beside me, spread out his rations, drank to me derisively from his measure of prison beer, and began. What he said it would be impossible to print; but his admirers, who believed their wit to have surpassed himself, actually rolled among the gravel. For my part, I thought at first I should have died. I had not dreamed the wretch was so observant; but hate sharpens the ears, and he had counted our interviews and actually knew Flora by her name. Gradually my coolness returned to me, accompanied by a volume of living anger that surprised myself.

“Are you nearly done?” I asked. “Because if you are, I am about to say a word or two myself.”

“O, fair play!” said he. “Turnabout! The Marquis of Carabas to the tribune.”

“Very well,” said I. “I have to inform you that I am a gentleman. You do not know what that means, hey? Well, I will tell you. It is a comical sort of animal; springs from another strange set of creatures they call ancestors; and, in common with toads and other vermin, has a thing that he calls feelings. The lion is a gentleman; he will not touch carrion. I am a gentleman, and I cannot bear to soil my fingers with such a lump of dirt. Sit still, Philippe Goguelat! sit still and, do not say a word, or I shall know you are a coward; the eyes of our guards are upon us. Here is your health!” said I, and pledged him in the prison beer. “You have chosen to speak in a certain way of a young child,” I continued, “who might be your daughter, and who was giving alms to me and some others of us mendicants. If the Emperor” – saluting – “if my Emperor could hear you, he would pluck off the Cross from your gross body. I cannot do that; I cannot take away what his Majesty has given; but one thing I promise you – I promise you, Goguelat, you shall be dead to-night.”

I had borne so much from him in the past, I believe he thought there was no end to my forbearance, and he was at first amazed. But I have the pleasure to think that some of my expressions had pierced through his thick hide; and besides, the brute was truly a hero of valour, and loved fighting

for itself. Whatever the cause, at least, he had soon pulled himself together, and took the thing (to do him justice) handsomely.

“And I promise you, by the devil’s horns, that you shall have the chance!” said he, and pledged me again; and again I did him scrupulous honour.

The news of this defiance spread from prisoner to prisoner with the speed of wings; every face was seen to be illuminated like those of the spectators at a horse-race; and indeed you must first have tasted the active life of a soldier, and then mouldered for a while in the tedium of a gaol, in order to understand, perhaps even to excuse, the delight of our companions. Goguelat and I slept in the same squad, which greatly simplified the business; and a committee of honour was accordingly formed of our shed-mates. They chose for president a sergeant-major in the 4th Dragoons, a greybeard of the army, an excellent military subject, and a good man. He took the most serious view of his functions, visited us both, and reported our replies to the committee. Mine was of a decent firmness. I told him the young lady of whom Goguelat had spoken had on several occasions given me alms. I reminded him that, if we were now reduced to hold out our hands and sell pill boxes for charity, it was something very new for soldiers of the Empire. We had all seen bandits standing at a corner of a wood truckling for copper halfpence, and after their benefactors were gone spitting out injuries and curses. “But,” said I, “I trust that none of us will fall so low. As a Frenchman and a soldier, I owe that young child gratitude, and am bound to protect her character, and to support that of the army. You are my elder and my superior: tell me if I am not right.”

He was a quiet-mannered old fellow, and patted me with three fingers on the back. “*C’est bien, mon enfant,*” says he, and returned to his committee.

Goguelat was no more accommodating than myself. “I do not like apologies nor those that make them,” was his only answer. And there remained nothing but to arrange the details of the meeting. So far as regards place and time we had no choice; we must settle the dispute at night, in the dark, after a round had passed by, and in the open middle of the shed under which we slept. The question of arms was more obscure. We had a good many tools, indeed, which we employed in the manufacture of our toys; but they were none of them suited for a single combat between civilised men, and, being nondescript, it was found extremely hard to equalise the chances of the combatants. At length a pair of scissors was unscrewed; and a couple of tough wands being found in a corner of the courtyard, one blade of the scissors was lashed solidly to each with resined twine – the twine coming I know not whence, but the resin from the green pillars of the shed, which still sweated from the axe. It was a strange thing to feel in one’s hand this weapon, which was no heavier than a riding-rod, and which it was difficult to suppose would prove more dangerous. A general oath was administered and taken, that no one should interfere in the duel nor (suppose it to result seriously) betray the name of the survivor. And with that, all being then ready, we composed ourselves to await the moment.

The evening fell cloudy; not a star was to be seen when the first round of the night passed through our shed and wound off along the ramparts; and as we took our places, we could still hear, over the murmurs of the surrounding city, the sentries challenging its further passage. Laclas, the sergeant-major, set us in our stations, engaged our wands, and left us. To avoid blood-stained clothing, my adversary and I had stripped to the shoes; and the chill of the night enveloped our bodies like a wet sheet. The man was better at fencing than myself; he was vastly taller than I, being of a stature almost gigantic, and proportionately strong. In the inky blackness of the shed it was impossible to see his eyes; and from the suppleness of the wands, I did not like to trust to a parade. I made up my mind accordingly to profit, if I might, by my defect; and as soon as the signal should be given, to throw myself down and lunge at the same moment. It was to play my life upon one card: should I not mortally wound him, no defence would be left me; what was yet more appalling, I thus ran the risk of bringing my own face against his scissor with the double force of our assaults, and my face and eyes are not that part of me that I would the most readily expose.

“*Allez!*” said the sergeant-major.

Both lunged in the same moment with an equal fury, and but for my manœuvre both had certainly been spitted. As it was, he did no more than strike my shoulder, while my scissor plunged below the girdle into a mortal part; and that great bulk of a man, falling from his whole height, knocked me immediately senseless.

When I came to myself I was laid in my own sleeping-place, and could make out in the darkness the outline of perhaps a dozen heads crowded around me. I sat up. “What is it?” I exclaimed.

“Hush!” said the sergeant-major. “Blessed be God, all is well.” I felt him clasp my hand, and there were tears in his voice. “’Tis but a scratch, my child; here is papa, who is taking good care of you. Your shoulder is bound up; we have dressed you in your clothes again, and it will all be well.”

At this I began to remember. “And Goguelat?” I gasped.

“He cannot bear to be moved; he has his bellyful; ’tis a bad business,” said the sergeant-major.

The idea of having killed a man with such an instrument as half a pair of scissors seemed to turn my stomach. I am sure I might have killed a dozen with a firelock, a sabre, a bayonet, or any accepted weapon, and been visited by no such sickness of remorse. And to this feeling every unusual circumstance of our rencounter, the darkness in which we had fought, our nakedness, even the resin on the twine, appeared to contribute. I ran to my fallen adversary, kneeled by him, and could only sob his name.

He bade me compose myself. “You have given me the key of the fields, comrade,” said he. “*Sans rancune!*”

At this my horror redoubled. Here had we two expatriated Frenchmen engaged in an ill-regulated combat like the battles of beasts. Here was he, who had been all his life so great a ruffian, dying in a foreign land of this ignoble injury, and meeting death with something of the spirit of a Bayard. I insisted that the guards should be summoned and a doctor brought. “It may still be possible to save him,” I cried.

The sergeant-major reminded me of our engagement. “If you had been wounded,” said he, “you must have lain there till the patrol came by and found you. It happens to be Goguelat – and so must he! Come, child, time to go to by-by.” And as I still resisted, “Champdivers!” he said, “this is weakness. You pain me.”

“Ay, off to your beds with you!” said Goguelat, and named us in a company with one of his jovial gross epithets.

Accordingly the squad lay down in the dark and simulated, what they certainly were far from experiencing, sleep. It was not yet late. The city, from far below, and all around us, sent up a sound of wheels and feet and lively voices. Yet awhile, and the curtain of the cloud was rent across, and in the space of sky between the eaves of the shed and the irregular outline of the ramparts a multitude of stars appeared. Meantime, in the midst of us lay Goguelat, and could not always withhold himself from groaning.

We heard the round far off; heard it draw slowly nearer. Last of all, it turned the corner and moved into our field of vision: two file of men and a corporal with a lantern, which he swung to and fro, so as to cast its light in the recesses of the yards and sheds.

“Hullo!” cried the corporal, pausing as he came by Goguelat.

He stooped with his lantern. All our hearts were flying.

“What devil’s work is this?” he cried, and with a startling voice summoned the guard.

We were all afoot upon the instant; more lanterns and soldiers crowded in front of the shed; an officer elbowed his way in. In the midst was the big naked body, soiled with blood. Some one had covered him with his blanket; but as he lay there in agony, he had partly thrown it off.

“This is murder!” cried the officer. “You wild beasts, you will hear of this to-morrow.”

As Goguelat was raised and laid upon a stretcher, he cried to us a cheerful and blasphemous farewell.

CHAPTER III

MAJOR CHEVENIX COMES INTO THE STORY AND GOGUELAT GOES OUT

There was never any talk of a recovery, and no time was lost in getting the man's deposition. He gave but the one account of it: that he had committed suicide because he was sick of seeing so many Englishmen. The doctor vowed it was impossible, the nature and direction of the wound forbidding it. Goguelat replied that he was more ingenious than the other thought for, and had propped up the weapon in the ground and fallen on the point – “just like Nebuchadnezzar,” he added, winking to the assistants. The doctor, who was a little, spruce, ruddy man of an impatient temper, pushed and pshawed and swore over his patient. “Nothing could be made of him!” he cried. “A perfect heathen. If we could only find the weapon!” But the weapon had ceased to exist. A little resined twine was perhaps blowing about in the Castle gutters; some bits of broken stick may have trailed in corners; and behold, in the pleasant air of the morning, a dandy prisoner trimming his nails with a pair of scissors!

Finding the wounded man so firm, you may be sure the authorities did not leave the rest of us in peace. No stone was left unturned. We were had in again and again to be examined, now singly, now in twos and threes. We were threatened with all sorts of impossible severities and tempted with all manner of improbable rewards. I suppose I was five times interrogated, and came off from each with flying colours. I am like old Souvaroff: I cannot understand a soldier being taken aback by any question: he should answer, as he marches on the fire, with an instant briskness and gaiety. I may have been short of bread, gold, or grace; I was never found wanting in an answer. My comrades, if they were not all so ready, were none of them less staunch; and I may say here at once that the inquiry came to nothing at the time, and the death of Goguelat remained a mystery of the prison. Such were the veterans of France! And yet I should be disingenuous if I did not own this was a case apart; in ordinary circumstances, some one might have stumbled or been intimidated into an admission; and what bound us together with a closeness beyond that of mere comrades was a secret to which we were all committed and a design in which all were equally engaged. No need to inquire as to its nature: there is only one desire, and only one kind of design, that blooms in prisons. And the fact that our tunnel was near done supported and inspired us.

I came off in public, as I have said, with flying colours; the sittings of the court of inquiry died away like a tune that no one listens to; and yet I was unmasked – I, whom my very adversary defended, as good as confessed, as good as told the nature of the quarrel, and by so doing prepared for myself in the future a most anxious, disagreeable adventure. It was the third morning after the duel, and Goguelat was still in life, when the time came round for me to give Major Chevenix a lesson. I was fond of this occupation; not that he paid me much – no more, indeed, than eighteenpence a month, the customary figure, being a miser in the grain; but because I liked his breakfasts and (to some extent) himself. At least, he was a man of education; and of the others with whom I had any opportunity of speech, those that would not have held a book upside down would have torn the pages out for pipe-lights. For I must repeat again that our body of prisoners was exceptional: there was in Edinburgh Castle none of that educational busyness that distinguished some of the other prisons, so that men entered them unable to read, and left them fit for high employments. Chevenix was handsome, and surprisingly young to be a major: six feet in his stockings, well set up, with regular features and very clear grey eyes. It was impossible to pick a fault in him, and yet the sum-total was displeasing. Perhaps he was too clean; he seemed to bear about with him the smell of soap. Cleanliness is good, but I cannot bear a man's nails to seem japanned. And certainly he was too self-possessed and cold. There was none of the fire of youth, none of the swiftness of the soldier, in this young officer. His kindness was cold, and cruel cold; his deliberation exasperating. And perhaps it

was from this character, which is very much the opposite of my own, that even in these days, when he was of service to me, I approached him with suspicion and reserve.

I looked over his exercise in the usual form, and marked six faults.

“H’m. Six,” says he, looking at the paper. “Very annoying! I can never get it right.”

“O, but you make excellent progress!” I said. I would not discourage him, you understand, but he was congenitally unable to learn French. Some fire, I think, is needful, and he had quenched his fire in soapsuds.

He put the exercise down, leaned his chin upon his hand, and looked at me with clear, severe eyes.

“I think we must have a little talk,” said he.

“I am entirely at your disposition,” I replied; but I quaked, for I knew what subject to expect.

“You have been some time giving me these lessons,” he went on, “and I am tempted to think rather well of you. I believe you are a gentleman.”

“I have that honour, sir,” said I.

“You have seen me for the same period. I do not know how I strike you; but perhaps you will be prepared to believe that I also am a man of honour,” said he.

“I require no assurances; the thing is manifest,” and I bowed.

“Very well, then,” said he. “What about this Goguelat?”

“You heard me yesterday before the court,” I began. “I was awakened only – ”

“O yes; I ‘heard you yesterday before the court,’ no doubt,” he interrupted, “and I remember perfectly that you were ‘awakened only.’ I could repeat the most of it by rote, indeed. But do you suppose that I believed you for a moment?”

“Neither would you believe me if I were to repeat it here,” said I.

“I may be wrong – we shall soon see,” says he; “but my impression is that you will not ‘repeat it here.’ My impression is that you have come into this room, and that you will tell me something before you go out.”

I shrugged my shoulders.

“Let me explain,” he continued. “Your evidence, of course, is nonsense. I put it by, and the court put it by.”

“My compliments and thanks!” said I.

“You *must* know – that’s the short and the long,” he proceeded. “All of you in Shed B are bound to know. And I want to ask you where is the common sense of keeping up this farce, and maintaining this cock-and-bull story between friends. Come, come, my good fellow, own yourself beaten, and laugh at it yourself.”

“Well, I hear you – go ahead,” said I. “You put your heart in it.”

He crossed his legs slowly. “I can very well understand,” he began, “that precautions have had to be taken. I dare say an oath was administered. I can comprehend that perfectly.” (He was watching me all the time with his cold, bright eyes.) “And I can comprehend that, about an affair of honour, you would be very particular to keep it.”

“About an affair of honour?” I repeated, like a man quite puzzled.

“It was not an affair of honour, then?” he asked.

“What was not? I do not follow,” said I.

He gave no sign of impatience; simply sat a while silent, and began again in the same placid and good-natured voice: “The court and I were at one in setting aside your evidence. It could not deceive a child. But there was a difference between myself and the other officers, because *I knew my man* and they did not. They saw in you a common soldier, and I knew you for a gentleman. To them your evidence was a leash of lies, which they yawned to hear you telling. Now, I was asking myself, how far will a gentleman go? Not surely so far as to help hush a murder up? So that – when I heard you tell how you knew nothing of the matter, and were only awakened by the corporal, and

all the rest of it – I translated your statements into something else. Now, Champdivers,” he cried, springing up lively and coming towards me with animation, “I am going to tell you what that was, and you are going to help me to see justice done: how, I don’t know, for of course you are under oath – but somehow. Mark what I’m going to say.”

At that moment he laid a heavy, hard grip upon my shoulder; and whether he said anything more or came to a full stop at once, I am sure I could not tell you to this day. For, as the devil would have it, the shoulder he laid hold of was the one Goguelat had pinked. The wound was but a scratch; it was healing with the first intention; but in the clutch of Major Chevenix it gave me agony. My head swam; the sweat poured off my face; I must have grown deadly pale.

He removed his hand as suddenly as he had laid it there.

“What is wrong with you?” said he.

“It is nothing,” said I. “A qualm. It has gone by.”

“Are you sure?” said he. “You are as white as a sheet.”

“O no, I assure you! Nothing whatever. I am my own man again,” I said, though I could scarce command my tongue.

“Well, shall I go on again?” says he. “Can you follow me?”

“O, by all means!” said I, and mopped my streaming face upon my sleeve, for you may be sure in those days I had no handkerchief.

“If you are sure you can follow me. That was a very sudden and sharp seizure,” he said doubtfully. “But if you are sure, all right, and here goes. An affair of honour among you fellows would, naturally, be a little difficult to carry out; perhaps it would be impossible to have it wholly regular. And yet a duel might be very irregular in form, and, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, loyal enough in effect. Do you take me? Now, as a gentleman and a soldier.”

His hand rose again at the words and hovered over me. I could bear no more, and winced away from him. “No,” I cried, “not that. Do not put your hand upon my shoulder. I cannot bear it. It is rheumatism,” I made haste to add. “My shoulder is inflamed and very painful.”

He returned to his chair and deliberately lighted a cigar.

“I am sorry about your shoulder,” he said at last. “Let me send for the doctor.”

“Not in the least,” said I. “It is a trifle. I am quite used to it. It does not trouble me in the smallest. At any rate, I don’t believe in doctors.”

“All right,” said he, and sat and smoked a good while in a silence which I would have given anything to break. “Well,” he began presently, “I believe there is nothing left for me to learn. I presume I may say that I know all.”

“About what?” said I boldly.

“About Goguelat,” said he.

“I beg your pardon. I cannot conceive,” said I.

“O,” says the major, “the man fell in a duel, and by your hand! I am not an infant.”

“By no means,” said I. “But you seem to me to be a good deal of a theorist.”

“Shall we test it?” he asked. “The doctor is close by. If there is not an open wound on your shoulder, I am wrong. If there is – ” He waved his hand. “But I advise you to think twice. There is a deuce of a nasty drawback to the experiment – that what might have remained private between us two becomes public property.”

“O, well!” said I, with a laugh, “anything rather than a doctor! I cannot bear the breed.”

His last words had a good deal relieved me, but I was still far from comfortable.

Major Chevenix smoked a while, looking now at his cigar ash, now at me. “I’m a soldier myself,” he says presently, “and I’ve been out in my time and hit my man. I don’t want to run any one into a corner for an affair that was at all necessary or correct. At the same time, I want to know that much, and I’ll take your word of honour for it. Otherwise, I shall be very sorry, but the doctor must be called in.”

“I neither admit anything nor deny anything,” I returned. “But if this form of words will suffice you, here is what I say: I give you my parole, as a gentleman and a soldier, there has nothing taken place amongst us prisoners that was not honourable as the day.”

“All right,” says he. “That was all I wanted. You can go now, Champdivers.”

And as I was going out he added, with a laugh: “By the bye, I ought to apologise: I had no idea I was applying the torture!”

The same afternoon the doctor came into the courtyard with a piece of paper in his hand. He seemed hot and angry, and had certainly no mind to be polite.

“Here!” he cried. “Which of you fellows knows any English? O!” – spying me – “there you are, what’s your name! *You’ll* do. Tell these fellows that the other fellow’s dying. He’s booked; no use talking; I expect he’ll go by evening. And tell them I don’t envy the feelings of the fellow who spiked him. Tell them that first.”

I did so.

“Then you can tell ’em,” he resumed, “that the fellow, Goggle – what’s his name? – wants to see some of them before he gets his marching orders. If I got it right, he wants to kiss or embrace you, or some sickening stuff. Got that? Then here’s a list he’s had written, and you’d better read it out to them – I can’t make head or tail of your beastly names – and they can answer *present*, and fall in against that wall.”

It was with a singular movement of incongruous feelings that I read the first name on the list. I had no wish to look again on my own handiwork; my flesh recoiled from the idea; and how could I be sure what reception he designed to give me? The cure was in my own hand; I could pass that first name over – the doctor would not know – and I might stay away. But to the subsequent great gladness of my heart, I did not dwell for an instant on the thought, walked over to the designated wall, faced about, read out the name “Champdivers,” and answered myself with the word “Present.”

There were some half-dozen on the list, all told; and as soon as we were mustered, the doctor led the way to the hospital, and we followed after, like a fatigue-party, in single file. At the door he paused, told us “the fellow” would see each of us alone, and, as soon as I had explained that, sent me by myself into the ward. It was a small room, whitewashed; a south window stood open on a vast depth of air and a spacious and distant prospect; and from deep below, in the Grassmarket, the voices of hawkers came up clear and far away. Hard by, on a little bed, lay Goguelat. The sunburn had not yet faded from his face, and the stamp of death was already there. There was something wild and unmannish in his smile, that took me by the throat; only death and love know or have ever seen it. And when he spoke, it seemed to shame his coarse talk.

He held out his arms as if to embrace me. I drew near with incredible shrinkings, and surrendered myself to his arms with overwhelming disgust. But he only drew my ear down to his lips.

“Trust me,” he whispered. “*Je suis bon bougre, moi*. I’ll take it to hell with me and tell the devil.”

Why should I go on to reproduce his grossness and trivialities? All that he thought, at that hour, was even noble, though he could not clothe it otherwise than in the language of a brutal farce. Presently he bade me call the doctor; and when that officer had come in, raised himself a little up in his bed, pointed first to himself and then to me, who stood weeping by his side, and several times repeated the expression, “Frinds – frinds – dam frinds.”

To my great surprise the doctor appeared very much affected. He nodded his little bob-wigged head at us, and said repeatedly, “All right, Johnny – me comprong.”

Then Goguelat shook hands with me, embraced me again, and I went out of the room sobbing like an infant.

How often have I not seen it, that the most unpardonable fellows make the happiest exits! It is a fate we may well envy them. Goguelat was detested in life; in the last three days, by his admirable staunchness and consideration, he won every heart; and when word went about the prison the same evening that he was no more, the voice of conversation became hushed as in a house of mourning.

For myself, I was like a man distracted; I cannot think what ailed me: when I awoke the following day, nothing remained of it; but that night I was filled with a gloomy fury of the nerves. I had killed him; he had done his utmost to protect me; I had seen him with that awful smile. And so illogical and useless is this sentiment of remorse that I was ready, at a word or a look, to quarrel with somebody else. I presume the disposition of my mind was imprinted on my face; and when, a little after, I overtook, saluted, and addressed the doctor, he looked on me with commiseration and surprise.

I had asked him if it was true.

“Yes,” he said, “the fellow’s gone.”

“Did he suffer much?” I asked.

“Devil a bit; passed away like a lamb,” said he. He looked on me a little, and I saw his hand go to his fob. “Here, take that! no sense in fretting,” he said, and, putting a silver twopenny-bit in my hand, he left me.

I should have had that twopenny framed to hang upon the wall, for it was the man’s one act of charity in all my knowledge of him. Instead of that I stood looking at it in my hand and laughed out bitterly, as I realised his mistake; then went to the ramparts, and flung it far into the air like blood-money. The night was falling; through an embrasure and across the garden valley I saw the lamp-lighters hasting along Princes Street with ladder and lamp, and looked on moodily. As I was so standing a hand was laid upon my shoulder, and I turned about. It was Major Chevenix, dressed for the evening, and his neckcloth really admirably folded. I never denied the man could dress.

“Ah!” said he, “I thought it was you, Champdivers. So he’s gone?”

I nodded.

“Come, come,” said he, “you must cheer up. Of course it’s very distressing, very painful and all that. But do you know, it ain’t such a bad thing either for you or me? What with his death and your visit to him I am entirely reassured.”

So I was to owe my life to Goguelat at every point.

“I had rather not discuss it,” said I.

“Well,” said he, “one word more and I’ll agree to bury the subject. What did you fight about?”

“O, what do men ever fight about?” I cried.

“A lady?” said he.

I shrugged my shoulders.

“Deuce you did!” said he. “I should scarce have thought it of him.”

And at this my ill-humour broke fairly out in words. “He!” I cried. “He never dared to address her – only to look at her and vomit his vile insults! She may have given him sixpence: if she did, it may take him to heaven yet!”

At this I became aware of his eyes set upon me with a considering look, and brought up sharply.

“Well, well,” said he. “Good-night to you, Champdivers. Come to me at breakfast-time tomorrow, and we’ll talk of other subjects.”

I fully admit the man’s conduct was not bad: in writing it down so long after the events I can even see that it was good.

CHAPTER IV

ST. IVES GETS A BUNDLE OF BANK-NOTES

I was surprised one morning, shortly after, to find myself the object of marked consideration by a civilian and a stranger. This was a man of the middle age; he had a face of a mulberry colour, round black eyes, comical tufted eyebrows, and a protuberant forehead, and was dressed in clothes of a Quakerish cut. In spite of his plainness, he had that inscrutable air of a man well-to-do in his affairs. I conceived he had been some while observing me from a distance, for a sparrow sat betwixt us quite unalarmed on the breech of a piece of cannon. So soon as our eyes met, he drew near and addressed me in the French language, which he spoke with a good fluency but an abominable accent.

“I have the pleasure of addressing Monsieur le Vicomte Anne de K roual de Saint-Yves?” said he.

“Well,” said I, “I do not call myself all that; but I have a right to, if I choose. In the meanwhile I call myself plain Champdivers, at your disposal. It was my mother’s name, and good to go soldiering with.”

“I think not quite,” said he; “for if I remember rightly your mother also had the particle. Her name was Florimonde de Champdivers.”

“Right again,” said I, “and I am extremely pleased to meet a gentleman so well informed in my quarterings. Is monsieur Born himself?” This I said with a great air of assumption, partly to conceal the degree of curiosity with which my visitor had inspired me, and in part because it struck me as highly incongruous and comical in my prison garb and on the lips of a private soldier.

He seemed to think so too, for he laughed.

“No, sir,” he returned, speaking this time in English; “I am not ‘born,’ as you call it, and must content myself with *dying*, of which I am equally susceptible with the best of you. My name is Mr. Romaine – Daniel Romaine – a solicitor of London city, at your service; and, what will perhaps interest you more, I am here at the request of your great-uncle, the Count.”

“What!” I cried, “does M. de K roual de Saint-Yves remember the existence of such a person as myself, and will he deign to count kinship with a soldier of Napoleon?”

“You speak English well,” observed my visitor.

“It has been a second language to me from a child,” said I. “I had an English nurse; my father spoke English with me; and I was finished by a countryman of yours and a dear friend of mine, a Mr. Vicary.”

A strong expression of interest came into the lawyer’s face.

“What!” he cried, “you knew poor Vicary?”

“For more than a year,” said I; “and shared his hiding-place for many months.”

“And I was his clerk, and have succeeded him in business,” said he. “Excellent man! It was on the affairs of M. de K roual that he went to that accursed country, from which he was never destined to return. Do you chance to know his end, sir?”

“I am sorry,” said I, “I do. He perished miserably at the hands of a gang of banditti, such as we call *chauffeurs*. In a word, he was tortured, and died of it. See,” I added, kicking off one shoe, for I had no stockings; “I was no more than a child, and see how they had begun to treat myself.”

He looked at the mark of my old burn with a certain shrinking. “Beastly people!” I heard him mutter to himself.

“The English may say so with a good grace,” I observed politely.

Such speeches were the coin in which I paid my way among this credulous race. Ninety per cent. of our visitors would have accepted the remark as natural in itself and creditable to my powers of judgment, but it appeared my lawyer was more acute.

“You are not entirely a fool, I perceive,” said he.

“No,” said I; “not wholly.”

“And yet it is well to beware of the ironical mood,” he continued. “It is a dangerous instrument. Your great uncle has, I believe, practised it very much, until it is now become a problem what he means.”

“And that brings me back to what you will admit is a most natural inquiry,” said I. “To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit? how did you recognise me? and how did you know I was here?”

Carefully separating his coat skirts, the lawyer took a seat beside me on the edge of the flags.

“It is rather an odd story,” says he, “and, with your leave, I’ll answer the second question first. It was from a certain resemblance you bear to your cousin, M. le Vicomte.”

“I trust, sir, that I resemble him advantageously,” said I.

“I hasten to reassure you,” was the reply: “you do. To my eyes, M. Alain de Saint-Yves has scarce a pleasing exterior. And yet, when I knew you were here, and was actually looking for you – why, the likeness helped. As for how I came to know your whereabouts, by an odd enough chance, it is again M. Alain we have to thank. I should tell you, he has for some time made it his business to keep M. de Kéroual informed of your career; with what purpose I leave you to judge. When he first brought the news of your – that you were serving Buonaparte, it seemed it might be the death of the old gentleman, so hot was his resentment. But from one thing to another, matters have a little changed. Or I should rather say, not a little. We learned you were under orders for the Peninsula, to fight the English; then that you had been commissioned for a piece of bravery, and were again reduced to the ranks. And from one thing to another (as I say), M. de Kéroual became used to the idea that you were his kinsman and yet served with Buonaparte, and filled instead with wonder that he should have another kinsman who was so remarkably well informed of events in France. And now it became a very disagreeable question, whether the young gentleman was not a spy? In short, sir, in seeking to disserve you, he had accumulated against himself a load of suspicions.”

My visitor now paused, took snuff, and looked at me with an air of benevolence.

“Good God, sir!” says I, “this is a curious story.”

“You will say so before I have done,” said he. “For there have two events followed. The first of these was an encounter of M. de Kéroual and M. de Mauséant.”

“I know the man to my cost,” said I; “it was through him I lost my commission.”

“Do you tell me so?” he cried. “Why, here is news!”

“O, I cannot complain!” said I. “I was in the wrong. I did it with my eyes open. If a man gets a prisoner to guard and lets him go, the least he can expect is to be degraded.”

“You will be paid for it,” said he. “You did well for yourself and better for your king.”

“If I had thought I was injuring my emperor,” said I, “I would have let M. de Mauséant burn in hell ere I had helped him, and be sure of that! I saw in him only a private person in a difficulty: I let him go in private charity; not even to profit myself will I suffer it to be misunderstood.”

“Well, well,” said the lawyer, “no matter now. This is a foolish warmth – a very misplaced enthusiasm, believe me! The point of the story is that M. de Mauséant spoke of you with gratitude, and drew your character in such a manner as greatly to affect your uncle’s views. Hard upon the back of which, in came your humble servant, and laid before him the direct proof of what we had been so long suspecting. There was no dubiety permitted. M. Alain’s expensive way of life, his clothes and mistresses, his dicing and racehorses, were all explained: he was in the pay of Buonaparte, a hired spy, and a man that held the strings of what I can only call a convolution of extremely fishy enterprises. To do M. de Kéroual justice, he took it in the best way imaginable, destroyed the evidences of the one great-nephew’s disgrace – and transferred his interest wholly to the other.”

“What am I to understand by that?” said I.

“I will tell you,” says he. “There is a remarkable inconsistency in human nature which gentlemen of my cloth have a great deal of occasion to observe. Selfish persons can live without chick or child,

they can live without all mankind except perhaps the barber and the apothecary; but when it comes to dying, they seem physically unable to die without an heir. You can apply this principle for yourself. Viscount Alain, though he scarce guesses it, is no longer in the field. Remains, Viscount Anne.”

“I see,” said I, “you give a very unfavourable impression of my uncle, the Count.”

“I had not meant it,” said he. “He has led a loose life – sadly loose – but he is a man it is impossible to know and not to admire; his courtesy is exquisite.”

“And so you think there is actually a chance for me?” I asked.

“Understand,” said he: “in saying as much as I have done, I travel quite beyond my brief. I have been clothed with no capacity to talk of wills, or heritages, or your cousin. I was sent here to make but the one communication: that M. de Kéroual desires to meet his great-nephew.”

“Well,” said I, looking about me on the battlements by which we sat surrounded, “this is a case in which Mahomet must certainly come to the mountain.”

“Pardon me,” said Mr. Romaine; “you know already your uncle is an aged man; but I have not yet told you that he is quite broken up, and his death shortly looked for. No, no, there is no doubt about it – it is the mountain that must come to Mahomet.”

“From an Englishman, the remark is certainly significant,” said I; “but you are of course, and by trade, a keeper of men’s secrets, and I see you keep that of Cousin Alain, which is not the mark of a truculent patriotism, to say the least.”

“I am first of all the lawyer of your family!” says he.

“That being so,” said I, “I can perhaps stretch a point myself. This rock is very high, and it is very steep; a man might come by a devil of a fall from almost any part of it, and yet I believe I have a pair of wings that might carry me just so far as to the bottom. Once at the bottom I am helpless.”

“And perhaps it is just then that I could step in,” returned the lawyer. “Suppose by some contingency, at which I make no guess, and on which I offer no opinion – ”

But here I interrupted him. “One word ere you go further. I am under no parole,” said I.

“I understood so much,” he replied, “although some of you French gentry find their word sit lightly on them.”

“Sir, I am not one of those,” said I.

“To do you plain justice, I do not think you one,” said he. “Suppose yourself, then, set free and at the bottom of the rock,” he continued, “although I may not be able to do much, I believe I can do something to help you on your road. In the first place I would carry this, whether in an inside pocket or in my shoe.” And he passed me a bundle of bank-notes.

“No harm in that,” said I, at once concealing them.

“In the second place,” he resumed, “it is a great way from here to where your uncle lives – Amersham Place, not far from Dunstable; you have a great part of Britain to get through; and for the first stages, I must leave you to your own luck and ingenuity. I have no acquaintance here in Scotland, or at least” (with a grimace) “no dishonest ones. But further to the south, about Wakefield, I am told there is a gentleman called Burchell Fenn, who is not so particular as some others, and might be willing to give you a cast forward. In fact, sir, I believe it’s the man’s trade: a piece of knowledge that burns my mouth. But that is what you get by meddling with rogues; and perhaps the biggest rogue now extant, M. de Saint-Yves, is your cousin, M. Alain.”

“If this be a man of my cousin’s,” I observed, “I am perhaps better to keep clear of him?”

“It was through some paper of your cousin’s that we came across his trail,” replied the lawyer. “But I am inclined to think, so far as anything is safe in such a nasty business, you might apply to the man Fenn. You might even, I think, use the Viscount’s name; and the little trick of family resemblance might come in. How, for instance, if you were to call yourself his brother?”

“It might be done,” said I. “But look here a moment. You propose to me a very difficult game: I have apparently a devil of an opponent in my cousin; and, being a prisoner of war, I can scarcely be said to hold good cards. For what stakes, then, am I playing?”

“They are very large,” said he. “Your great-uncle is immensely rich – immensely rich. He was wise in time; he smelt the Revolution long before; sold all that he could, and had all that was movable transported to England through my firm. There are considerable estates in England; Amersham Place itself is very fine; and he has much money, wisely invested. He lives, indeed, like a prince. And of what use is it to him? He has lost all that was worth living for – his family, his country; he has seen his king and queen murdered; he has seen all these miseries and infamies,” pursued the lawyer, with a rising inflection and a heightening colour; and then broke suddenly off, – “In short, sir, he has seen all the advantages of that government for which his nephew carries arms, and he has the misfortune not to like them.”

“You speak with a bitterness that I suppose I must excuse,” said I; “yet which of us has the more reason to be bitter? This man, my uncle, M. de K  roual, fled. My parents, who were less wise perhaps, remained. In the beginning they were even republicans; to the end they could not be persuaded to despair of the people. It was a glorious folly, for which, as a son, I reverence them. First one and then the other perished. If I have any mark of a gentleman, all who taught me died upon the scaffold, and my last school of manners was the prison of the Abbaye. Do you think you can teach bitterness to a man with a history like mine?”

“I have no wish to try,” said he. “And yet there is one point I cannot understand: I cannot understand that one of your blood and experience should serve the Corsican. I cannot understand it: it seems as though everything generous in you must rise against that – domination.”

“And perhaps,” I retorted, “had your childhood passed among wolves, you would have been overjoyed yourself to see the Corsican Shepherd.”

“Well, well,” replied Mr. Romaine, “it may be. There are things that do not bear discussion.”

And with a wave of his hand he disappeared abruptly down a flight of steps and under the shadow of a ponderous arch.

CHAPTER V

ST. IVES IS SHOWN A HOUSE

The lawyer was scarce gone before I remembered many omissions; and chief among these, that I had neglected to get Mr. Burchell Fenn's address. Here was an essential point neglected; and I ran to the head of the stairs to find myself already too late. The lawyer was beyond my view; in the archway that led downward to the Castle gate, only the red coat and the bright arms of a sentry glittered in the shadow; and I could but return to my place upon the ramparts.

I am not very sure that I was properly entitled to this corner. But I was a high favourite; not an officer, and scarce a private, in the Castle would have turned me back, except upon a thing of moment; and whenever I desired to be solitary, I was suffered to sit here behind my piece of cannon unmolested. The cliff went down before me almost sheer, but mantled with a thicket of climbing trees; from farther down, an outwork raised its turret; and across the valley I had a view of that long terrace of Princes Street which serves as a promenade to the fashionable inhabitants of Edinburgh. A singularity in a military prison, that it should command a view on the chief thoroughfare!

It is not necessary that I should trouble you with the train of my reflections, which turned upon the interview I had just concluded and the hopes that were now opening before me. What is more essential, my eye (even while I thought) kept following the movement of the passengers on Princes Street, as they passed briskly to and fro – met, greeted, and bowed to each other – or entered and left the shops, which are in that quarter, and, for a town of the Britannic provinces, particularly fine. My mind being busy upon other things, the course of my eye was the more random; and it chanced that I followed, for some time, the advance of a young gentleman with a red head and a white greatcoat, for whom I cared nothing at the moment, and of whom it is probable I shall be gathered to my fathers without learning more. He seemed to have a large acquaintance: his hat was for ever in his hand; and I dare say I had already observed him exchanging compliments with half-a-dozen, when he drew up at last before a young man and a young lady whose tall persons and gallant carriage I thought I recognised.

It was impossible at such a distance that I could be sure, but the thought was sufficient, and I craned out of the embrasure to follow them as long as possible. To think that such emotions, that such a concussion of the blood, may have been inspired by a chance resemblance, and that I may have stood and thrilled there for a total stranger! This distant view, at least, whether of Flora or of some one else, changed in a moment the course of my reflections. It was all very well, and it was highly needful, I should see my uncle; but an uncle, a great-uncle at that, and one whom I had never seen, leaves the imagination cold; and if I were to leave the Castle, I might never again have the opportunity of finding Flora. The little impression I had made, even supposing I had made any, how soon it would die out! how soon I should sink to be a phantom memory, with which (in after days) she might amuse a husband and children! No, the impression must be clenched, the wax impressed with the seal, ere I left Edinburgh. And at this the two interests that were now contending in my bosom came together and became one. I wished to see Flora again; and I wanted some one to further me in my flight and to get me new clothes. The conclusion was apparent. Except for persons in the garrison itself, with whom it was a point of honour and military duty to retain me captive, I knew, in the whole country of Scotland, these two alone. If it were to be done at all, they must be my helpers. To tell them of my designed escape while I was still in bonds, would be to lay before them a most difficult choice. What they might do in such a case, I could not in the least be sure of, for (the same case arising) I was far from sure what I should do myself. It was plain I must escape first. When the harm was done, when I was no more than a poor wayside fugitive, I might apply to them with less offence and more security. To this end it became necessary that I should find out where they lived and how to reach it;

and feeling a strong confidence that they would soon return to visit me, I prepared a series of baits with which to angle for my information. It will be seen the first was good enough.

Perhaps two days after, Master Ronald put in an appearance by himself. I had no hold upon the boy, and pretermitted my design till I should have laid court to him and engaged his interest. He was prodigiously embarrassed, not having previously addressed me otherwise than by a bow and blushes; and he advanced to me with an air of one stubbornly performing a duty, like a raw soldier under fire. I laid down my carving; greeted him with a good deal of formality, such as I thought he would enjoy; and finding him to remain silent, branched off into narratives of my campaigns such as Goguelat himself might have scrupled to endorse. He visibly thawed and brightened; drew more near to where I sat; forgot his timidity so far as to put many questions; and at last, with another blush, informed me he was himself expecting a commission.

“Well,” said I, “they are fine troops, your British troops in the Peninsula. A young gentleman of spirit may well be proud to be engaged at the head of such soldiers.”

“I know that,” he said; “I think of nothing else. I think shame to be dangling here at home, and going through with this foolery of education, while others, no older than myself, are in the field.”

“I cannot blame you,” said I. “I have felt the same myself.”

“There are – there are no troops, are there, quite so good as ours?” he asked.

“Well,” said I, “there is a point about them: they have a defect – they are not to be trusted in a retreat. I have seen them behave very ill in a retreat.”

“I believe that is our national character,” he said – God forgive him! – with an air of pride.

“I have seen your national character running away at least, and had the honour to run after it!” rose to my lips, but I was not so ill-advised as to give it utterance. Every one should be flattered, but boys and women without stint; and I put in the rest of the afternoon narrating to him tales of British heroism, for which I should not like to engage that they were all true.

“I am quite surprised,” he said at last. “People tell you the French are insincere. Now, I think your sincerity is beautiful. I think you have a noble character. I admire you very much. I am very grateful for your kindness to – to one so young,” and he offered me his hand.

“I shall see you again soon?” said I.

“O, now! Yes, very soon,” said he. “I – I wish to tell you. I would not let Flora – Miss Gilchrist, I mean – come to-day. I wished to see more of you myself. I trust you are not offended: you know, one should be careful about strangers.”

I approved his caution, and he took himself away: leaving me in a mixture of contrarious feelings, part ashamed to have played on one so gullible, part raging that I should have burned so much incense before the vanity of England; yet, in the bottom of my soul, delighted to think I had made a friend – or, at least, begun to make a friend – of Flora’s brother.

As I had half expected, both made their appearance the next day. I struck so fine a shade betwixt the pride that is allowed to soldiers and the sorrowful humility that befits a captive, that I declare, as I went to meet them, I might have afforded a subject for a painter. So much was high comedy, I must confess; but so soon as my eyes lighted full on her dark face and eloquent eyes, the blood leaped into my cheeks – and that was nature! I thanked them, but not the least with exultation; it was my cue to be mournful, and to take the pair of them as one.

“I have been thinking,” I said, “you have been so good to me, both of you, stranger and prisoner as I am, that I have been thinking how I could testify to my gratitude. It may seem a strange subject for a confidence, but there is actually no one here, even of my comrades, that knows me by my name and title. By these I am called plain Champdivers, a name to which I have a right, but not the name which I should bear, and which (but a little while ago) I must hide like a crime. Miss Flora, suffer me to present to you the Vicomte Anne de Kéroual de Saint-Yves, a private soldier.”

“I knew it!” cried the boy; “I knew he was a noble!”

And I thought the eyes of Miss Flora said the same, but more persuasively. All through this interview she kept them on the ground, or only gave them to me for a moment at a time, and with a serious sweetness.

“You may conceive, my friends, that this is rather a painful confession,” I continued. “To stand here before you vanquished, a prisoner in a fortress, and take my own name upon my lips, is painful to the proud. And yet I wished that you should know me. Long after this we may yet hear of one another – perhaps Mr. Gilchrist and myself in the field and from opposing camps – and it would be a pity if we heard and did not recognise.”

They were both moved; and began at once to press upon me offers of service, such as to lend me books, get me tobacco if I used it, and the like. This would have been all mightily welcome, before the tunnel was ready. Now it signified no more to me than to offer the transition I required.

“My dear friends,” I said – “for you must allow me to call you that, who have no others within so many hundred leagues – perhaps you will think me fanciful and sentimental; and perhaps indeed I am; but there is one service that I would beg of you before all others. You see me set here on the top of this rock in the midst of your city. Even with what liberty I have, I have the opportunity to see a myriad roofs, and I dare to say, thirty leagues of sea and land. All this hostile! Under all these roofs my enemies dwell; wherever I see the smoke of a house rising, I must tell myself that some one sits before the chimney and reads with joy of our reverses. Pardon me, dear friends, I know that you must do the same, and I do not grudge at it! With you it is all different. Show me your house, then, were it only the chimney, or, if that be not visible, the quarter of the town in which it lies! So, when I look all about me, I shall be able to say: *‘There is one house in which I am not quite unkindly thought of.’*”

Flora stood a moment.

“It is a pretty thought,” said she, “and, as far as regards Ronald and myself, a true one. Come, I believe I can show you the very smoke out of our chimney.”

So saying, she carried me round the battlements towards the opposite or southern side of the fortress, and indeed to a bastion almost immediately overlooking the place of our projected flight. Thence we had a view of some fore-shortened suburbs at our feet, and beyond of a green, open, and irregular country rising towards the Pentland Hills. The face of one of these summits (say two leagues from where we stood) is marked with a procession of white scars. And to this she directed my attention.

“You see these marks?” she said. “We call them the Seven Sisters. Follow a little lower with your eye, and you will see a fold of the hill, the tops of some trees, and a tail of smoke out of the midst of them. That is Swanston Cottage, where my brother and I are living with my aunt. If it gives you pleasure to see it, I am glad. We, too, can see the Castle from a corner in the garden, and we go there in the morning often – do we not, Ronald? – and we think of you, M. de Saint-Yves; but I am afraid it does not altogether make us glad!”

“Mademoiselle!” said I, and indeed my voice was scarce under command, “if you knew how your generous words – how even the sight of you – relieved the horrors of this place, I believe, I hope, I know, you would be glad. I will come here daily and look at that dear chimney and these green hills, and bless you from the heart, and dedicate to you the prayers of this poor sinner. Ah! I do not say they can avail!”

“Who can say that, M. de Saint-Yves?” she said softly. – “But I think it is time we should be going.”

“High time,” said Ronald, whom (to say the truth) I had a little forgotten.

On the way back, as I was laying myself out to recover lost ground with the youth, and to obliterate, if possible, the memory of my last and somewhat too fervent speech, who should come past us but the major! I had to stand aside and salute as he went by, but his eyes appeared entirely occupied with Flora.

“Who is that man?” she asked.

“He is a friend of mine,” said I. “I give him lessons in French, and he has been very kind to me.”

“He stared,” she said, – “I do not say rudely; but why should he stare?”

“If you do not wish to be stared at, mademoiselle, suffer me to recommend a veil,” said I.

She looked at me with what seemed anger. “I tell you the man stared,” she said.

And Ronald added: “O, I don’t think he meant any harm. I suppose he was just surprised to see us walking about with a pr – with M. Saint-Yves.”

But the next morning, when I went to Chevenix’s rooms, and after I had dutifully corrected his exercise – “I compliment you on your taste,” said he to me.

“I beg your pardon?” said I.

“O no, I beg yours,” said he. “You understand me perfectly, just as I do you.”

I murmured something about enigmas.

“Well, shall I give you the key to the enigma?” said he, leaning back. “That was the young lady whom Goguelat insulted and whom you avenged. I do not blame you. She is a heavenly creature.”

“With all my heart, to the last of it!” said I. “And to the first also, if it amuses you! You are become so very acute of late that I suppose you must have your own way.”

“What is her name?” he asked.

“Now, really,” said I. “Do you think it likely she has told me?”

“I think it certain,” said he.

I could not restrain my laughter. “Well, then, do you think it likely I would tell you?” I cried.

“Not a bit,” said he. – “But come, to our lesson!”

CHAPTER VI

THE ESCAPE

The time for our escape drew near, and the nearer it came the less we seemed to enjoy the prospect. There is but one side on which this Castle can be left either with dignity or safety; but as there is the main gate and guard, and the chief street of the upper city, it is not to be thought of by escaping prisoners. In all other directions an abominable precipice surrounds it, down the face of which (if anywhere at all) we must regain our liberty. By our concurrent labours in many a dark night, working with the most anxious precautions against noise, we had made out to pierce below the curtain about the south-west corner, in a place they call the Devil's Elbow. I have never met that celebrity; nor (if the rest of him at all comes up to what they called his elbow) have I the least desire of his acquaintance. From the heel of the masonry, the rascally, breakneck precipice descended sheer among waste lands, scattered suburbs of the city, and houses in the building. I had never the heart to look for any length of time – the thought that I must make the descent in person some dark night robbing me of breath; and, indeed, on anybody not a seaman or a steeple-jack the mere sight of the Devil's Elbow wrought like an emetic.

I don't know where the rope was got, and doubt if I much cared. It was not that which gravelled me, but whether, now that we had it, it would serve our turn. Its length, indeed, we made a shift to fathom out; but who was to tell us how that length compared with the way we had to go? Day after day, there would be always some of us stolen out to the Devil's Elbow and making estimates of the descent, whether by a bare guess or the dropping of stones. A private of pioneers remembered the formula for that – or else remembered part of it and obligingly invented the remainder. I had never any real confidence in that formula; and even had we got it from a book, there were difficulties in the way of the application that might have daunted Archimedes. We durst not drop any considerable pebble lest the sentinels should hear, and those that we dropped we could not hear ourselves. We had never a watch – or none that had a second-hand; and though every one of us could guess a second to a nicety, all somehow guessed it differently. In short, if any two set forth upon this enterprise, they invariably returned with two opinions and often with a black eye in the bargain. I looked on upon these proceedings, although not without laughter, yet with impatience and disgust. I am one that cannot bear to see things botched or gone upon with ignorance; and the thought that some poor devil was to hazard his bones upon such premises revolted me. Had I guessed the name of that unhappy first adventurer, my sentiments might have been livelier still.

The designation of this personage was indeed all that remained for us to do; and even in that we had advanced so far that the lot had fallen on Shed B. It had been determined to mingle the bitter and the sweet; and whoever went down first, the whole of his shed-mates were to follow next in order. This caused a good deal of joy in Shed B, and would have caused more if it had not still remained to choose our pioneer. In view of the ambiguity in which we lay as to the length of the rope and the height of the precipice – and that this gentleman was to climb down from fifty to seventy fathoms on a pitchy night, on a rope entirely free, and with not so much as an infant child to steady it at the bottom, a little backwardness was perhaps excusable. But it was, in our case, more than a little. The truth is, we were all womanish fellows about a height; and I have myself been put, more than once, *hors de combat* by a less affair than the rock of Edinburgh Castle.

We discussed it in the dark and between the passage of the rounds; and it was impossible for any body of men to show a less adventurous spirit. I am sure some of us, and myself first among the number, regretted Goguelat. Some were persuaded it was safe, and could prove the same by argument; but if they had good reasons why some one else should make the trial, they had better still why it should not be themselves. Others, again, condemned the whole idea as insane; among these, as ill-

luck would have it, a seaman of the fleet; who was the most dispiriting of all. The height, he reminded us, was greater than the tallest ship's mast, the rope entirely free; and he as good as defied the boldest and strongest to succeed. We were relieved from this deadlock by our sergeant-major of dragoons.

"Comrades," said he, "I believe I rank before you all; and for that reason, if you really wish it, I will be the first myself. At the same time, you are to consider what the chances are that I may prove to be the last as well. I am no longer young – I was sixty near a month ago. Since I have been a prisoner, I have made for myself a little *bedaine*. My arms are all gone to fat. And you must promise not to blame me, if I fall and play the devil with the whole thing."

"We cannot hear of such a thing!" said I. "M. Laclas is the oldest man here; and, as such, he should be the very last to offer. It is plain we must draw lots."

"No," said M. Laclas; "you put something else in my head! There is one here who owes a pretty candle to the others, for they have kept his secret. Besides, the rest of us are only rabble; and he is another affair altogether. Let Champdivers – let the noble go the first."

I confess there was a notable pause before the noble in question got his voice. But there was no room for choice. I had been so ill-advised, when I first joined the regiment, as to take ground on my nobility. I had been often rallied on the matter in the ranks, and had passed under the by-names of *Monseigneur* and *the Marquis*. It was now needful I should justify myself and take a fair revenge.

Any little hesitation I may have felt passed entirely unnoticed, from the lucky incident of a round happening at that moment to go by. And during the interval of silence there occurred something to set my blood to the boil. There was a private in our shed called Clausel, a man of a very ugly disposition. He had made one of the followers of Goguelat; but whereas Goguelat had always a kind of monstrous gaiety about him, Clausel was no less morose than he was evil-minded. He was sometimes called *the General*, and sometimes by a name too ill-mannered for repetition. As we all sat listening, this man's hand was laid on my shoulder, and his voice whispered in my ear: "If you don't go, I'll have you hanged, Marquis!"

As soon as the round was past – "Certainly, gentlemen!" said I. "I will give you a lead, with all the pleasure in the world. But, first of all, there is a hound here to be punished. M. Clausel has just insulted me, and dishonoured the French army; and I demand that he run the gauntlet of this shed."

There was but one voice asking what he had done, and, as soon as I had told them, but one voice agreeing to the punishment. The General was, in consequence, extremely roughly handled, and the next day was congratulated by all who saw him on his *new decorations*. It was lucky for us that he was one of the prime movers and believers in our project of escape, or he had certainly revenged himself by a denunciation. As for his feelings towards myself, they appeared, by his looks, to surpass humanity; and I made up my mind to give him a wide berth in the future.

Had I been to go down that instant, I believe I could have carried it well. But it was already too late – the day was at hand. The rest had still to be summoned. Nor was this the extent of my misfortune; for the next night, and the night after, were adorned with a perfect galaxy of stars, and showed every cat that stirred in a quarter of a mile. During this interval I have to direct your sympathies on the Vicomte de Saint-Yves! All addressed me softly, like folk round a sick-bed. Our Italian corporal, who had got a dozen of oysters from a fishwife, laid them at my feet, as though I were a Pagan idol; and I have never since been wholly at my ease in the society of shellfish. He who was the best of our carvers brought me a snuff-box, which he had just completed, and which, while it was yet in hand, he had often declared he would not part with under fifteen dollars. I believe the piece was worth the money too! And yet the voice stuck in my throat with which I must thank him. I found myself, in a word, to be fed up like a prisoner in a camp of anthropophagi, and honoured like the sacrificial bull. And what with these annoyances, and the risky venture immediately ahead, I found my part a trying one to play.

It was a good deal of a relief when the third evening closed about the Castle with volumes of sea-fog. The lights of Princes Street sometimes disappeared, sometimes blinked across at us no brighter than the eyes of cats; and five steps from one of the lanterns on the ramparts it was already groping

dark. We made haste to lie down. Had our gaolers been upon the watch they must have observed our conversation to die out unusually soon. Yet I doubt if any of us slept. Each lay in his place, tortured at once with the hope of liberty and the fear of a hateful death. The guard call sounded; the hum of the town declined by little and little. On all sides of us, in their different quarters, we could hear the watchmen cry the hours along the street. Often enough, during my stay in England, have I listened to these gruff or broken voices; or perhaps gone to my window when I lay sleepless, and watched the old gentleman hobble by upon the causeway with his cape and his cap, his hanger and his rattle. It was ever a thought with me how differently that cry would re-echo in the chamber of lovers, beside the bed of death, or in the condemned cell. I might be said to hear it that night myself in the condemned cell! At length a fellow with a voice like a bull's began to roar out in the opposite thoroughfare:

“Past yin o’cloak, and a dark, haary moarnin’.”

At which we were all silently afoot.

As I stole about the battlements towards the – gallows, I was about to write – the sergeant-major, perhaps doubtful of my resolution, kept close by me, and occasionally proffered the most indigestible reassurances in my ear. At last I could bear them no longer.

“Be so obliging as to let me be!” said I. “I am neither a coward nor a fool. What do *you* know of whether the rope be long enough? But I shall know it in ten minutes!”

The good old fellow laughed in his moustache, and patted me.

It was all very well to show the disposition of my temper before a friend alone; before my assembled comrades the thing had to go handsomely. It was then my time to come on the stage; and I hope I took it handsomely.

“Now, gentlemen,” said I, “if the rope is ready, here is the criminal!”

The tunnel was cleared, the stake driven, the rope extended. As I moved forward to the place, many of my comrades caught me by the hand and wrung it, an attention I could well have done without.

“Keep an eye on Clause!” I whispered to Laclas; and with that, got down on my elbows and knees, took the rope in both hands, and worked myself, feet foremost, through the tunnel. When the earth failed under my feet, I thought my heart would have stopped; and a moment after I was demeaning myself in mid-air like a drunken jumping-jack. I have never been a model of piety, but at this juncture prayers and a cold sweat burst from me simultaneously.

The line was knotted at intervals of eighteen inches; and to the inexpert it may seem as if it should have been even easy to descend. The trouble was, this devil of a piece of rope appeared to be inspired, not with life alone, but with a personal malignity against myself. It turned to the one side, paused for a moment, and then spun me like a toasting-jack to the other; slipped like an eel from the clasp of my feet; kept me all the time in the most outrageous fury of exertion; and dashed me at intervals against the face of the rock. I had no eyes to see with; and I doubt if there was anything to see but darkness. I must occasionally have caught a gasp of breath, but it was quite unconscious. And the whole forces of my mind were so consumed with losing hold and getting it again, that I could scarce have told whether I was going up or coming down.

Of a sudden I knocked against the cliff with such a thump as almost bereft me of my sense; and, as reason twinkled back, I was amazed to find that I was in a state of rest, that the face of the precipice here inclined outwards at an angle which relieved me almost wholly of the burthen of my own weight, and that one of my feet was safely planted on a ledge. I drew one of the sweetest breaths in my experience, hugged myself against the rope, and closed my eyes in a kind of ecstasy of relief. It occurred to me next to see how far I was advanced on my unlucky journey, a point on which I had not a shadow of a guess. I looked up: there was nothing above me but the blackness of the night and the fog. I craned timidly forward and looked down. There, upon a floor of darkness, I beheld a certain pattern of hazy lights, some of them aligned as in thoroughfares, others standing apart as in solitary houses; and before I could well realise it, or had in the least estimated my distance, a wave

of nausea and vertigo warned me to lie back and close my eyes. In this situation I had really but the one wish, and that was: something else to think of! Strange to say, I got it; a veil was torn from my mind, and I saw what a fool I was – what fools we had all been – and that I had no business to be thus dangling between earth and heaven by my arms. The only thing to have done was to have attached me to a rope and lowered me, and I had never the wit to see it till that moment!

I filled my lungs, got a good hold on my rope, and once more launched myself on the descent. As it chanced, the worst of the danger was at an end, and I was so fortunate as to be never again exposed to any violent concussion. Soon after I must have passed within a little distance of a bush of wallflower, for the scent of it came over me with that impression of reality which characterises scents in darkness. This made me a second landmark, the ledge being my first. I began accordingly to compute intervals of time: so much to the ledge, so much again to the wallflower, so much more below. If I were not at the bottom of the rock, I calculated I must be near indeed to the end of the rope, and there was no doubt that I was not far from the end of my own resources. I began to be light-headed and to be tempted to let go – now arguing that I was certainly arrived within a few feet of the level and could safely risk a fall, anon persuaded I was still close at the top and it was idle to continue longer on the rock. In the midst of which I came to a bearing on plain ground, and had nearly wept aloud. My hands were as good as flayed, my courage entirely exhausted, and, what with the long strain and the sudden relief, my limbs shook under me with more than the violence of ague, and I was glad to cling to the rope.

But this was no time to give way. I had (by God's single mercy) got myself alive out of that fortress; and now I had to try to get the others, my comrades. There was about a fathom of rope to spare; I got it by the end, and searched the whole ground thoroughly for anything to make it fast to. In vain: the ground was broken and stony, but there grew not there so much as a bush of furze.

"Now then," thought I to myself, "here begins a new lesson, and I believe it will prove richer than the first. I am not strong enough to keep this rope extended. If I do not keep it extended the next man will be dashed against the precipice. There is no reason why he should have my extravagant good luck. I see no reason why he should not fall – nor any place for him to fall on but my head."

From where I was now standing there was occasionally visible, as the fog lightened, a lamp in one of the barrack windows, which gave me a measure of the height he had to fall, and the horrid force that he must strike me with. What was yet worse, we had agreed to do without signals: every so many minutes by Laclas' watch another man was to be started from the battlements. Now, I had seemed to myself to be about half-an-hour in my descent, and it seemed near as long again that I waited, straining on the rope for my next comrade to begin. I began to be afraid that our conspiracy was out, that my friends were all secured, and that I should pass the remainder of the night, and be discovered in the morning, vainly clinging to the rope's end like a hooked fish upon an angle. I could not refrain, at this ridiculous image, from a chuckle of laughter. And the next moment I knew, by the jerking of the rope, that my friend had crawled out of the tunnel, and was fairly launched on his descent. It appears it was the sailor who had insisted on succeeding me: as soon as my continued silence had assured him the rope was long enough, Gautier, for that was his name, had forgot his former arguments, and shown himself so extremely forward, that Laclas had given way. It was like the fellow, who had no harm in him beyond an instinctive selfishness. But he was like to have paid pretty dearly for the privilege. Do as I would, I could not keep the rope as I could have wished it; and he ended at last by falling on me from a height of several yards, so that we both rolled together on the ground. As soon as he could breathe he cursed me beyond belief, wept over his finger, which he had broken, and cursed me again. I bade him be still and think shame of himself to be so great a cry-baby. Did he not hear the round going by above? I asked; and who could tell but what the noise of his fall was already remarked, and the sentinels at the very moment leaning upon the battlements to listen?

The round, however, went by, and nothing was discovered; the third man came to the ground quite easily; the fourth was, of course, child's play; and before there were ten of us collected, it seemed to me that, without the least injustice to my comrades, I might proceed to take care of myself.

I knew their plan: they had a map and an almanac, and designed for Grangemouth, where they were to steal a ship. Suppose them to do so, I had no idea they were qualified to manage it after it was stolen. Their whole escape, indeed, was the most haphazard thing imaginable; only the impatience of captives and the ignorance of private soldiers would have entertained so misbegotten a device; and though I played the good comrade and worked with them upon the tunnel, but for the lawyer's message I should have let them go without me. Well, now they were beyond my help, as they had always been beyond my counselling; and, without word said or leave taken, I stole out of the little crowd. It is true I would rather have waited to shake hands with Laclas, but in the last man who had descended I thought I recognised Clausel, and since the scene in the shed my distrust of Clausel was perfect. I believed the man to be capable of any infamy, and events have since shown that I was right.

CHAPTER VII

SWANSTON COTTAGE

I had two views. The first was, naturally, to get clear of Edinburgh Castle and the town, to say nothing of my fellow-prisoners; the second to work to the southward so long as it was night, and be near Swanston Cottage by morning. What I should do there and then, I had no guess, and did not greatly care, being a devotee of a couple of divinities called Chance and Circumstance. Prepare, if possible; where it is impossible, work straight forward, and keep your eyes open and your tongue oiled. Wit and a good exterior – there is all life in a nutshell.

I had at first a rather chequered journey: got involved in gardens, butted into houses, and had even once the misfortune to awake a sleeping family, the father of which, as I suppose, menaced me from the window with a blunderbuss. Altogether, though I had been some time gone from my companions, I was still at no great distance, when a miserable accident put a period to the escape. Of a sudden the night was divided by a scream. This was followed by the sound of something falling, and that again by the report of a musket from the Castle battlements. It was strange to hear the alarm spread through the city. In the fortress drums were beat and a bell rung backward. On all hands the watchmen sprang their rattles. Even in that limbo or no-man's-land where I was wandering, lights were made in the houses; sashes were flung up; I could hear neighbouring families converse from window to window, and at length I was challenged myself.

“Wha’s that?” cried a big voice.

I could see it proceeded from a big man in a big nightcap, leaning from a one-pair window; and as I was not yet abreast of his house, I judged it was more wise to answer. This was not the first time I had had to stake my fortunes on the goodness of my accent in a foreign tongue; and I have always found the moment inspiring, as a gambler should. Pulling around me a sort of greatcoat I had made of my blanket, to cover my sulphur-coloured livery, – “A friend!” said I.

“What like’s all this collieshangie?” said he.

I had never heard of a collieshangie in my days, but with the racket all about us in the city, I could have no doubt as to the man’s meaning.

“I do not know, sir, really,” said I; “but I suppose some of the prisoners will have escaped.”

“Be damned!” says he.

“O, sir, they will be soon taken,” I replied: “it has been found in time. Good-morning, sir!”

“Ye walk late, sir?” he added.

“O, surely not,” said I, with a laugh. “Earlyish, if you like!” which brought me finally beyond him, highly pleased with my success.

I was now come forth on a good thoroughfare, which led (as well as I could judge) in my direction. It brought me almost immediately through a piece of street, whence I could hear close by the springing of a watchman’s rattle, and where I suppose a sixth part of the windows would be open, and the people, in all sorts of night-gear, talking with a kind of tragic gusto from one to another. Here, again, I must run the gauntlet of a half-dozen questions, the rattle all the while sounding nearer; but as I was not walking inordinately quick, as I spoke like a gentleman, and the lamps were too dim to show my dress, I carried it off once more. One person, indeed, inquired where I was off to at that hour.

I replied vaguely and cheerfully, and as I escaped at one end of this dangerous pass I could see the watchman’s lantern entering by the other. I was now safe on a dark country highway, out of sight of lights and out of the fear of watchmen. And yet I had not gone above a hundred yards before a fellow made an ugly rush at me from the roadside. I avoided him with a leap, and stood on guard, cursing my empty hands, wondering whether I had to do with an officer or a mere footpad, and scarce

knowing which to wish. My assailant stood a little; in the thick darkness I could see him bob and sidle as though he were fainting at me for an advantageous onfall. Then he spoke.

“My goo’ frien’,” says he, and at the first word I pricked my ears, “my goo’ frien’, will you oblishe me with lil neshary information? Whish roa’ t’ Cramond?”

I laughed out clear and loud, stepped up to the convivialist, took him by the shoulders, and faced him about. “My good friend,” said I, “I believe I know what is best for you much better than yourself, and may God forgive you the fright you have given me! There, get you gone to Edinburgh!” And I gave a shove, which he obeyed with the passive agility of a ball, and disappeared incontinently in the darkness down the road by which I had myself come.

Once clear of this foolish fellow, I went on again up a gradual hill, descended on the other side through the houses of a country village, and came at last to the bottom of the main ascent leading to the Pentlands and my destination. I was some way up when the fog began to lighten; a little farther, and I stepped by degrees into a clear starry night, and saw in front of me, and quite distinct, the summits of the Pentlands, and behind, the valley of the Forth and the city of my late captivity buried under a lake of vapour. I had but one encounter – that of a farm-cart, which I heard, from a great way ahead of me, creaking nearer in the night, and which passed me about the point of dawn like a thing seen in a dream, with two silent figures in the inside nodding to the horse’s steps. I presume they were asleep; by the shawl about her head and shoulders, one of them should be a woman. Soon, by concurrent steps, the day began to break and the fog to subside and roll away. The east grew luminous and was barred with chilly colours, and the Castle on its rock, and the spires and chimneys of the upper town, took gradual shape, and arose, like islands, out of the receding cloud. All about me was still and sylvan; the road mounting and winding, with nowhere a sign of any passenger, the birds chirping, I suppose for warmth, the boughs of the trees knocking together, and the red leaves falling in the wind.

It was broad day, but still bitter cold and the sun not up, when I came in view of my destination. A single gable and chimney of the cottage peeped over the shoulder of the hill; not far off, and a trifle higher on the mountain, a tall old whitewashed farmhouse stood among the trees, beside a falling brook; beyond were rough hills of pasture. I bethought me that shepherd folk were early risers, and if I were once seen skulking in that neighbourhood it might prove the ruin of my prospects; took advantage of a line of hedge, and worked myself up in its shadow till I was come under the garden wall of my friend’s house. The cottage was a little quaint place of many rough-cast gables and grey roofs. It had something the air of a rambling infinitesimal cathedral, the body of it rising in the midst, two stories high, with a steep-pitched roof, and sending out upon all hands (as it were chapter-houses, chapels, and transepts) one-storied and dwarfish projections. To add to this appearance, it was grotesquely decorated with crockets and gargoyles, ravished from some mediæval church. The place seemed hidden away, being not only concealed in the trees of the garden, but, on the side on which I approached it, buried as high as the eaves by the rising of the ground. About the walls of the garden there went a line of well-grown elms and beeches, the first entirely bare, the last still pretty well covered with red leaves, and the centre was occupied with a thicket of laurel and holly, in which I could see arches cut and paths winding.

I was now within hail of my friends, and not much the better. The house appeared asleep; yet if I attempted to wake any one, I had no guarantee it might not prove either the aunt with the gold eye-glasses (whom I could only remember with trembling), or some ass of a servant-maid who should burst out screaming at sight of me. Higher up I could hear and see a shepherd shouting to his dogs and striding on the rough sides of the mountain, and it was clear I must get to cover without loss of time. No doubt the holly thickets would have proved a very suitable retreat, but there was mounted on the wall a sort of signboard not uncommon in the country of Great Britain, and very damping to the adventurous: Spring Guns and Man Traps was the legend that it bore. I have learned since that these advertisements, three times out of four, were in the nature of Quaker guns on a disarmed battery, but I had not learned it then, and even so, the odds would not have been good enough. For a choice,

I would a hundred times sooner be returned to Edinburgh Castle and my corner in the bastion, than to leave my foot in a steel trap or have to digest the contents of an automatic blunderbuss. There was but one chance left – that Ronald or Flora might be the first to come abroad; and in order to profit by this chance, if it occurred, I got me on the cope of the wall in the place where it was screened by the thick branches of a beech, and sat there waiting.

As the day wore on, the sun came very pleasantly out. I had been awake all night, I had undergone the most violent agitations of mind and body, and it is not so much to be wondered at, as it was exceedingly unwise and foolhardy, that I should have dropped into a doze. From this I awakened to the characteristic sound of digging, looked down, and saw immediately below me the back view of a gardener in a stable waistcoat. Now he would appear steadily immersed in his business; anon, to my more immediate terror, he would straighten his back, stretch his arms, gaze about the otherwise deserted garden, and relish a deep pinch of snuff. It was my first thought to drop from the wall upon the other side. A glance sufficed to show me that even the way by which I had come was now cut off, and the field behind me already occupied by a couple of shepherds' assistants and a score or two of sheep. I have named the talismans on which I habitually depend, but here was a conjuncture in which both were wholly useless. The copestone of a wall arrayed with broken bottles is no favourable rostrum; and I might be as eloquent as Pitt, and as fascinating as Richelieu, and neither the gardener nor the shepherd lads would care a halfpenny. In short, there was no escape possible from my absurd position: there I must continue to sit until one or other of my neighbours should raise his eyes and give the signal for my capture.

The part of the wall on which (for my sins) I was posted could be scarce less than twelve feet high on the inside; the leaves of the beech which made a fashion of sheltering me were already partly fallen; and I was thus not only perilously exposed myself, but enabled to command some part of the garden walks and (under an evergreen arch) the front lawn and windows of the cottage. For long nothing stirred except my friend with the spade; then I heard the opening of a sash; and presently after saw Miss Flora appear in a morning wrapper and come strolling hitherward between the borders, pausing and visiting her flowers – herself as fair. *There* was a friend; *here*, immediately beneath me, an unknown quantity – the gardener: how to communicate with the one and not attract the notice of the other? To make a noise was out of the question; I dared scarce to breathe. I held myself ready to make a gesture as soon as she should look, and she looked in every possible direction but the one. She was interested in the vilest tuft of chickweed, she gazed at the summit of the mountain, she came even immediately below me and conversed on the most fastidious topics with the gardener; but to the top of that wall she would not dedicate a glance! At last she began to retrace her steps in the direction of the cottage; whereupon, becoming quite desperate, I broke off a piece of plaster, took a happy aim, and hit her with it in the nape of the neck. She clapped her hand to the place, turned about, looked on all sides for an explanation, and spying me (as indeed I was parting the branches to make it the more easy), half uttered and half swallowed down again a cry of surprise.

The infernal gardener was erect upon the instant. “What’s your wull, miss?” said he.

Her readiness amazed me. She had already turned and was gazing in the opposite direction. “There’s a child among the artichokes,” she said.

“The Plagues of Egyp’! *I’ll* see to them!” cried the gardener truculently, and with a hurried waddle disappeared among the evergreens.

That moment she turned, she came running towards me, her arms stretched out, her face incarnadined for the one moment with heavenly blushes, the next pale as death. “Monsieur de Saint-Yves!” she said.

“My dear young lady,” I said, “this is the damnedest liberty – I know it! But what else was I to do?”

“You have escaped?” said she.

“If you call this escape,” I replied.

“But you cannot possibly stop there!” she cried.

“I know it,” said I. “And where am I to go?”

She struck her hands together. “I have it!” she exclaimed. “Come down by the beech trunk – you must leave no footprint in the border – quickly, before Robie can get back! I am the hen-wife here: I keep the key; you must go into the hen-house – for the moment.”

I was by her side at once. Both cast a hasty glance at the blank windows of the cottage and so much as was visible of the garden alleys; it seemed there was none to observe us. She caught me by the sleeve and ran. It was no time for compliments; hurry breathed upon our necks; and I ran along with her to the next corner of the garden, where a wired court and a board hovel standing in a grove of trees advertised my place of refuge. She thrust me in without a word; the bulk of the fowls were at the same time emitted; and I found myself the next moment locked in alone with half-a-dozen sitting hens. In the twilight of the place all fixed their eyes on me severely, and seemed to upbraid me with some crying impropriety. Doubtless the hen has always a puritanic appearance, although (in its own behaviour) I could never observe it to be more particular than its neighbours. But conceive a British hen!

CHAPTER VIII

THE HEN-HOUSE

I was half-an-hour at least in the society of these distressing bipeds, and alone with my own reflections and necessities. I was in great pain of my flayed hands, and had nothing to treat them with; I was hungry and thirsty, and had nothing to eat or to drink; I was thoroughly tired, and there was no place for me to sit. To be sure there was the floor, but nothing could be imagined less inviting.

At the sound of approaching footsteps my good-humour was restored. The key rattled in the lock, and Master Ronald entered, closed the door behind him, and leaned his back to it.

“I say, you know!” he said, and shook a sullen young head.

“I know it’s a liberty,” said I.

“It’s infernally awkward: my position is infernally embarrassing,” said he.

“Well,” said I, “and what do you think of mine?”

This seemed to pose him entirely, and he remained gazing upon me with a convincing air of youth and innocence. I could have laughed, but I was not so inhumane.

“I am in your hands,” said I, with a little gesture. “You must do with me what you think right.”

“Ah, yes!” he cried: “if I knew!”

“You see,” said I, “it would be different if you had received your commission. Properly speaking, you are not yet a combatant; I have ceased to be one; and I think it arguable that we are just in the position of one ordinary gentleman to another, where friendship usually comes before the law. Observe, I only say *arguable*. For God’s sake, don’t think I wish to dictate an opinion. These are the sort of nasty little businesses, inseparable from war, which every gentleman must decide for himself. If I were in your place – ”

“Ay, what would you do, then?” says he.

“Upon my word, I do not know,” said I. “Hesitate, as you are doing, I believe.”

“I will tell you,” he said. “I have a kinsman, and it is what *he* would think that I am thinking. It is General Graham of Lynedoch – Sir Thomas Graham. I scarcely know him, but I believe I admire him more than I do God.”

“I admire him a good deal myself,” said I, “and have good reason to. I have fought with him, been beaten, and run away. *Veni, victus sum, evasi.*”

“What!” he cried. “You were at Barossa?”

“There and back, which many could not say,” said I. “It was a pretty affair and a hot one, and the Spaniards behaved abominably, as they usually did in a pitched field; the Marshal Duke of Belluno made a fool of himself, and not for the first time; and your friend Sir Thomas had the best of it, so far as there was any best. He is a brave and ready officer.”

“Now, then, you will understand!” said the boy. “I wish to please Sir Thomas: what would he do?”

“Well, I can tell you a story,” said I, “a true one too, and about this very combat of Chiclana, or Barossa as you call it. I was in the Eighth of the Line; we lost the eagle of the First Battalion, more betoken, but it cost you dear. Well, we had repulsed more charges than I care to count, when your 87th Regiment came on at a foot’s pace, very slow but very steady; in front of them a mounted officer, his hat in his hand, white-haired, and talking very quietly to the battalions. Our Major, Vigo-Roussillon, set spurs to his horse and galloped out to sabre him, but seeing him an old man, very handsome, and as composed as if he were in a coffee-house, lost heart and galloped back again. Only, you see, they had been very close together for the moment, and looked each other in the eyes. Soon after the Major was wounded, taken prisoner, and carried into Cadiz. One fine day they announced

to him the visit of the General, Sir Thomas Graham. ‘Well, sir,’ said the General, taking him by the hand, ‘I think we were face to face upon the field.’ It was the white-haired officer!”

“Ah!” cried the boy; his eyes were burning.

“Well, and here is the point,” I continued. “Sir Thomas fed the Major from his own table from that day, and served him with six covers.”

“Yes, it is a beautiful – a beautiful story,” said Ronald. “And yet somehow it is not the same – is it?”

“I admit it freely,” said I.

The boy stood a while brooding. “Well, I take my risk of it,” he cried. “I believe it’s treason to my sovereign – I believe there is an infamous punishment for such a crime – and yet I’m hanged if I can give you up.”

I was as much moved as he. “I could almost beg you to do otherwise,” I said. “I was a brute to come to you, a brute and a coward. You are a noble enemy; you will make a noble soldier.” And with rather a happy idea of a compliment for this warlike youth, I stood up straight and gave him the salute.

He was for a moment confused; his face flushed. “Well, well, I must be getting you something to eat, but it will not be for six,” he added, with a smile; “only what we can get smuggled out. There is my aunt in the road, you see,” and he locked me in again with the indignant hens.

I always smile when I recall that young fellow; and yet, if the reader were to smile also, I should feel ashamed. If my son shall be only like him when he comes to that age, it will be a brave day for me and not a bad one for his country.

At the same time I cannot pretend that I was sorry when his sister succeeded in his place. She brought me a few crusts of bread and a jug of milk, which she had handsomely laced with whisky after the Scottish manner.

“I am so sorry,” she said: “I dared not bring you anything more. We are so small a family, and my aunt keeps such an eye upon the servants. I have put some whisky in the milk – it is more wholesome so – and with eggs you will be able to make something of a meal. How many eggs will you be wanting to that milk? for I must be taking the others to my aunt – that is my excuse for being here. I should think three or four. Do you know how to beat them in? or shall I do it?”

Willing to detain her a while longer in the hen-house, I displayed my bleeding palms; at which she cried out aloud.

“My dear Miss Flora, you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs,” said I; “and it is no bagatelle to escape from Edinburgh Castle. One of us, I think, was even killed.”

“And you are as white as a rag, too,” she exclaimed, “and can hardly stand! Here is my shawl, sit down upon it here in the corner, and I will beat your eggs. See, I have brought a fork, too; I should have been a good person to take care of Jacobites or Covenanters in old days! You shall have more to eat this evening; Ronald is to bring it you from town. We have money enough, although no food that we can call our own. Ah, if Ronald and I kept house you should not be lying in this shed! He admires you so much.”

“My dear friend,” said I, “for God’s sake do not embarrass me with more alms. I loved to receive them from that hand, so long as they were needed; but they are so no more, and whatever else I may lack – and I lack everything – it is not money.” I pulled out my sheaf of notes and detached the top one: it was written for ten pounds, and signed by that very famous individual, Abraham Newlands. “Oblige me, as you would like me to oblige your brother if the parts were reversed, and take this note for the expenses. I shall need not only food, but clothes.”

“Lay it on the ground,” said she. “I must not stop my beating.”

“You are not offended?” I exclaimed.

She answered me by a look that was a reward in itself, and seemed to imply the most heavenly offers for the future. There was in it a shadow of reproach, and such warmth of communicative cordiality as left me speechless. I watched her instead till her hens’ milk was ready.

“Now,” said she, “taste that.”

I did so, and swore it was nectar. She collected her eggs and crouched in front of me to watch me eat. There was about this tall young lady at the moment an air of motherliness delicious to behold. I am like the English general, and to this day I still wonder at my moderation.

“What sort of clothes will you be wanting?” said she.

“The clothes of a gentleman,” said I. “Right or wrong, I think it is the part I am best qualified to play. Mr. St. Ives (for that’s to be my name upon the journey) I conceive as rather a theatrical figure, and his make-up should be to match.”

“And yet there is a difficulty,” said she. “If you got coarse clothes the fit would hardly matter. But the clothes of a fine gentleman – O, it is absolutely necessary that these should fit! And above all, with your” – she paused a moment – “to our ideas somewhat noticeable manners.”

“Alas for my poor manners!” said I. “But, my dear friend Flora, these little noticeabilities are just what mankind has to suffer under. Yourself, you see, you’re very noticeable even when you come in a crowd to visit poor prisoners in the Castle.”

I was afraid I should frighten my good angel visitant away, and without the smallest breath of pause went on to add a few directions as to stuffs and colours.

She opened big eyes upon me. “O, Mr. St. Ives!” she cried – “if that is to be your name – I do not say they would not be becoming; but for a journey, do you think they would be wise? I am afraid” – she gave a pretty break of laughter – “I am afraid they would be daft-like!”

“Well, and am I not daft?” I asked her.

“I do begin to think you are,” said she.

“There it is, then!” said I. “I have been long enough a figure of fun. Can you not feel with me that perhaps the bitterest thing in this captivity has been the clothes? Make me a captive – bind me with chains if you like – but let me be still myself. You do not know what it is to be a walking travesty – among foes,” I added bitterly.

“O, but you are too unjust!” she cried. “You speak as though any one ever dreamed of laughing at you. But no one did. We were all pained to the heart. Even my aunt – though sometimes I do think she was not quite in good taste – you should have seen her and heard her at home! She took so much interest. Every patch in your clothes made us sorry; it should have been a sister’s work.”

“That is what I never had – a sister,” said I. “But since you say that I did not make you laugh – ”

“O, Mr. St. Ives! never!” she exclaimed. “Not for one moment. It was all too sad. To see a gentleman – ”

“In the clothes of a harlequin, and begging?” I suggested.

“To see a gentleman in distress, and nobly supporting it,” she said.

“And do you not understand, my fair foe,” said I, “that even if all were as you say – even if you had thought my travesty were becoming – I should be only the more anxious for my sake, for my country’s sake, and for the sake of your kindness, that you should see him whom you have helped as God meant him to be seen? that you should have something to remember him by at least more characteristic than a misfitting sulphur-yellow suit, and half a week’s beard?”

“You think a great deal too much of clothes,” she said. “I am not that kind of girl.”

“And I am afraid I am that kind of a man,” said I. “But do not think of me too harshly for that. I talked just now of something to remember by. I have many of them myself, of these beautiful reminders, of these keepsakes, that I cannot be parted from until I lose memory and life. Many of them are great things, many of them are high virtues – charity, mercy, faith. But some of them are trivial enough. Miss Flora, do you remember the day that I first saw you, the day of the strong east wind? Miss Flora, shall I tell you what you wore?”

We had both risen to our feet, and she had her hand already on the door to go. Perhaps this attitude emboldened me to profit by the last seconds of our interview; and it certainly rendered her escape the more easy.

“O, you are too romantic!” she said, laughing; and with that my sun was blown out, my enchantress had fled away, and I was again left alone in the twilight with the lady hens.

CHAPTER IX

THREE IS COMPANY, AND FOUR NONE

The rest of the day I slept in the corner of the hen-house upon Flora's shawl. Nor did I awake until a light shone suddenly in my eyes, and starting up with a gasp (for, indeed, at the moment I dreamed I was still swinging from the Castle battlements) I found Ronald bending over me with a lantern. It appeared it was past midnight, that I had slept about sixteen hours, and that Flora had returned her poultry to the shed and I had heard her not. I could not but wonder if she had stooped to look at me as I slept. The puritan hens now slept irremediably; and being cheered with the promise of supper I wished them an ironical good-night, and was lighted across the garden and noiselessly admitted to a bedroom on the ground-floor of the cottage. There I found soap, water, razors – offered me diffidently by my beardless host – and an outfit of new clothes. To be shaved again without depending on the barber of the gaol was a source of a delicious, if a childish joy. My hair was sadly too long, but I was none so unwise as to make an attempt on it myself. And, indeed, I thought it did not wholly misbecome me as it was, being by nature curly. The clothes were about as good as I expected. The waistcoat was of toilenet, a pretty piece, the trousers of fine kerseymere, and the coat sat extraordinarily well. Altogether, when I beheld this changeling in the glass, I kissed my hand to him.

“My dear fellow,” said I, “have you no scent?”

“Good God, no!” cried Ronald. “What do you want with scent?”

“Capital thing on a campaign,” said I. “But I can do without.”

I was now led, with the same precautions against noise, into the little bow-windowed dining-room of the cottage. The shutters were up, the lamp guiltily turned low; the beautiful Flora greeted me in a whisper; and when I was set down to table, the pair proceeded to help me with precautions that might have seemed excessive in the Ear of Dionysius.

“She sleeps up there,” observed the boy, pointing to the ceiling; and the knowledge that I was so imminently near to the resting-place of that gold eye-glass touched even myself with some uneasiness.

Our excellent youth had imported from the city a meat-pie, and I was glad to find it flanked with a decanter of really admirable wine of Oporto. While I ate, Ronald entertained me with the news of the city, which had naturally rung all day with our escape: troops and mounted messengers had followed each other forth at all hours and in all directions; but according to the last intelligence no recapture had been made. Opinion in town was very favourable to us; our courage was applauded, and many professed regret that our ultimate chance of escape should be so small. The man who had fallen was one Sombref, a peasant; he was one who slept in a different part of the Castle; and I was thus assured that the whole of my former companions had attained their liberty, and Shed B was untenanted.

From this we wandered insensibly into other topics. It is impossible to exaggerate the pleasure I took to be thus sitting at the same table with Flora, in the clothes of a gentleman, at liberty and in the full possession of my spirits and resources; of all of which I had need, because it was necessary that I should support at the same time two opposite characters, and at once play the cavalier and lively soldier for the eyes of Ronald, and to the ears of Flora maintain the same profound and sentimental note that I had already sounded. Certainly there are days when all goes well with a man; when his wit, his digestion, his mistress are in a conspiracy to spoil him, and even the weather smiles upon his wishes. I will only say of myself upon that evening that I surpassed my expectations, and was privileged to delight my hosts. Little by little they forgot their terrors and I my caution; until at last we were brought back to earth by a catastrophe that might very easily have been foreseen, but was not the less astonishing to us when it occurred.

I had filled all the glasses. “I have a toast to propose,” I whispered, “or rather three, but all so inextricably interwoven that they will not bear dividing. I wish first to drink to the health of a brave and therefore a generous enemy. He found me disarmed, a fugitive and helpless. Like the lion, he disdained so poor a triumph; and when he might have vindicated an easy valour, he preferred to make a friend. I wish that we should next drink to a fairer and a more tender foe. She found me in prison; she cheered me with a priceless sympathy; and what she has done since, I know she has done in mercy, and I only pray – I dare scarce hope – her mercy may prove to have been merciful. And I wish to conjoin with these, for the first, and perhaps the last time, the health – and I fear I may already say the memory – of one who has fought, not always without success, against the soldiers of your nation; but who came here, vanquished already, only to be vanquished again by the loyal hand of the one, by the unforgettable eyes of the other.”

It is to be feared I may have lent at times a certain resonancy to my voice; it is to be feared that Ronald, who was none the better for his own hospitality, may have set down his glass with something of a clang. Whatever may have been the cause, at least, I had scarce finished my compliment before we were aware of a thump upon the ceiling overhead. It was to be thought some very solid body had descended to the floor from the level (possibly) of a bed. I have never seen consternation painted in more lively colours than on the faces of my hosts. It was proposed to smuggle me forth into the garden, or to conceal my form under a horsehair sofa which stood against the wall. For the first expedient, as was now plain by the approaching footsteps, there was no longer time; from the second I recoiled with indignation.

“My dear creatures,” said I, “let us die, but do not let us be ridiculous.”

The words were still upon my lips when the door opened and my friend of the gold eye-glass appeared, a memorable figure, on the threshold. In one hand she bore a bedroom-candlestick; in the other, with the steadiness of a dragoon, a horse-pistol. She was wound about in shawls which did not wholly conceal the candid fabric of her nightdress, and surmounted by a nightcap of portentous architecture. Thus accoutred, she made her entrance; laid down the candle and pistol, as no longer called for; looked about the room with a silence more eloquent than oaths; and then, in a thrilling voice – “To whom have I the pleasure?” she said, addressing me with a ghost of a bow.

“Madam, I am charmed, I am sure,” said I. “The story is a little long; and our meeting, however welcome, was for the moment entirely unexpected by myself. I am sure – ” but here I found I was quite sure of nothing, and tried again. “I have the honour,” I began, and found I had the honour to be only exceedingly confused. With that, I threw myself outright upon her mercy. “Madam, I must be more frank with you,” I resumed. “You have already proved your charity and compassion for the French prisoners: I am one of these; and if my appearance be not too much changed, you may even yet recognise in me that *Oddity* who had the good fortune more than once to make you smile.”

Still gazing upon me through her glass, she uttered an uncompromising grunt; and then, turning to her niece – “Flora,” said she, “how comes he here?”

The culprits poured out for a while an antiphony of explanations, which died out at last in a miserable silence.

“I think at least you might have told your aunt,” she snorted.

“Madam,” I interposed, “they were about to do so. It is my fault if it be not done already. But I made it my prayer that your slumbers might be respected, and this necessary formula of my presentation should be delayed until to-morrow in the morning.”

The old lady regarded me with undissembled incredulity, to which I was able to find no better repartee than a profound and I trust graceful reverence.

“French prisoners are very well in their place,” she said, “but I cannot see that their place is in my private dining-room.”

“Madam,” said I, “I hope it may be said without offence, but (except the Castle of Edinburgh) I cannot think upon the spot from which I would so readily be absent.”

At this, to my relief, I thought I could perceive a vestige of a smile to steal upon that iron countenance and to be bitten immediately in.

“And if it is a fair question, what do they call ye?” she asked.

“At your service, the Vicomte Anne de Saint-Yves,” said I.

“Moshia the Viscount,” said she, “I am afraid you do us plain people a great deal too much honour.”

“My dear lady,” said I, “let us be serious for a moment. What was I to do? Where was I to go? And how can you be angry with these benevolent children who took pity on one so unfortunate as myself? Your humble servant is no such terrific adventurer that you should come out against him with horse-pistol and” – smiling – “bedroom-candlesticks. It is but a young gentleman in extreme distress, hunted upon every side, and asking no more than to escape from his pursuers. I know your character, I read it in your face” – the heart trembled in my body as I said these daring words. “There are unhappy English prisoners in France at this day, perhaps at this hour. Perhaps at this hour they kneel as I do; they take the hand of her that might conceal and assist them; they press it to their lips as I do – ”

“Here, here!” cried the old lady, breaking from my solicitations. “Behave yourself before folk! Saw ever any one the match of that? And on earth, my dears, what are we to do with him?”

“Pack him off, my dear lady,” said I: “pack off the impudent fellow double-quick! And if it may be, and if your good heart allows it, help him a little on the way he has to go.”

“What’s this pie?” she cried stridently. “Where is this pie from, Flora?”

No answer was vouchsafed by my unfortunate and (I may say) extinct accomplices.

“Is that my port?” she pursued. “Hough! Will somebody give me a glass of my port wine?”

I made haste to serve her.

She looked at me over the rim with an extraordinary expression. “I hope ye liked it?” said she.

“It is even a magnificent wine,” said I.

“Awell, it was my father laid it down,” said she. “There were few knew more about port wine than my father, God rest him!” She settled herself in a chair with an alarming air of resolution. “And so there is some particular direction that you wish to go in?” said she.

“O,” said I, following her example, “I am by no means such a vagrant as you suppose. I have good friends, if I could get to them, for which all I want is to be once clear of Scotland; and I have money for the road.” And I produced my bundle.

“English bank-notes?” she said. “That’s not very handy for Scotland. It’s been some fool of an Englishman that’s given you these, I’m thinking. How much is it?”

“I declare to Heaven I never thought to count!” I exclaimed. “But that is soon remedied.”

And I counted out ten notes of ten pound each, all in the name of Abraham Newlands, and five bills of country bankers for as many guineas.

“One hundred and twenty-six pound five,” cried the old lady. “And you carry such a sum about you, and have not so much as counted it! If you are not a thief, you must allow you are very thief-like.”

“And yet, madam, the money is legitimately mine,” said I.

She took one of the bills and held it up. “Is there any probability, now, that this could be traced?” she asked.

“None, I should suppose; and if it were, it would be no matter,” said I. “With your usual penetration, you guessed right. An Englishman brought it me. It reached me through the hands of his English solicitor, from my great-uncle, the Comte de Kérroual de Saint-Yves, I believe the richest *émigré* in London.”

“I can do no more than take your word for it,” said she.

“And I trust, madam, not less,” said I.

“Well,” said she, “at this rate the matter may be feasible. I will cash one of these five-guinea bills, less the exchange, and give you silver and Scots notes to bear you as far as the border. Beyond that, Moshia the Viscount, you will have to depend upon yourself.”

I could not but express a civil hesitation as to whether the amount would suffice, in my case, for so long a journey.

“Ay,” said she, “but you havena heard me out. For if you are not too fine a gentleman to travel with a pair of drovers, I believe I have found the very thing, and the Lord forgive me for a treasonable old wife! There are a couple stopping up-by with the shepherd-man at the farm; to-morrow they will take the road for England, probably by skreigh of day – and in my opinion you had best be travelling with the stots,” said she.

“For Heaven’s sake do not suppose me to be so effeminate a character!” I cried. “An old soldier of Napoleon is certainly beyond suspicion. But, dear lady, to what end? and how is the society of these excellent gentlemen supposed to help me?”

“My dear sir,” said she, “you do not at all understand your own predicament, and must just leave your matters in the hands of those who do. I dare say you have never even heard tell of the drove-roads or the drovers; and I am certainly not going to sit up all night to explain it to you. Suffice it, that it is me who is arranging this affair – the more shame to me! – and that is the way ye have to go. Ronald,” she continued, “away up-by to the shepherds; rowst them out of their beds, and make it perfectly distinct that Sim is not to leave till he has seen *me*.”

Ronald was nothing loth to escape from his aunt’s neighbourhood, and left the room and the cottage with a silent expedition that was more like flight than mere obedience. Meanwhile the old lady turned to her niece.

“And I would like to know what we are to do with him the night!” she cried.

“Ronald and I meant to put him in the hen-house,” said the encrimsoned Flora.

“And I can tell you he is to go to no such a place,” replied the aunt. “Hen-house indeed! If a guest he is to be, he shall sleep in no mortal hen-house. Your room is the most fit, I think, if he will consent to occupy it on so great a suddenty. And as for you, Flora, you shall sleep with me.”

I could not help admiring the prudence and tact of this old dowager, and of course it was not for me to make objections. Ere I well knew how, I was alone with a flat candlestick, which is not the most sympathetic of companions, and stood studying the snuff in a frame of mind between triumph and chagrin. All had gone well with my flight; the masterful lady who had arrogated to herself the arrangement of the details gave me every confidence; and I saw myself already arriving at my uncle’s door. But, alas! it was another story with my love-affair. I had seen and spoken with her alone; I had ventured boldly; I had been not ill received; I had seen her change colour, had enjoyed the undissembled kindness of her eyes; and now, in a moment, down comes upon the scene that apocalyptic figure with the nightcap and the horse-pistol, and with the very wind of her coming behold me separated from my love! Gratitude and admiration contended in my breast with the extreme of natural rancour. My appearance in her house at past midnight had an air (I could not disguise it from myself) that was insolent and underhand, and could not but minister to the worst suspicions. And the old lady had taken it well. Her generosity was no more to be called in question than her courage, and I was afraid that her intelligence would be found to match. Certainly, Miss Flora had to support some shrewd looks, and certainly she had been troubled. I could see but the one way before me; to profit by an excellent bed, to try to sleep soon, to be stirring early, and to hope for some renewed occasion in the morning. To have said so much and yet to say no more, to go out into the world upon so half-hearted a parting, was more than I could accept.

It is my belief that the benevolent fiend sat up all night to balk me. She was at my bedside with a candle long ere day, roused me, laid out for me a damnable misfit of clothes, and bade me pack my own (which were wholly unsuited to the journey) in a bundle. Sore grudging, I arrayed myself in a suit of some country fabric, as delicate as sackcloth and about as becoming as a shroud; and, on coming forth, found the dragon had prepared for me a hearty breakfast. She took the head of the table, poured out the tea, and entertained me as I ate with a great deal of good sense and a conspicuous lack of charm. How often did I not regret the change! – how often compare her, and condemn her in

the comparison, with her charming niece! But if my entertainer was not beautiful, she had certainly been busy in my interest. Already she was in communication with my destined fellow-travellers; and the device on which she had struck appeared entirely suitable. I was a young Englishman who had outrun the constable; warrants were out against me in Scotland, and it had become needful I should pass the border without loss of time, and privately.

“I have given a very good account of you,” said she, “which I hope you may justify. I told them there was nothing against you beyond the fact that you were put to the horn (if that is the right word) for debt.”

“I pray God you have the expression incorrectly, ma’am,” said I. “I do not give myself out for a person easily alarmed; but you must admit there is something barbarous and mediæval in the sound well qualified to startle a poor foreigner.”

“It is the name of a process in Scots Law, and need alarm no honest man,” said she. “But you are a very idle-minded young gentleman; you must still have your joke, I see: I only hope you will have no cause to regret it.”

“I pray you not to suppose, because I speak lightly, that I do not feel deeply,” said I. “Your kindness has quite conquered me; I lay myself at your disposition, I beg you to believe, with real tenderness; I pray you to consider me from henceforth as the most devoted of your friends.”

“Well, well,” she said, “here comes your devoted friend the drover. I’m thinking he will be eager for the road; and I will not be easy myself till I see you well off the premises, and the dishes washed, before my servant-woman wakes. Praise God, we have gotten one that is a treasure at the sleeping!”

The morning was already beginning to be blue in the trees of the garden, and to put to shame the candle by which I had breakfasted. The lady rose from table, and I had no choice but to follow her example. All the time I was beating my brains for any means by which I should be able to get a word apart with Flora, or find the time to write her a billet. The windows had been opened while I breakfasted, I suppose to ventilate the room from any traces of my passage there; and, Master Ronald appearing on the front lawn, my ogre leaned forth to address him.

“Ronald,” she said, “wasn’t that Sim that went by the wall?”

I snatched my advantage. Right at her back there was pen, ink, and paper laid out. I wrote: “I love you”; and before I had time to write more, or so much as to blot what I had written, I was again under the guns of the gold eye-glasses.

“It’s time,” she began; and then, as she observed my occupation, “Umph!” she broke off. “Ye have something to write?” she demanded.

“Some notes, madam,” said I, bowing with alacrity.

“Notes,” she said; “or a note?”

“There is doubtless some *finesse* of the English language that I do not comprehend,” said I.

“I’ll contrive, however, to make my meaning very plain to ye, Mosha le Viscount,” she continued. “I suppose you desire to be considered a gentleman?”

“Can you doubt it, madam?” said I.

“I doubt very much, at least, whether you go the right way about it,” she said. “You have come here to me, I cannot very well say how; I think you will admit you owe me some thanks, if it was only for the breakfast I made ye. But what are you to me? A waif young man, not so far to seek for looks and manners, with some English notes in your pocket and a price upon your head. I am a lady; I have been your hostess, with however little will; and I desire that this random acquaintance of yours with my family will cease and determine.”

I believe I must have coloured. “Madam,” said I, “the notes are of no importance; and your least pleasure ought certainly to be my law. You have felt, and you have been pleased to express, a doubt of me. I tear them up.” Which you may be sure I did thoroughly.

“There’s a good lad!” said the dragon, and immediately led the way to the front lawn.

The brother and sister were both waiting us here, and, as well as I could make out in the imperfect light, bore every appearance of having passed through a rather cruel experience. Ronald seemed ashamed to so much as catch my eye in the presence of his aunt, and was the picture of embarrassment. As for Flora, she had scarce the time to cast me one look before the dragon took her by the arm, and began to march across the garden in the extreme first glimmer of the dawn without exchanging speech. Ronald and I followed in equal silence.

There was a door in that same high wall on the top of which I had sat perched no longer gone than yesterday morning. This the old lady set open with a key; and on the other side we were aware of a rough-looking, thick-set man, leaning with his arms (through which was passed a formidable staff) on a dry-stone dyke. Him the old lady immediately addressed.

“Sim,” said she, “this is the young gentleman.”

Sim replied with an inarticulate grumble of sound, and a movement of one arm and his head, which did duty for a salutation.

“Now, Mr. St. Ives,” said the old lady, “it’s high time for you to be taking the road. But first of all let me give the change of your five-guinea bill. Here are four pounds of it in British Linen notes, and the balance in small silver, less sixpence. Some charge a shilling, I believe, but I have given you the benefit of the doubt. See and guide it with all the sense that you possess.”

“And here, Mr. St. Ives,” said Flora, speaking for the first time, “is a plaid which you will find quite necessary on so rough a journey. I hope you will take it from the hands of a Scots friend,” she added, and her voice trembled.

“Genuine holly: I cut it myself,” said Ronald, and gave me as good a cudgel as a man could wish for in a row.

The formality of these gifts, and the waiting figure of the drover, told me loudly that I must be gone. I dropped on one knee and bade farewell to the aunt, kissing her hand. I did the like – but with how different a passion! – to her niece; as for the boy, I took him to my arms and embraced him with a cordiality that seemed to strike him speechless. “Farewell!” and “Farewell!” I said. “I shall never forget my friends. Keep me sometimes in memory. Farewell!” With that I turned my back and began to walk away; and had scarce done so, when I heard the door in the high wall close behind me. Of course this was the aunt’s doing; and of course, if I know anything of human character, she would not let me go without some tart expressions. I declare, even if I had heard them, I should not have minded in the least, for I was quite persuaded that, whatever admirers I might be leaving behind me in Swanston Cottage, the aunt was not the least sincere.

CHAPTER X

THE DROVERS

It took me a little effort to come abreast of my new companion; for though he walked with an ugly roll and no great appearance of speed, he could cover the ground at a good rate when he wanted to. Each looked at the other: I with natural curiosity, he with a great appearance of distaste. I have heard since that his heart was entirely set against me; he had seen me kneel to the ladies, and diagnosed me for a “gesterin’ eediot.”

“So, ye’re for England, are ye?” said he.

I told him yes.

“Weel, there’s waur places, I believe,” was his reply; and he relapsed into a silence which was not broken during a quarter of an hour of steady walking.

This interval brought us to the foot of a bare green valley, which wound upwards and backwards among the hills. A little stream came down the midst and made a succession of clear pools, near by the lowest of which I was aware of a drove of shaggy cattle, and a man who seemed the very counterpart of Mr. Sim making a breakfast upon bread and cheese. This second drover (whose name proved to be Candlish) rose on our approach.

“Here’s a mannie that’s to gang through with us,” said Sim. “It was the auld wife Gilchrist wanted it.”

“Aweel, aweel,” said the other; and presently, remembering his manners, and looking on me with a solemn grin, “A fine day!” says he.

I agreed with him, and asked him how he did.

“Brawly,” was the reply; and without further civilities, the pair proceeded to get the cattle under way. This, as well as almost all the herding, was the work of a pair of comely and intelligent dogs, directed by Sim or Candlish in little more than monosyllables. Presently we were ascending the side of the mountain by a rude green track, whose presence I had not hitherto observed. A continual sound of munching and the crying of a great quantity of moor birds accompanied our progress, which the deliberate pace and perennial appetite of the cattle rendered wearisomely slow. In the midst my two conductors marched in a contented silence that I could not but admire. The more I looked at them, the more I was impressed by their absurd resemblance to each other. They were dressed in the same coarse home-spun, carried similar sticks, were equally begrimed about the nose with snuff, and each wound in an identical plaid of what is called the shepherd’s tartan. In a back view they might be described as indistinguishable; and even from the front they were much alike. An incredible coincidence of humours augmented the impression. Thrice and four times I attempted to pave the way for some exchange of thought, sentiment, or – at the least of it – human words. An *Ay* or a *Nhm* was the sole return, and the topic died on the hillside without echo. I can never deny that I was chagrined; and when, after a little more walking, Sim turned towards me and offered me a ram’s horn of snuff, with the question, “Do ye use it?” I answered, with some animation, “Faith, sir, I would use pepper to introduce a little cordiality.” But even this sally failed to reach, or at least failed to soften, my companions.

At this rate we came to the summit of a ridge, and saw the track descend in front of us abruptly into a desert vale, about a league in length, and closed at the farther end by no less barren hill-tops. Upon this point of vantage Sim came to a halt, took off his hat, and mopped his brow.

“Weel,” he said, “here we’re at the top o’ Howden.”

“The top o’ Howden, sure eneuch,” said Candlish.

“Mr. St. Ivy, are ye dry?” said the first.

“Now, really,” said I, “is not this Satan reproving sin?”

“What ails ye, man?” said he. “I’m offerin’ ye a dram.”

“O, if it be anything to drink,” said I, “I am as dry as my neighbours.”

Whereupon Sim produced from the corner of his plaid a black bottle, and we all drank and pledged each other. I found these gentlemen followed upon such occasions an invariable etiquette, which you may be certain I made haste to imitate. Each wiped his mouth with the back of his left hand, held up the bottle in his right, remarked with emphasis, “Here’s to ye!” and swallowed as much of the spirit as his fancy prompted. This little ceremony, which was the nearest thing to manners I could perceive in either of my companions, was repeated at becoming intervals, generally after an ascent. Occasionally we shared a mouthful of ewe-milk cheese and an inglorious form of bread, which I understood (but am far from engaging my honour on the point) to be called “shearer’s bannock.” And that may be said to have concluded our whole active intercourse for the first day.

I had the more occasion to remark the extraordinarily desolate nature of that country, through which the drove-road continued, hour after hour, and even day after day, to wind. A continual succession of insignificant shaggy hills, divided by the course of ten thousand brooks, through which we had to wade, or by the side of which we encamped at night; infinite perspectives of heather; infinite quantities of moorfowl; here and there, by a stream-side, small and pretty clumps of willows or the silver birch; here and there, the ruins of ancient and inconsiderable fortresses – made the unchanging characters of the scene. Occasionally, but only in the distance, we could perceive the smoke of a small town or of an isolated farmhouse or cottage on the moors; more often, a flock of sheep and its attendant shepherd, or a rude field of agriculture perhaps not yet harvested. With these alleviations, we might almost be said to pass through an unbroken desert – sure, one of the most impoverished in Europe; and when I recalled to mind that we were yet but a few leagues from the chief city (where the law-courts sat every day with a press of business, soldiers garrisoned the Castle, and men of admitted parts were carrying on the practice of letters and the investigations of science), it gave me a singular view of that poor, barren, and yet illustrious country through which I travelled. Still more, perhaps, did it commend the wisdom of Miss Gilchrist in sending me with these uncouth companions and by this unfrequented path.

My itinerary is by no means clear to me; the names and distances I never clearly knew, and have now wholly forgotten; and this is the more to be regretted as there is no doubt that, in the course of those days, I must have passed and camped among sites which have been rendered illustrious by the pen of Walter Scott. Nay, more, I am of opinion that I was still more favoured by fortune, and have actually met and spoken with that inimitable author. Our encounter was of a tall, stoutish, elderly gentleman, a little grizzled, and of a rugged but cheerful and engaging countenance. He sat on a hill pony, wrapped in a plaid over his green coat, and was accompanied by a horsewoman, his daughter, a young lady of the most charming appearance. They overtook us on a stretch of heath, reined up as they came alongside, and accompanied us for perhaps a quarter of an hour before they galloped off again across the hillsides to our left. Great was my amazement to find the unconquerable Mr. Simthaw immediately on the accost of this strange gentleman, who hailed him with a ready familiarity, proceeded at once to discuss with him the trade of droving and the prices of cattle, and did not disdain to take a pinch from the inevitable ram’s horn. Presently I was aware that the stranger’s eye was directed on myself; and there ensued a conversation, some of which I could not help overhearing at the time, and the rest have pieced together more or less plausibly from the report of Sim.

“Surely that must be an *amateur drover* ye have gotten there?” the gentleman seems to have asked.

Sim replied I was a young gentleman that had a reason of his own to travel privately.

“Well, well, ye must tell me nothing of that. I am in the law, you know, and *tace* is the Latin for a candle,” answered the gentleman. “But I hope it’s nothing bad.”

Sim told him it was no more than debt.

“O Lord, if that be all!” cried the gentleman; and turning to myself, “Well, sir,” he added, “I understand you are taking a tramp through our forest here for the pleasure of the thing?”

“Why, yes, sir,” said I; “and I must say I am very well entertained.”

“I envy you,” said he. “I have jogged many miles of it myself when I was younger. My youth lies buried about here under every heather-bush, like the soul of the licentiate Lucius. But you should have a guide. The pleasure of this country is much in the legends, which grow as plentiful as blackberries.” And directing my attention to a little fragment of a broken wall no greater than a tombstone, he told me, for an example, a story of its earlier inhabitants. Years after it chanced that I was one day diverting myself with a Waverley Novel, when what should I come upon but the identical narrative of my green-coated gentleman upon the moors! In a moment the scene, the tones of his voice, his northern accent, and the very aspect of the earth and sky and temperature of the weather, flashed back into my mind with the reality of dreams. The unknown in the green coat had been the Great Unknown! I had met Scott; I had heard a story from his lips; I should have been able to write, to claim acquaintance, to tell him that his legend still tingled in my ears. But the discovery came too late, and the great man had already succumbed under the load of his honours and misfortunes.

Presently, after giving us a cigar apiece, Scott bade us farewell and disappeared with his daughter over the hills. And when I applied to Sim for information, his answer of “The Shirra, man! A’body kens the Shirra!” told me, unfortunately, nothing.

A more considerable adventure falls to be related. We were now near the border. We had travelled for long upon the track beaten and browsed by a million herds, our predecessors, and had seen no vestige of that traffic which had created it. It was early in the morning when we at last perceived, drawing near to the drove-road, but still at a distance of about half a league, a second caravan, similar to but larger than our own. The liveliest excitement was at once exhibited by both my comrades. They climbed hillocks, they studied the approaching drove from under their hand, they consulted each other with an appearance of alarm that seemed to me extraordinary. I had learned by this time that their stand-off manners implied, at least, no active enmity; and I made bold to ask them what was wrong.

“Bad yins,” was Sim’s emphatic answer.

All day the dogs were kept unsparingly on the alert, and the drove pushed forward at a very unusual and seemingly unwelcome speed. All day Sim and Candlish, with a more than ordinary expenditure both of snuff and of words, continued to debate the position. It seems that they had recognised two of our neighbours on the road – one Faa, and another by the name of Gillies. Whether there was an old feud between them still unsettled I could never learn; but Sim and Candlish were prepared for every degree of fraud or violence at their hands. Candlish repeatedly congratulated himself on having left “the watch at home with the mistress”; and Sim perpetually brandished his cudgel, and cursed his ill-fortune that it should be sprung.

“I wilna care a damn to gie the daashed scoon’rel a fair clout wi’ it,” he said. “The daashed thing micht come sindry in ma hand.”

“Well, gentlemen,” said I, “suppose they do come on, I think we can give a very good account of them.” And I made my piece of holly, Ronald’s gift, the value of which I now appreciated, sing about my head.

“Ay, man? Are ye stench?” inquired Sim, with a gleam of approval in his wooden countenance.

The same evening, somewhat wearied with our day-long expedition, we encamped on a little verdant mound, from the midst of which there welled a spring of clear water scarce great enough to wash the hands in. We had made our meal and lain down, but were not yet asleep, when a growl from one of the collies set us on the alert. All three sat up, and on a second impulse all lay down again, but now with our cudgels ready. A man must be an alien and an outlaw, an old soldier and a young man in the bargain, to take adventure easily. With no idea as to the rights of the quarrel or the probable consequences of the encounter, I was as ready to take part with my two drovers as ever to

fall in line on the morning of a battle. Presently there leaped three men out of the heather; we had scarce time to get to our feet before we were assailed; and in a moment each one of us was engaged with an adversary whom the deepening twilight scarce permitted him to see. How the battle sped in other quarters I am in no position to describe. The rogue that fell to my share was exceedingly agile and expert with his weapon; had and held me at a disadvantage from the first assault; forced me to give ground continually, and at last, in mere self-defence, to let him have the point. It struck him in the throat, and he went down like a nine-pin and moved no more.

It seemed this was the signal for the engagement to be discontinued. The other combatants separated at once; our foes were suffered, without molestation, to lift up and bear away their fallen comrade; so that I perceived this sort of war to be not wholly without laws of chivalry, and perhaps rather to partake of the character of a tournament than of a battle *à outrance*. There was no doubt, at least, that I was supposed to have pushed the affair too seriously. Our friends the enemy removed their wounded companion with undisguised consternation; and they were no sooner over the top of the brae than Sim and Candlish roused up their wearied drove and set forth on a night march.

“I’m thinking Faa’s unco bad,” said the one.

“Ay,” said the other, “he lookit dooms gash.”

“He did that,” said the first.

And their weary silence fell upon them again.

Presently Sim turned to me. “Ye’re unco ready with the stick,” said he.

“Too ready, I’m afraid,” said I. “I am afraid Mr. Faa (if that be his name) has got his gruel.”

“Weel, I wouldna wonder,” replied Sim.

“And what is likely to happen?” I inquired.

“Aweel,” said Sim, snuffing profoundly, “if I were to offer an opeenion, it would not be conscientious. For the plain fac’ is, Mr. St. Ivy, that I div not ken. We have had crackit heids – and rowth of them – ere now; and we have had a broken leg, or maybe twa; and the like of that we drover bodies make a kind of a practice like to keep among oursel’s. But a corp we have none of us ever had to deal with, and I could set na leemit to what Gillies micht consider proper in the affair. Forbye that, he would be in raither a hobble himsel’ if he was to gang hame wantin’ Faa. Folk are awfu’ throng with their questions, and parteicularly when they’re no’ wantit.”

“That’s a fac’,” said Candlish.

I considered this prospect ruefully; and then making the best of it, “Upon all which accounts,” said I, “the best will be to get across the Border and there separate. If you are troubled, you can very truly put the blame upon your late companion; and if I am pursued, I must just try to keep out of the way.”

“Mr. St. Ivy,” said Sim, with something resembling enthusiasm, “no’ a word mair! I have met in wi’ mony kinds o’ gentry ere now; I hae seen o’ them that was the tae thing, and I hae seen o’ them that was the tither; but the wale of a gentleman like you I have no’ sae very frequently seen the bate of.”

Our night march was accordingly pursued with unremitting diligence. The stars paled, the east whitened, and we were still, both dogs and men, toiling after the wearied cattle. Again and again Sim and Candlish lamented the necessity: it was “fair ruin on the bestial,” they declared; but the thought of a judge and a scaffold hunted them ever forward. I myself was not so much to be pitied. All that night, and during the whole of the little that remained before us of our conjunct journey, I enjoyed a new pleasure, the reward of my prowess, in the now loosened tongue of Mr. Sim. Candlish was still obdurately taciturn: it was the man’s nature; but Sim, having finally appraised and approved me, displayed without reticence a rather garrulous habit of mind and a pretty talent for narration. The pair were old and close companions, co-existing in these endless moors in a brotherhood of silence such as I have heard attributed to the trappers of the West. It seems absurd to mention love in connection with so ugly and snuffy a couple; at least, their trust was absolute; and they entertained a surprising admiration for each other’s qualities; Candlish exclaiming that Sim was “grand company!”

and Sim frequently assuring me in an aside that for “a rale auld stench bitch there was na the bate of Candlish in braid Scotland.” The two dogs appeared to be entirely included in this family compact, and I remarked that their exploits and traits of character were constantly and minutely observed by the two masters. Dog-stories particularly abounded with them; and not only the dogs of the present but those of the past contributed their quota. “But that was naething,” Sim would begin: “there was a herd in Manar, they ca’d him Tweedie – ye’ll mind Tweedie, Can’lish?” “Fine, that!” said Candlish. “Aweel, Tweedie had a dog – ” The story I have forgotten; I dare say it was dull, and I suspect it was not true; but indeed my travels with the drovers had rendered me indulgent, and perhaps even credulous, in the matter of dog-stories. Beautiful, indefatigable beings! as I saw them at the end of a long day’s journey frisking, barking, bounding, striking attitudes, slanting a bushy tail, manifestly playing to the spectator’s eye, manifestly rejoicing in their grace and beauty – and turned to observe Sim and Candlish unornamentally plodding in the rear with the plaids about their bowed shoulders and the drop at their snuffy nose – I thought I would rather claim kinship with the dogs than with the men! My sympathy was unreturned; in their eyes I was a creature light as air; and they would scarce spare me the time for a perfunctory caress or perhaps a hasty lap of the wet tongue, ere they were back again in sedulous attendance on those dingy deities, their masters – and their masters, as like as not, damning their stupidity.

Altogether the last hours of our tramp were infinitely the most agreeable to me, and I believe to all of us; and by the time we came to separate there had grown up a certain familiarity and mutual esteem that made the parting harder. It took place about four of the afternoon on a bare hillside from which I could see the ribbon of the great north road, henceforth to be my conductor. I asked what was to pay.

“Naething,” replied Sim.

“What in the name of folly is this?” I exclaimed. “You have led me, you have fed me, you have filled me full of whisky, and now you will take nothing!”

“Ye see we indentit for that,” replied Sim.

“Indented?” I repeated; “what does the man mean?”

“Mr. St. Ivy,” said Sim, “this is a maitter entirely between Candlish and me and the auld wife Gilchrist. You had naething to say to it; weel, ye can have naething to do with it, then.”

“My good man,” said I, “I can allow myself to be placed in no such ridiculous position. Mrs. Gilchrist is nothing to me, and I refuse to be her debtor.”

“I dinna exac’ly see what way ye’re gaun to help it,” observed my drover.

“By paying you here and now,” said I.

“There’s aye twa to a bargain, Mr. St. Ivy,” said he.

“You mean that you will not take it?” said I.

“There or thereabout,” said he. “Forbye that it would set ye a heap better to keep your siller for them you awe it to. Ye’re young, Mr. St. Ivy, and thoughtless; but it’s my belief that, wi’ care and circumspection, ye may yet do credit to yoursel’. But just you bear this in mind: that him that *awes* siller should never *gie* siller.”

Well, what was there to say? I accepted his rebuke, and, bidding the pair farewell, set off alone upon my southward way.

“Mr. St. Ivy,” was the last word of Sim, “I was never muckle ta’en up in Englishry; but I think that I really ought to say that ye seem to me to have the makings of quite a decent lad.”

CHAPTER XI

THE GREAT NORTH ROAD

It chanced that as I went down the hill these last words of my friend the drover echoed not unfruitfully in my head. I had never told these men the least particulars as to my race or fortune, as it was a part, and the best part, of their civility to ask no questions: yet they had dubbed me without hesitation English. Some strangeness in the accent they had doubtless thus explained. And it occurred to me, that if I could pass in Scotland for an Englishman, I might be able to reverse the process and pass in England for a Scot. I thought, if I was pushed to it, I could make a struggle to imitate the brogue; after my experience with Candlish and Sim, I had a rich provision of outlandish words at my command; and I felt I could tell the tale of Tweedie's dog so as to deceive a native. At the same time, I was afraid my name of St. Ives was scarcely suitable; till I remembered there was a town so called in the province of Cornwall, thought I might yet be glad to claim it for my place of origin, and decided for a Cornish family and a Scots education. For a trade, as I was equally ignorant of all, and as the most innocent might at any moment be the means of my exposure, it was best to pretend to none. And I dubbed myself a young gentleman of a sufficient fortune and an idle, curious habit of mind, rambling the country at my own charges, in quest of health, information, and merry adventures.

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