

Fenn George Manville

# Thereby Hangs a Tale. Volume One



**George Fenn**

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# **Fenn George Manville**

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### **A Peep at Tolcarne**

“Ed – Ward!”

“Yes, mum.”

A stiff, high-shouldered footman turned round as he reached the breakfast-room door.

“Are you sure Sir Hampton has been called?”

“Yes, mum.”

“And did Smith take up her ladyship’s hot water?”

“Yes, mum.”

“Are the young ladies coming down?”

“They went out for a walk nearly an hour ago, mum.”

“Dear me! and such a damp morning, too! Did they take their waterproofs?”

“Please, ’m, I didn’t see them go.”

“Look if they’re hanging in the hall, Edward.”

“Yes, mum.”

Edward walked stiffly out, closed the door, “made a face” at it, and returned at the end of a minute.

“Waterproofs hanging on the pegs, mum.”

“Dear, dear, dear, dear! Then of course they put on their goloshes! Go and see if they’re in the lobby, Edward.”

“Did see, mum,” said Edward, who was wise in his generation, and had learned the art of making his head save his heels – “goloshes is in the lobby.”

“Goloshes is in the plural, Edward, and should be *are*– mind that: goloshes are.”

“Yes, mum – galoshes are,” said Edward; “and the letter-bag *are* just come into the kitchen. Shall I fetch it?”

“*Is*, Edward, *is*. Now do, pray, be careful. Nothing is more annoying to visitors than to hear servants make grammatical mistakes.”

“Yes, mum,” said Edward.

“Is the heater very hot?”

“Yes, mum – white ’ot.”

“White *what*, Edward?”

“’Ot, mum! white ’ot!”

Miss Matilda Rea, a rather compressed, squeezey lady of forty-five, shuddered, and rearranged her black net mittens.

“Go and fetch the letter-bag, Ed-ward.”

The footman made the best of his way out, and Miss Matilda inspected the well-spread breakfast table through a large, square, gold-rimmed eyeglass; walked to the sideboard, upon which were sundry cold meats; and finished with a glance round the handsomely furnished room, ready to be down upon a speck of

dust. But the place was scrupulously well kept; even the great bay window, looking out upon sloping green lawn, flower beds, and clumps of evergreens, backed up by a wall of firs, was perfectly clean. So Miss Matilda preened her feathers, frowned, and waited the return of Edward with a locked wallet of leather, bearing the Rea crest – a peacock with expanded tail, the motto “*Floreat majestas*” – and, in large letters on the brass plate, the words, “Sir Hampton Rea, Tolcarne.”

“Place it beside Sir Hampton’s chair, Edward,” said Miss Matilda.

The wallet was duly deposited in the indicated place.

“Now bring in the urn, Edward.”

“Please, ’m, Sir Hampton said it was to come in at nine punctually, and it wants a quarter.”

“Then go and be quite ready to fill it, Edward,” said Miss Matilda, not daring to interfere with the Mede-like laws of the master of the house.

And Edward departed to finish his own breakfast, and confide to the cook his determination that if that old tabby was to be always worriting him to death, he would give warning.

Miss Matilda gave another look round, and then going to the end of the hearthrug, she very delicately lifted up the corner of a thick wool antimacassar, when a little, sharp, black nose peeped up, and a pair of full black eyes stared at her.

“A little darling!” said Miss Matilda, soothingly. “It was very ill, it was; and it should have some medicine to-day, it should.”

The little toy terrier pointed its nose at the ceiling, and uttered a wretched, attenuated howl, cut short by Miss Matilda, who popped the antimacassar down; for at that moment there was heard upon the stairs a sonorous “Er-rum! Er-rum!” – a reverberating, awe-inspiring sound, as of a mighty orator clearing his voice before sending verbal thunder through an opposing crowd. Then came steps across the marble hall, the door handle rattled very loudly, the door was thrown open very widely, and entered Sir Hampton Rea.

The sounds indicated bigness – grandeur; but Sir Hampton Rea was not a big man – saving his head, which was so large that it had sunk a little down between his shoulders, where it looked massive and shiny, being very bald and surrounded by a frizzle of grizzly hair.

Sir Hampton came in stiffly, for his buff vest was as starchy as his shirt front and sprigged cravat, which acted like a garrote, though its wearer suffered it, on account of its imposing aspect, and now walked with long strides to the fire, to which he turned his back, threw up his chin, and made his bald crown double in the glass.

“Matilda, have the goodness to close the door.”

“Yes, dear,” and the door was closed.

“Matilda, have the goodness to ring for the urn. Oh, it is here!”

In effect, hissing and steaming, the urn was brought in by Edward, and the tea-caddy placed upon the table.

“Edward!”

“Yes, Sir Hampton.”

“Tell Miss Smith to inform her ladyship that we are waiting breakfast.”

“Yes, Sir Hampton.”

The footman hurried out, and Sir Hampton took up yesterday's *Times*, which arrived so late on the day of issue that it was not perused by the good knight till breakfast-hour the next morning, his seat, Tolcarne, being three hundred and twenty miles from town, and some distance off the West Cornwall Railway.

Sir Hampton – tell it not in the far West – had made his money by tea; had been made alderman by his fellow-citizens, and made a knight by his sovereign, upon the occasion of a visit to the City, when the turtle provided was extra good, and pleased the royal palate.

While waiting the coming of her ladyship, Sir Hampton, a staunch Conservative, skimmed the cream of a tremendously Liberal leader, grew redder in the face, punched the paper in its Liberal wind to double it up, and then went on with it, shaking his head fiercely, as his sister smoothed her mittens and watched him furtively, till the door opened with a snatch, and a little round, plump body, very badly dressed, and, so to speak, walking beneath a ribbon and lace structure, which she bore upon her head as if it were something to sell, bobbed into the room.

Description of people is absolutely necessary on the first introduction, so a few words must be said about Lady Frances

Rea. She was what vulgar people would have termed “crumby;” but, literally, she was a plump little body of forty, who, born a baby, seemed to have remained unaltered save as to size. She was pink, and fair, and creamy, and soft, and had dimples in every place where a dimple was possible; her eyes were bright, teeth good, her hair a nice brown, and in short she seemed as if she had always lived on milk, and was brimming with the milk of human kindness still.

“Ten minutes past nine, Fanny,” said Sir Hampton, pompously, after a struggle with a watch that did not want to be consulted.

“Never mind, dear,” said her ladyship, going at him like a soft ball, and giving him a loud kiss. “Matty, where’s my keys?”

“In your basket, dear,” said Miss Matilda, pecking her sister-in-law softly on the forehead.

“So they are, dear,” said her ladyship, rattling open the tea-caddy, and shovelling the tea into the silver pot.

“Er-rum, er-rum!” coughed Sir Hampton, clearing his throat. His sister fell into an attitude of attention, with one thin finger pressed into her yellow cheek.

“Er-rum,” said Sir Hampton. “Punctuality, Lady Rea, is a necessity in an establishment like ours, and – ”

“Now don’t be so particular, Hampy,” said her ladyship, watching the boiling water run into the teapot. “It’s like having crumbs in bed with you. Ring the bell, Matty.”

“But, my dear,” began Sir Hampton, pompously, “with people

in our position – ”

The door opened and Edward appeared.

“Tell cook to poach the eggs and grill the cold turkey, Edward.”

“Yes, my lady.”

“And where are the young – oh, dear me! bring a cloth; there’s that stupid teapot running over again.”

“Turn off the water, dear,” said Miss Matilda, with the suffering look of one who had been longing to make the tea herself.

“Oh yes, of course!” said her ladyship. “Quick, Edward, bring a cloth and sop up this mess.”

“Yes, m’ lady.”

Sir Hampton rustled his paper very loudly, rolled his head in his cravat till it crackled again, and looked cross. Then he strode to the table, took his seat, and began methodically to open the letter-bag and sort the letters; and then, in the midst of the sopping process and the exclamations of her ladyship, a door was heard to open, steps pattered over the hall floor, there was a babble of pleasant voices, a scuffling as of hats and baskets being thrown on to a table, and then the breakfast-room door opened, and two young girls hurried into the room.

“Nearly twenty minutes past nine, my dears,” said Sir Hampton, consulting his watch.

“Ah! so late, papa?” said one, hurrying up to kiss Lady Rea, and receive a hearty hug in return.

“Oh, never mind,” said the other, following her sister’s suit, and vigorously returning the maternal hug. “We’ve had such a jolly walk. Oh, ma, how well you look this morning!”

“Do I, my love? There, Edward – that will do. Now, the poached eggs and the turkey, quick!”

“Yes, m’ lady,” said Edward.

And he disappeared, as Sir Hampton was forgetting to be stiff for a few minutes, as he returned the salute of his eldest girl, Valentina.

“I’m sorry we’re late, papa; but we went farther than we meant.”

“But you know, Tiny,” said Sir Hampton, “I like punctuality.”

And he glanced with pride at the graceful undulating form, in its pretty morning dress; and then gazed in the soft grey eyes, looking lovingly out of a sweet oval face, framed in rich brown hair.

“Oh, bother punctuality, daddy!” said the younger girl, a merry, mischievous-looking blonde, with freckled face, bright eyes, and a charming petite form that was most attractive. “Don’t be cross,” she cried, getting behind his chair, throwing her arms round his neck, and laying a soft downy cheek upon his bald head. “Don’t be cross; we’ve had such a jolly walk, and got a basketful of ferns. There! that’ll make you good tempered.”

And she leaned over, dragging his head back, and kissed him half a dozen times on the forehead.

“Fin! Finetta!” exclaimed Sir Hampton. “Now, suppose one

of the servants saw you!”

“Oh, they wouldn’t mind, daddy,” laughed the girl. “Oh, I say, how your head shines this morning!”

And bubbling over, as it were, with fun, she breathed sharply twice on her astonished parent’s crown, gave her hand a circular movement over it a few times, and, before he could recover from his surprise, she finished it off with a polish from her pocket-handkerchief, and then stepped back, looking mischievously at the irate knight, as he forced his chair back from the table and stared at her.

“Is the girl mad?” he exclaimed. “Finetta, you make me exceedingly angry.”

“Not with me, daddy,” said the girl placing herself on his knee. “Kiss me, and say good morning, sir.”

The head of the family hesitated for a moment, and then could not resist the upturned face, which he kissed and then pushed the girl away.

“Now go to your place; and I insist Fin, upon your dropping – ”

Miss Matilda started.

“I mean leaving off – using that absurdly childish appellation. I desire you always to address me as papa.”

“All right, daddy,” said the girl, laughing – “as soon as I can teach myself.”

Sir Hampton snatched himself back into his place, and began to open letters; while Finetta went and kissed her aunt.

“Well, aunty, how’s Pip this morning?”

“Pepine is very unwell, my dear,” said Miss Matilda, coldly.

“You stuff him too much, aunty, and don’t give him exercise enough.”

“My dear you should not deliver opinions upon what you do not understand. Your papa’s cup.”

“Don’t understand, aunty!” said the girl, passing the cup; “why, I know all about dogs and horses. You give Pip over to me for a week; I’ll soon put the little wretch right.”

Lady Rea saw the horror upon her sister-in-law’s countenance, and catching her daughter’s eye, shook her head at her, as she went on dispensing the tea.

“Have some poached eggs, daddy – pa?” said Fin, correcting herself with much gravity, and revelling in the look of suffering upon her aunt’s face. “No? Tiny, give papa some of the turkey.”

Sir Hampton fed himself mechanically, passed some letters to his wife and eldest daughter, and read his own.

“Is there no letter for me, Hampton?” said Miss Matilda, plaintively.

There was a grunt, indicative of “No,” from the knight; and Miss Matilda sighed, and went on sipping her sugarless tea, and nibbling some very dry, butterless toast.

“I say, Aunt Matty,” said Fin, merrily, “I mean to take you in hand.”

“Take me in hand, child?” said the spinster.

“Yes, aunty. Now, look here; if, instead of stopping grumping here at home, you had had a jolly good run with us – ”

Miss Matilda took a sip of her tea, which might have been vinegar from the aspect of her countenance.

“You could have gathered ferns, sipped the bright morning dew, come back with a colour, and eaten a breakfast like I do. Tiny, give me some more of that turkey.”

“Your appetite is really ravenous, child,” said Miss Matilda, with a shudder.

“Not it, aunty; I’m growing – ain’t I, ma, dear?”

“Well, my love, I think you are filling out – not growing.”

“Oh, but, ma,” laughed Fin, with her mouth full, “I’m not going to be round and plump like you are, am I?”

“Fin!” exclaimed her sister, from the other side of the table.

“Oh, ma knows I don’t mean any harm; don’t you, dear? It’s only my fun, isn’t it? I shouldn’t mind – I should like to be such a soft, loving old dear; shouldn’t I?”

“Hush, hush, hush!” exclaimed Lady Rea. “I do think, though, aunty, a walk would do you good before breakfast.”

“Perhaps it might do you good, too,” said Miss Matilda, with some asperity.

“Er-rum, er-rum!” ejaculated Sir Hampton, laying down a big blue official envelope. “Lady Rea – my dears, I have something to communicate.”

He sat back in his chair, and brushed a few crumbs from his buff waistcoat.

“Well, pa, dear, what is it?” said Lady Rea, out of her tea-cup.

“Er-rum, I have at last,” said Sir Hampton, pompously,

“received public recognition of my position. My dears, I have been placed upon the bench, and am now one of the county magistracy.”

He looked round for the applause which should follow.

“Well, my dear, I’m sure I’m very glad if it pleases you,” said Lady Rea. “Matty, give me another poached egg.”

“It was quite time they did, Hampton,” said Miss Matilda.

“I congratulate you, papa, dear,” said Valentina, going up to him and kissing him; “and I’m sure the poor will be glad to have so kind a magistrate to deal with them.”

“Thank you, Tiny – thank you,” said Sir Hampton, smiling, and trying to look every inch a magistrate, before turning to his second daughter, who was intent upon a turkey drumstick.

“But I say, pa, what fun it will be!” she said at last; “you’ll have to sit on the poachers.”

“Yes, the scoundrels!” said Sir Hampton, and his cravat crackled.

“And send all the poor old women to quod for picking sticks.”

“To where?” exclaimed Miss Matilda, in horrified tones.

“Quod,” said Finetta, quite unmoved; “it’s Latin, I think, for prison, or else it’s stable slang – I’m not sure. But oh, my,” she continued, seeing her father’s frown, “we’ve got some news, too.”

“Have you, dear?” said mamma, “what is it?”

“We saw Humphrey Lloyd this morning.”

“Who is Humphrey Lloyd?” said Lady Rea.

“The keeper at Penreife.”

“Penreife,” said Sir Hampton, waking up out of a day-dream of judicial honours. “Yes, a beautiful estate. I would have bought it instead of this if it had been for sale.”

“Well,” said Finetta, “we met Humphrey, and talked to him.”

“I think, if I may be allowed to say so, Finetta, that you are too fond of talking to grooms and keepers, and people of that class,” said Miss Matilda, glancing at her brother, who, however, was once more immersed in judicial dreams – J.P., *custos rotulorum*, commission of the peace, etcetera.

“Tennyson used to hang with grooms and porters on bridges, and he’s poet laureate; so why shouldn’t I?” said Finetta, rebelliously.

“I don’t think it’s nice, though,” said mamma. “Aunt Matty is quite right; you are not a child now, my dear.”

“Oh, mamma, dear, it’s only Fin’s nonsense,” said Tiny. “Humphrey is a very respectful, worthy young fellow, and he climbed up the big rocks down by Penreife for us, and got us some of those beautiful little aspleniums we couldn’t reach.”

“Yes, ma, dear,” said Finetta; “and he says that the next time he writes to his old aunt in Wales, he’ll tell her to send some of the beautiful little rare ferns that grow up on one of the mountains, in a place that nearly broke my teeth when I tried to say it.”

Lady Rea shook her head at her daughter, who rattled on.

“Well, you know about Penreife belonging to Lieutenant Trevor?”

Lady Rea nodded.

“Well, Humphrey’s got orders to go to town to meet his master, who has been on a cruise round the world, and his ship’s paid off, and now he’s going to settle at home.”

“Who’s going to settle at home?” inquired Sir Hampton.

“Lieutenant Trevor.”

“Ah! a sailor person, and rough, I suppose – sailors always are,” said Sir Hampton.

“Yes,” cried Finetta, “they haul in slack, and cry ‘Avast!’ at you, and ‘shiver my timbers!’ But, I say – I like sailors; I shall set my cap at him.”

“Finetta!” gasped Miss Matilda.

“Don’t talk nonsense, child,” said Lady Rea. “Don’t you hear what papa says about sailors being so rough? I daresay he isn’t a bit of a gentleman.”

“But he’s an officer, ma, dear,” said Finetta; “and if Tiny hasn’t made up her mind to have him, I shall. They are doing all sorts of things up at the house; and it’s to be full of company, Mrs Lloyd says; and she looked as proud as a peacock, as she stood smoothing her white apron. We’re sure to be invited; and won’t it be a good job! for this place is so jolly dull.”

“Ah, my child,” said Aunt Matilda, “if you would only properly employ your time, you would not find it dull.”

“What! knit mittens, bother the poor people, and read Saint Thomas à Kempis, aunty?” replied Finetta. “No, thank you. But Mr Trevor’s coming – I say, ought we to call him lieutenant? – it’s so absurd – ought to brighten up the place a bit; and of course,

ma, you'll ask him here?"

"Er-rum!" ejaculated Sir Hampton, rousing himself from his day-dreams. "It is my wish that there should always be shown in my establishment the hospitality of – er – er – a country gentleman."

"And a knight," said Miss Matilda, softly.

"Thank you, Matilda – and a knight," said Sir Hampton. "But, my dears, I have great pleasure in announcing to you that I have made up my mind that we shall now pay a short visit to the great metropolis."

"How jolly!" said Finetta. "But what are we going for, pa, dear?"

"My dear, I have several things to see about," said Sir Hampton. "To engage a groom for one thing, to buy horses for another, and a gun or two for my friends. I intend to have, too, the west room fitted up for billiards."

"For what, Hampton?" said his sister.

"Er-rum! – billiards," said Sir Hampton.

"It is not often that I venture upon a word, Hampton, respecting your household management; but when I hear of propositions which must interfere with your fixture welfare, I feel bound to speak."

"And, pray, what do you mean?" said Sir Hampton, angrily.

"I mean that I gave way when you insisted on having cards in the house, because you said your visitors liked whist – "

"And you were always rattling the dice box and playing

backgammon,” retorted Sir Hampton.

“That is different,” said Miss Matilda; “backgammon is a very old and a very innocent game.”

“Oh!” said Sir Hampton.

“I have known great divines play at backgammon.”

“And I’ve known a bishop play a good rubber at whist,” said Sir Hampton.

“I am sorry for it,” said Miss Matilda; “but I draw the line at billiards. It is a detestable game, played on a green cloth which is the flag of gambling, and – ”

“If you will take my advice, Matty, you will hold your tongue,” said Sir Hampton. “My guests will like a game at billiards, and I’ll be bound to say, before we’ve had the table in the house a month, you’ll be playing a game yourself.”

“Hampton!”

“Same as you do at whist.”

“I oblige your guests, and make up your horrid rubbers.”

“But I say, aunty, you do like winning, you know,” chimed in Fin.

“Oh, my dear, I – ”

“You pocketed fifteen shillings – I won’t say ‘bob,’ because it’s slangy,” said Fin, laughing mischievously.

“I protest, I – ”

“Er-rum! – I will not hear another word. We start for town to-morrow; and, my dears, you asked me once for horses – you shall have them. Fin, my child, don’t strangle me! There, now,

see how you've rumpled my cravat!"

"Oh, thank you, daddy!"

"Now, if you say *daddy* again, I'll alter my mind," said the old gentleman, angrily.

"There, then, I won't," said Fin. "But I say, pa, we must have a groom."

"Of course, my dear."

"And riding-habits."

"To be sure."

"And we can get them in town. Oh, Tiny, do say 'Hooray' for once in your life."

"Er-rum! It's my intention," said Sir Hampton, "to patronise the sports of our country, and foster hunting, game-keeping, and the like. By the way, that man Lloyd might do some commissions for me. Matty, you will keep house till we return. My dears, we start to-morrow morning."

"Then all I've got to say," said Miss Matilda, sharply, "is this —"

"Yelp! yelp! yelp!" — a succession of wild shrieks from beneath the antimacassar, out of one side of which lay a thin black tail, in very close proximity to Fin's pretty little foot, and in an instant Aunt Matty was down upon her knees, talking to and caressing the dog.

"Er-rum!" went Sir Hampton, slowly crossing the hall to his library, followed by Lady Rea; and directly after Miss Matilda hurried away, with her pet in her arms.

“Now, Fin, that was cruel. I saw you tread on Pip’s tail,” said Tiny.

“Doing evil that good might come,” said Fin, defiantly. “Look here, Tiny – pets were anciently offered up to save a row. If I hadn’t made him squeal, there would have been pa storming, Aunt Matty going into hysterics, and ma worried to death; so that it was like the old nursery rhyme – ”

“I trod sharp on the little dog’s tail;  
The dog began to shriek and wail,  
And poor Aunty Matty turned mighty pale:  
It stopped papa from blowing a gale;  
And that’s the end of my little tale.”

“Er-rum!” was heard from across the hall.

“There’s daddy going to lecture me; and look here, Tiny, Edward will come in directly to clear the cloth. Now, then, here’s a penny; let’s toss. Heads or tails, who wins.”

“Wins what?”

“Mr Richard Trevor, and Penreife. Now then, cry!”

“No,” said Tiny, “I’ll laugh instead.”

And she kissed her sister on the cheek.

## In Pall Mall

“Voilà! – the pilot-fish and the shark!”

The words were spoken by an individual idly smoking a cigar on the steps of that gloomy-looking pile in Pall Mall known as the Peripatetics. He was the being that, go where he would, uneducated people would set down as belonging to the division Swell; for there was *ton* and aristocrat in the fit of his clothes and every curve of his body. Women would have called his black moustache and beard handsome, and spoken of his piercing eyes, high white forehead, and wonderful complexion; but Podger Pratt – that is to say, Frank Pratt – said more than once he had never seen a barber’s dummy that was his equal. He said it in a very solemn way; and when it came to the ears of the gentleman in question, he denounced Podger Pratt as a disgusting little cad, and the next time they met at the club Captain Vanleigh asked Pratt what he meant by it.

“What did I mean?” said Pratt, in a serious, puzzled tone of voice. “What did I mean? – oh, just what I said. It’s a fact.”

Captain Vanleigh stood glaring at him as if trying to pierce the imperturbable crust of solemnity on the speaker’s face; but Pratt remained as solemn as a judge, and amidst an ill-suppressed tittering, the Captain stalked from the room, saying to his companion —

“The fellow’s a fool – an ass – little better than an idiot!”

As for Podger Pratt, he looked innocently round the room as if asking the meaning of the laugh, and then went on with his paper.

But that was months before the present day, when Captain Vanleigh, gracefully removing his cigar from between his white teeth, said —

“Voilà! the pilot-fish and the shark!”

“The sucking-fish and the porpoise, I should say,” remarked his companion, a fair young fellow, dressed evidently upon the other’s model. “What big fellow Dick Trevor has grown!”

“You’re right, Flick; sucking-fish it is. That fat, little, briefless barrister will fatten still more on Dick Trevor’s chequebook. Ah, well, Flicky, it is a wise ordination of Providence that those men who have the largest properties are the biggest fools.”

“Ya-as, exactly,” said Flick, otherwise Sir Felix Landells. “I daresay you’re right, Van; but don’t quite see your argument. I s’pose may call ’self a wealthy man?”

“No rule without an exception, my dear boy; you are one of the exceptions. Odd, though, isn’t it, how we have all been thrown together after four years?”

“Yes, ’tis odd; but think it’s dooced nice of Dick to look us up as he has. You’ll make one of the party, of course?”

“Well, I don’t know. Certainly, town is empty. These sailor fellows are rather rough, though.”

“Oh, come down. Besides, it’s in the country.”

“Such an infernal distance! – but there, perhaps I will.”

As they stood talking, there came slowly sauntering along the

pave a well-built young fellow, broad of shoulder and chest, and fining rapidly down to the loins. He seemed to convey the idea that he was rolling up to you on the deck of a ship with a sea on, and he carried his hands as if it might be necessary at any moment to throw them out to seize belaying pin or handrail. He was well dressed; but there was a certain easy freedom in the fit of his garments, and a loose swing pervading all, much in contrast with the natty, fashionable attire of the friends, whom he saluted with a pleasant smile lighting up his bronzed face and clear grey eyes. His hair was crisp, curly, and brown, seeming rather at war with the glossy new hat he wore, and settled more than once upon his head as he listened to the remarks of the little dapper-looking man at his side – Podger, otherwise Frank, Pratt, of the Temple.

Pratt was a solemn, neutral-looking fellow; but none the less he was keen and peculiar, even though, to use his own words, he had been born without any looks at all.

“There’s the wolf, Dick,” said Pratt, as they approached the club. “Who’s that with him? Ah, might have known – the lamb.”

“You seem to have kept up the old school tricks, Frank,” said Trevor, “and I suppose it gets you into hot water sometimes. Bad habit giving nicknames. We shouldn’t stand it at sea.”

“It breaks no bones,” said the other, quietly, “and seems to do me good – safety-valve for my spleen. How odd it is, though, that we four should be thrown together again in this way!”

“I was thinking the same; but I don’t see why we should call things odd when we have shaped them ourselves. I was cruising

about for days to find you all out.”

“Well, it’s very kind of you, Dick,” said Pratt. “And let me see – I’ve won four pounds ten and six of you during the last week at pool and whist. Dick, you’re quite a godsend to a poor fellow. Look here, new gloves – ain’t had such a pair for a month.”

“By the way,” said Trevor, “is Vanleigh well off?”

“He was,” said Pratt – “came in for a nice property. How he stands now I can’t say.”

“And Landells?”

“Landells has a clear nine thousand a year; but I’ve seen hardly anything of them lately. Poole dresses them; and how could you expect such exquisites to seek the society of a man who wears sixteen-shilling pantaloons, dines on chops, reads hard, and, when he does go to a theatre, sits in the pit? By Jove, Dick, you would have laughed one night! I did – inside, for there wasn’t a crease in my phiz. They cut me dead. I was sitting in the front row in the pit, and as luck or some mischievous imp would have it, they were placed in two stalls in the back row, exactly in front of me, so that I could inhale the ambrosial odours from Flick Landells’ fair curls the whole evening.”

“Snobbish – wasn’t it?” said Dick.

“Just half,” said Pratt. “Landells is a good chap at heart; but society is spoiling him. He came to my chambers the very next day, with a face like a turkey-cock, to ask me if it was I that he saw at the theatre. I looked at him out of the corner of one eye, and he broke down, and asked my pardon like a man. Swore he

wouldn't have minded a bit, if Van hadn't been with him. It's all right, Dick; I can read Felix the Unhappy like a book."

"Well, gentlemen," said Trevor, as they reached the steps, "it is settled for Wednesday, of course?"

"Well," said Landells, hesitating, "I – er – I – er –"

"Oh, you must come, Flick," said Trevor; "we've got all our old days to go over, and I've ordered the yacht round. Vanleigh, help me to persuade him."

"You might come," said Vanleigh, in a half-injured tone.

"Oh, I'll go if you are going," said Sir Felix, hastily; and then, correcting himself – "if you both really wish it."

"That's right," said Trevor; "take pity on my seafaring ignorance. I shall want some company down at the old place. Pratt has promised."

"Indeed!" said Vanleigh, fixing his glass in one eye. "I thought last night he couldn't leave his reading?"

"Obliged to yield, like you, to the force of circumstances," said Pratt, "and give way to our old friend's overwhelming hospitality. But you needn't mind, Van, old fellow, I won't disgrace you. Look here," he said, taking off his hat and speaking loudly, "new tile, fourteen bob – couldn't afford a Lincoln and Bennett; brand-new gloves, two-and-three; and I've ordered one of Samuel Brothers' tourist suits for the occasion."

"My dear fellow," said the Captain, after a look of disgust at Sir Felix, "I really do not want to know the extent of your wardrobe. In fact, mine is at your service – my valet – er – I beg

your pardon, Trevor.”

“I say, don’t take any notice of that solemn little humbug,” said Trevor, laughing; “you know what he always was. I – oh, my God!”

The exclamation was involuntary, for just at that moment a hansom cab was driven sharply out of the turning leading to Saint James’s Square, the horse shied – Pratt afterwards swore it was at Vanleigh’s eyes – and in another instant would have stricken down a faded-looking woman, who seemed to be crossing towards the club steps, but for the act of a passer-by.

The act was as quick as thought. With a bound he caught the woman, swung her round, and was struck by the horse full on the shoulder, to reel for a few yards with his burden, and then roll over and over in the muddy road.

The cabman pulled sharp up, and leapt off his perch with a face white as ashes, in an instant, while Trevor and Pratt ran to the fallen pair – the former to raise the woman, and carry her scared and trembling to the club steps, where Vanleigh stood looking as scared as the sufferer, while Pratt helped the gentleman to rise.

“Take me away, please; let me go – away,” said the woman, shivering with fear.

“Are you hurt?” said Trevor, with his arm still round her.

“No, no; not hurt – only let me go.”

“I couldn’t help it, gen’lemen,” began the cabman.

“No, confound you! – it was an accident, worse luck!” said the principal sufferer, “or you should have caught it sharply, Mr

Nine-hundred-and-seventy-six. Here's a pretty mess I'm in!"

"Very sorry, sir," said the cabman, – "but – "

"There, that'll do. Is the lady hurt?"

"No, no," said the woman, hastily, and she glanced timidly at Vanleigh, and then at Pratt, who was watching her keenly.

Just then a four-wheeler, which Trevor had hailed, came up, and he handed her in.

"Where shall he drive you?" said Trevor, as he slipped half-a-crown in the driver's hand.

"Twenty-seven, Whaley's Place, Upper Holloway," said the woman, in an unnecessarily loud voice; and the cab was driven off.

"Thank you," said the muddy stranger, holding out a very dirty hand to Trevor, who grasped it heartily.

"Worse disasters at sea," he said, smiling.

"Yes," said the other, looking hard in his face, "so I suppose; but then you do get an action for damages, or insurance money. I don't insure my clothes," he said, looking ruefully at his muddy garments, and then at those of the man who had served him. "I say, that was very kind of you, though."

"Nonsense!" said Trevor, laughing in the bright, earnest, middle-aged face before him. "Come into the club, and send for some fresh things."

"Thanks, no," said the stranger, "I'll get back to my rooms. I must have something out of somebody, so I'll make cabby suffer."

The cabman rubbed his ear, and looked blue.

"You'll drive me home, cabby?" said the stranger.

"That I will, sir, for a week," said the man, eagerly.

"We may as well exchange cards," said the stranger, pulling out a case, and putting a muddy thumb upon the top card. "There you are – John Barnard, his mark," he said, laughing. "Thanks once more. I'll stick your card in here with mine; and now good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Trevor, frankly; and they shook hands.

"I shall know your face again."

Saying which, after a curious stare in Trevor's face, the stranger climbed into the cab, the driver touched up his horse, and the two street boys and the crossing-sweeper, who had been attracted to the scene, were about to separate, when the latter pounced upon something white and held it up to Pratt.

"Did yer drop this 'ere, sir?"

"No," said Pratt, looking at the muddy note; "but here is sixpence – it is for one of my friends."

Directly after, to the disgust of the two exquisites, Trevor, soiled from head to foot, was laughing heartily at the rueful aspect of Frank Pratt as he entered the hall.

"Look here," he said, dolefully, as he held out his muddy gloves. "Two-and-three; and brand-new to-day. Van," he added, with a peculiar cock of one eye, "have you a clean pair in your pocket?"

"No," said Vanleigh, coldly. "You can get good gloves in the

Arcade; but not," he added, with a sneer, "at two-and-three."

"Thanks," said Pratt; "but I am not a simple Arcadian in my ideas. Oh, by the way, Van, here's a note for you which somebody seems to have dropped."

Vanleigh almost snatched the muddy note, which was directed in a fine, lady's hand; and there was a curious pinched expression about his lips as he took in the address.

"Ah, yes; thanks, much," he drawled. "Very kind of you, I'm shaw. By the way, Trevor, dear boy," he continued, turning to his friend, "hadn't you better send one of the fellows for some things, and then we might walk on to the Corner if you had nothing better to do? Try a suit of mine; those don't fit you well."

"No, I'll keep to my own style," said Trevor, laughing. "I don't think I could quite manage your cut."

Then nodding merrily in answer to the other's rather disgusted look, he sent a messenger to his hotel, and strolled off to one of the dormitories, while Frank Pratt went into the reading-room, where the others had walked to the window, took up a newspaper, furtively watching Captain Vanleigh and his friend, in the expectation that they would go; but, to his great annoyance, they stayed on till Trevor reappeared, when Vanleigh, with his slow dawdle, crossed to him.

"What are you going to do this afternoon, dear boy?"

"Well, I was thinking of what you said – running down to the Corner to look at a horse or two. Things I don't much understand."

"I'll go with you," said Vanleigh. "You'll come, won't you, Flick?"

"Delighted, quite!" was the reply, very much to Pratt's disgust – the feeling of disgust being equally shared by Vanleigh, when he saw "that gloveless little humbug" get up to accompany them.

No matter what the feelings were that existed, they sent for a couple of cabs, and a few minutes after were being trundled down Piccadilly towards what is still known as "The Corner" where that noble animal the "oss" is brought up and knocked down day by day, in every form and shape – horses with characters, and horses whose morals are bad; right up through park hacks and well-matched high steppers, greys, chestnuts, roans and bays, well-broken ladies' steeds, good for a canter all day, to the very perfection of hunters up to any weight – equine princes of the blood royal, that have in their youth snuffed the keen air of the Yorkshire wolds; mares with retrousse noses and the saucy look given by a dash of Irish blood. Racers, too, are there, whose satin skins, netted with veins, throb with the blue blood that has come down from some desert sire, who has been wont in fleet career to tear up the sand of Araby like a whirlwind, spurn it behind his hoofs, and yet, at the lightest touch of the bit, check the lithe play of his elastic limbs at the opening of some camel or goat-hair tent, where half a dozen swarthy children are ready to play with it, and crawl uninjured about its feet – the mother busily the while preparing the baken cakes and mares-milk draught for her Bedouin lord.

# First Encounters

“Clean yer boots? Brush down, sir?”

“Why can’t yer leave the gent alone? I spoke fust, sir.”

“Here y’are, sir – out of the crowd, sir.”

Sixpence to be earned, and a scuffle for it, with the result that Richard Trevor stood a little out of the stream of passengers, stoically permitting a gentleman in an old red-sleeved waistcoat to “ciss-s-s” at him, as he brushed him most carefully down with an old brush, even though he was not in the slightest degree dusty.

“Now, look here, Dick, if I’m to go trotting about at your heels like a big dog, I shall bite at everybody who tries to rob you. I shan’t stand by and see you fleeced. Is there something in salt water that makes you sailors ready to part with your money to the first comer?”

The speaker was Frank Pratt, as he drew his friend away towards one of the omnibuses running that day from Broxford Station to where a regular back and heart-breaking bit of country had been flagged over for a steeplechase course.

“You shall do precisely as you like, Frank,” was the quiet reply.

“Very good, then – I will. Now, look here, Dick; you have now, I suppose, a clear income of twelve thousand a year?”

“Yes, somewhere about that.”

“And you want to fool it all away?”

“Not I.”

“Well, there was a specimen. You gave that fellow a shilling for brushing your coat that was not dirty.”

“Poor devil, yes! He tried to earn it honestly, and we don’t get such luxuries at sea.”

“As honestly as Van earned forty sovs. of you after we left Tatt’s yesterday.”

“Don’t understand you, Franky,” said Trevor, with a twinkle of the eye, as he allowed himself to be caught by a shoeblack, and placed a slightly soiled boot upon his stand.

“Tut!” ejaculated Pratt. “There you go again. What a fellow you are, Dick! What I meant was that horse of his. You gave him a cheque for a hundred for it.”

“Yes, I did, Franky.”

“He gave sixty for it last week.”

Trevor winced slightly, and said quietly —

“Dealer’s profit; and he understands horses. Try another cigar, Frank.”

Pratt took another cigar, lit it, and said, quietly —

“Now look here, Dick, old fellow, I’m afraid I’m going to be a great nuisance to you. You’re so easy-going, that with this money of yours — to use your sea-going terms — you’ll be all amongst the sharks; every one will be making a set at you. ’Pon my soul, I’ve been miserable ever since I won that four pound ten. The best thing we can do is to see one another seldom, for if I stay with you I shall always be boring you about some foolish bit of

extravagance, and getting into hot water with the friends who take a fancy to you.”

“My dear Frank,” said Trevor, smoking away in the most unruffled fashion, “you will oblige me very much by letting that be the clearing-up shower as far as talk of leaving me is concerned. It is quite right. Here have I been to sea, middy and man, for twelve years; and now I come back to England a great helpless baby of a fellow, game for everybody. You think I’m a fool. Well, I am not over-wise; but my first act ashore here was the looking-up of a tried old schoolfellow, whose purse I’ve often shared, and who never once left me in the lurch – and,” he added, slowly and meaningly, “who never will leave me in the lurch. Am I right?”

Frank Pratt turned one sharp, quick flash upon the speaker, and that was enough.

“Thanky, sir,” cried the shoeblack, spinning up the sixpence he had received.

The friends turned towards one of the omnibuses about to make a start for the course.

“Beg parding, sir,” said a voice, “just a speck left on your coat, sir!” And the man who had received the shilling for the brushing began to “ciss” once more.

“That’ll do, sir! That’s the next ’bus, sir! Good luck to you for a real gent, sir,” he added; and then in a whisper, “Back White Lassie!”

Trevor turned sharply round, just time enough to encounter a

most knowing wink, and the man was gone.

“Dick, I’m afraid that’s a trap,” said Pratt, gazing after the man. “Better not bet at all; but if you do, I don’t think I should go by what that fellow says. Well, come along. Eh? what?”

“Consequential-looking old chap in that barouche, I said;” and Trevor pointed to where a carriage had drawn up by the railway hotel, the owner having posted down from town – “regular type of the old English gentleman.”

“Now, if we are to get on together, Dick,” said Pratt, plaintively, “don’t try to humbug me in that way. Don’t hoist false colours.”

“Humbug you? – false colours?”

“Yes, humbug me. Now, on your oath, didn’t you think more of the two ladies in the barouche than of the old gentleman?”

“Without being on my oath – yes, I did; for I haven’t seen a pretty girl for three years. Get up first.”

“After you,” was the response.

And directly after the friends were mounted on the knifeboard of a great three-horse omnibus, brought down expressly for the occasion.

The vehicle was soon loaded in a way that put its springs to the test, for the exact licenced number was not studied upon that day. There was a fair sprinkling of gentlemen, quiet, businesslike professionals, and decent tradesmen with a taste for sport; but the railway company having run cheap special trains, London had sent forth a few representative batches of the fancy, in the shape

of canine-featured gentlemen “got up” expressly for the occasion, with light trousers, spotted neckerchiefs, velvet coats, and a sign in the breast of their shirt or tie in the shape of a horseshoe pin. It is impossible to sit in such company without wondering whether the closely cropped hair was cut at the expense of the country, and when a quiet, neutral-looking man, sitting amongst them, accidentally clicks something in his pocket, you may know all the time that it is the lid of a tobacco-box, or a few halfpence, but you are certain to think of handcuffs.

You cannot pick your companions on an omnibus bound from a little country station to the scene of a steeplechase, and Richard Trevor and his friend soon found that they were in luck; for in addition to the regular racing attendants, London had sent down a pleasant assortment of those sporting gentlemen who used to hang about London Bridge Station on the morning when an event was to “come off,” police permitting, some forty miles down the line.

In the hurry of climbing up, Pratt had not noticed the occupants of the vehicle but as soon as they had taken their seats he was for descending again, and he turned to whisper his wishes to his friend.

“All comes of being in such a plaguy hurry, Frank. Always take soundings before you come to an anchor. Never mind now, though the onions are far from agreeable.”

The words had hardly left his lips, when a man on his left turned sharply, and asked why he hadn’t ordered his “kerridge,”

subsiding afterwards into a growl, in which the word “sweeps” was plainly to be made out.

This acted as the signal for a little light chaff, and remarks began to fly about the dress of the friends. Moses Brothers and Whitechapel hags were mentioned, counter-jumping playfully alluded to, and permissions to be out for the day; and then a battery of exceedingly foul pipes came into play, emitting odours resembling anything but those of Araby the Blest, and driving Frank Pratt to ask his friend, in self-defence, for a cigar.

“Giv’s that there light,” said an individual on his right – a gentleman in velveteen coat, tight trousers, and eyes of so friendly a nature that they seemed ever seeking each other’s society, and trying to burrow beneath the bridge of their owner’s flat nose. He had no whiskers nor beard, but a great deal of mouth and chin, spotted all over with tiny black dots. His massive neck was swathed in a great belcher kerchief, with ample but useful ends; for besides supplying warmth, one was used occasionally to supply the lack of nutriment, and be nibbled by the owner’s great horse-teeth.

Trevor took the vesuvian from his friend, and politely passed it to the man, who leered, grinned, stuffed it into his pipe-bowl, holding it there as he puffed for a few moments, and then, winking at a companion, he pitched the little incandescent globe upon Pratt’s light overcoat.

Pratt started, flushed angrily, and brushed the vesuvian from his coat, but not until it had burned there a round black spot. But

he said nothing; his face only twitched a little, as he began to make remarks about the country they were passing.

“Hillo! – eo – eo!” came from behind, as the omnibus slowly lumbered along; the driver drew a little on one side, and the open carriage, with its post-horses, that they had seen by the railway hotel, began slowly to pass, with the two young men eagerly scanning the occupants.

“Look at that old cock in the buff weskit,” said some one on the omnibus – a sally which was followed by roars of laughter, as an elderly gentleman, of portly, magisterial aspect, half started from the back seat, filming and frowning in utter astonishment at so ribald an attack on his dignity.

“Going to ask us to lunch, guv’nor?” laughed a third.

“That’s Brighamy Young and his three wives,” cried some one else.

“Tell the postboy to go a little faster, Edward,” the old gentleman called out to a footman on the box.

“Do you hear, Edward? Why don’t you go on faster, Edward? – eh, Edward?” cried the first speaker, while the old gentleman leaned forward to speak to one of the young ladies opposite, who was evidently somewhat agitated; while, to make matters worse, the omnibus driver had whipped up his horses, and the great vehicle kept on thundering along abreast of the barouche.

This fresh movement was the signal for a volley from the fellow on Trevor’s right; and he now made himself especially conspicuous, kissing his hand, and evidently goading the old

gentleman into a state of apoplexy. A scene was evidently brewing, and something unpleasant must have inevitably occurred, had not, almost at one and the same moment, Pratt whispered a word or two in French to his friend, and the postboy given his horses a few cuts, which made them start forward with such energy that the barouche was soon out of sight.

"You're about right, Frank," Trevor said, leaning back; "it is not worth notice."

"P'raps you'll just use about as much of this here 'bus as you pays for," said the man seated dos-à-dos to him, and whom he had slightly pressed.

Trevor started forward; for the remark was unpleasantly made, and qualified with offensive adjectives. Pratt looked anxious, and would gladly have finished the distance on foot; but to stop the omnibus, and get down, would probably have made bad worse – especially as Trevor only smiled, and sat up quite erect.

"He've been taking more than his share of the 'bus ever since he got up," said the black-looking gentleman on the right, pressing closer to Trevor. "Keep yer own side, will yer?"

Very pale and quiet, Richard Trevor edged a little more towards his companion; but this was only the signal for renewed insult, the knifeboard being in possession of the fellow's friends.

"Where are you a-scrowging to?" said the fellow on Pratt's left. And then, acting in concert, he and his companions forced the little barrister closer to his friend.

"Here, let's speak to the driver," said Trevor, quietly; but there

was a dull red spot in each cheek.

“No, no!” said Pratt. “It’s not much further; don’t let us have a row.”

“Mind your pockets, then,” muttered Trevor.

“Ah, just as I thought,” said the fellow who had been ringleader throughout. “They’re a talking about pockets – button up, gents.”

Here followed a roar of laughter, and a few more witticisms of a similar character were fired off. Then, seeing how patiently the two friends bore it all, a fresh crowding was tried, and one of the most offensive of the fellows called out to the man in velveteens —

“Why don’t you leave off, Barney?”

“Tain’t me,” said Barney, grinning hugely; “it’s these here two swell mob blokes.”

There was another roar of laughter, which culminated in a shriek of delight when Barney of the black muzzle removed his pipe from his mouth, and designedly spat upon Trevor’s glossy boot.

The young man started as if he had been stung; but there was a quiet, firm pressure of his arm, and he said, in French —

“Is it much further to the course?”

As he spoke, he quietly drew a white cambric handkerchief from his pocket, carefully removed all trace of the disgusting offence from his boot, and threw the handkerchief into the road, following it up by lighting a fresh cigar.

“My! what a pity!” said the fellow, sneeringly, as he watched with curiosity the young man’s action. “I am sorry. Wouldn’t you like the handkerchief – again?”

And he pointed to a boy who had just picked it up from the road.

The pressure was again upon Trevor’s arm, but he did not speak, and the only movement was a slight twitching about the muscles of the face.

What more insult might have followed it is impossible to say, for the omnibus now stopped at a gate, and the occupants began to scramble off. Trevor rose, and waited for the gentleman called Barney to get down. But he remained; so Trevor stepped over him, and Pratt was about to follow, when the fellow thrust out his legs, and the young man tripped, staggered, and would have fallen from the omnibus but for the strong arm of his friend.

“Get down first,” said Trevor.

“No, no – never mind,” said Pratt, catching his arm.

“Get down first,” said Trevor, as if he were on the quarter-deck.

“There’s nothing to be gained by it,” whispered Pratt.

“I’ll come directly,” was the reply; and facing round upon the fellow, who had risen, he looked him full in his closely-set eyes, face close to face, as he said, quietly —

“I think I shall know you again, my friend.”

Before the fellow had recovered from his surprise, Trevor stepped lightly down, took Pratt’s arm in an easy-going, familiar

way, and the friends joined the string of people crossing the fields.

“Thank goodness!” said Pratt; “I do hate a row. You must be on the losing side. Lost anything?”

“No,” said Trevor, thoughtfully. “But if that fellow had been at sea with me, and behaved like that – ”

“You’d have had him flogged?”

“No,” said Trevor, “I’d have pitched him overboard.”

“Overboard?”

“Yes,” said Trevor, with his face once more all smiles – “and fished him out!”

## Rather Unpleasant

“Ah,” said Pratt, after a brisk walk, “it might have been worse; it all comes of getting on knife-boards. I never do go on a ’bus but I’m sure to meet some one I don’t want to see from that elevated position. Let’s see: in somebody’s fables one poor bird got his neck wrung through being in bad company, and getting caught by the fowler.”

“And what has that to do with knife-boards?”

“Only this,” said Frank, grimly; “I should uncommonly like to see that barouche; and the cocky old gentleman inside will be safe to give us credit for being the ringleaders of those rowdies.”

“Well, never mind,” said Trevor; “I wanted to see a steeplechase, though I don’t suppose I shall like it any more than a ball.”

No more was said then, for they had reached the ground flagged out for the course – a pleasant tract running round in front of a mound-like hill, affording the spectators from the various stands a capital view of the whole race; save where here and there a tiny copse intervened, so that it must inevitably hide the horses for a few moments.

They were in ample time, for twelve, one, and two o’clock upon racing cards are very different hours to those represented upon the time-tables at our various termini; so they had a stroll round, pausing here or there; but, no matter where they strayed,

so sure as Frank Pratt turned his head, it was to see the evil-looking countenance of their companion on the omnibus close at hand, though whether Trevor had seen him or not he could not tell.

For, probably from a love of the beautiful, the young men's steps generally led them to where they could stand in pretty close proximity to the barouche – whose occupants seemed to have, for one at least, something of an attraction. And no wonder; for on the front seat were two fresh, bright-eyed English girls, whose eyes sparkled with animation, and in whose cheeks came and went the bright colour that told you of excited interest in the day's proceedings.

"I thought as much," said Pratt, as they passed once close by the carriage on their way to the stand, and a quick glance showed that they were recognised by the ladies, who coloured slightly, and turned away; whilst the old gentleman's countenance, as he stood up, gradually assumed the purply-red well known to all who have seen a turkey-cock at such time as he ruffleth his plumes, and scowled fiercely at the friends.

"The impudent scoundrels!" he said aloud, as he turned to the elderly lady at his side.

"That comes of being in bad company," said Pratt. "Dick, old fellow, I shall walk back. Here, my friend, I have feeling in my toe."

"Beg pardon, sir, I'm sure," said a fine, handsome, bluff West-countryman – a regular keeper, in brown velveteens; "I really

didn't see you." And he passed on towards the barouche, the friends following him with their eyes, to see him touch his hat to first one and then another of the inmates, who smiled, and seemed to talk to him in a very animated way, the old gentleman ending by pointing to the box-seat, a good post for seeing, to which the young man climbed.

"Lucky dog!" said Frank Pratt, softly; and they took their places on the stand, from which, close at hand, they could readily command the movements of all in the barouche.

But there was the ground mapped out by the little flags; green field, ploughed piece, brook, road, double fence, bullfinch; a cluster of spectators by this dangerous leap; a pollard laden with human fruit there; oak branches bending, groups of mounted men, with here and there the flutter of veil and riding-habit; vehicles in pastures, lanes, and wherever a glimpse could be obtained of the course; and over all the bright unclouded sun looked down, gilding, with its mellow beams, brown stubble and changing leaf; while overhead, little troubled by the buzzing crowds, a lark carolled its sweet song.

The friends were in ample time; but at last the excitement here and there announced the coming of the horses, and one by one the sleek, fleet creatures made their appearance to give the customary canter down the field, and then be gathered together for the start.

At last a low, dull, murmurous buzz runs through the crowd. They are off – nearly all together. The first hedge – only a

preparation for troubles to come – and the horses going easily over a ploughed piece, the young and ardent jockeys pushing to the front, the old stagers waiting their opportunity.

Another hedge. A refusal. One – two – four – six – nine over somehow or another, and one down.

Then a loud cheer, by no means pleasant for the fallen man; and “for the fun of the thing,” as he said, Trevor began to back the grey mare known as White Lassie.

“How can you be so foolish?” said Pratt.

“So,” said Trevor, laughing; and he doubled his stakes with another.

“I believe we should be better off there on the knoll,” said Pratt, pointing to the spot where the barouche was standing hemmed in by the crowd.

And acting upon the suggestion, the two friends quitted the low, temporary stand, and managed to get a pretty good position on the little eminence, where they could see right down the valley with the horses running along its slope.

But Pratt saw more than this; he noted that they were within half a dozen yards of the barouche where the ladies were standing on the seats, with eyes sparkling and parted lips, whilst close at hand were Barney, of the omnibus, and a couple of his intimates, demonstrative in their comments upon the race.

Of the eleven horses that started, four had, in hunting parlance, come to grief; and now of the others only five seemed to be in the race.

"Twenty pounds fooled away, Dick," said Pratt, in a whisper, as they now made out, the last of the five, the white cap and pale blue shirt of the rider of White Lassie.

"Be quiet, raven," was the calm reply; "the race is not won yet. Look at that."

*That* was the downfall of the leading horse at the next fence, the poor beast literally turning a somersault, and then getting up to stand shaking itself, as the other competitors got safely over; White Lassie, still last clearing the obstacle with ease.

"Now comes the tug of war," said Trevor; and all eyes were strained in the direction now taken by the horses towards a tolerably wide brook running between stunted pollards; for this once passed, there was only a low fence, and a straight run in to the winning post.

The betting on all sides was now fast and furious, Pratt biting his lips with vexation as, in spite of the distance his favourite was behind, Trevor kept making fresh engagements.

"He'll lose as much in ten minutes as would have kept me for a year," Pratt grumbled to himself; and then he was all eyes for the race, as, on reaching the brook, the leading horse stopped short and shot his rider right into the middle.

The next horse leaped short, and came into the brook with his hoofs pawing the crumbling bank, the rider having to crawl over his head, and help him ignominiously from his position. But long ere this, a great bay had cleared the brook easily, closely followed by White Lassie, whose rider now seemed to press her forward

till she was not more than a length in the rear, the two horses racing hard for the last leap.

At a distance it looked but a low hedge, but there was a deep dyke on the riders' side which would require no little skill to clear; and now, of course, the slightest slip would be fatal to either.

"Don't look so bad now, does it, Franky?" said Trevor.

"No," said the other between his teeth. "Look, how close they are. I couldn't have – bravo!"

For the mare had run up alongside of her great competitor, and together they literally skimmed over the obstacle in front, and landing on the stretch of smooth green sward, raced for home.

"King Dick!"

"White Lassie!"

"King Dick!"

"White Lassie!"

"White Lassie!"

"White Lassie!" rose in a perfect roar, as first one and then the other head appeared in front, till, within a hundred yards of the stand, the white mare's head – neck – shoulders – half-length – whole length appeared in front of her competitor, and, amidst the frantic cheers of the crowd, she leaped in, a clear winner.

"There," said Trevor, turning with a smile to Pratt, "what do \_"

He stopped short, and seemed to have tried to emulate the last hound of the mare; for at that moment, all excitement as she watched the race, Trevor saw one of the occupants of the

barouche give a sudden start, and nearly fall over the side.

The cause was simple, and was seen by Pratt at the same moment.

Barney, of the omnibus, for the delectation of his friends, had, the moment the race was ended, raised his stick, reached over the heads of the crowd, and given the old gentleman a sharp thrust in the ribs.

The result was a violent start, and, as we have said, the young girl was nearly precipitated from the seat upon which she stood.

A hoarse roar of laughter followed the clown-like feat; and then there was a dead silence, for a fresh character appeared upon the scene, and Barney was stooping down shaking his head to get rid of the dizziness caused by a tremendous blow upon his bulldog front.

The silence lasted but for a few moments, during which Richard Trevor caught one frightened glance from the lady in the barouche, and then there was an ugly rush, and he and his friend were borne down the slope of the hill.

The crowd seemed bubbling and seething with excitement for a few minutes, during which the voices of Barney's friends could be heard loudly exclaiming amongst them; and the gentleman named, in whose eyes the tears had previously been gathering from the excess of his mirth, was borne along with the others, still shaking his head, and feeling as if the drops that collected had suddenly been turned to molten metal.

"Come away, Dick; for goodness' sake come away."

“My dear Frank, if you fill a vessel quite full, it begins to run over. This ungodly vessel has been filled full of the gall of bitterness to-day, and now it is running over.”

“But, consider – what are you going to do?”

“I’m going to thrash this fellow within an inch of his life.”

“But, Dick – the disgrace – you can’t fight; you’ve punished him enough. Think of what you’re going to do.”

“I am thinking,” said Trevor, in a quiet, slow way – “thinking that he’s an ugly customer, and that his head looks precious hard.”

“Keep back!” – “Make a ring!” – “Let him have it!”

“Now, Barney!” shouted the bystanders.

“Here, let me get at him!” shouted Barney.

“Call up the police!” said a mounted gentleman. “You can’t fight that fellow, sir.”

“I’m going to try,” said Trevor, grimly.

There was a buzz of voices, the crowd swayed here and there, and an opening was made – Barney having struggled out of his upper garments, and begun to square – when, to the surprise of all, he was suddenly confronted by the stout-built West-country-man, who had leaped off the box of the barouche, now on the other side of the hill; and before the fellow had recovered from his surprise, he was sent staggering back into the arms of his friends with a sensation as if a hive of bees, suddenly let loose, were buzzing and stinging in his head.

That was the end of the engagement, for there was a rush of police through the crowd, people were separated, and by the

time Frank Pratt had fought his way out of a state of semi-suffocation, he was standing with his friend fifty yards away, and the constables were hurrying two men off to the station.

“Let’s get back,” said Trevor. “I can’t let that fellow bear all the brunt of the affair.”

Pratt felt disposed to dissuade, but he gave way, and they got to the outskirts with no little difficulty, just in time to see that the barouche horses had been put to, and that the carriage was being driven off the ground with the West-countryman upon the box.

“He’s out of the pickle, then,” said Pratt.

“There, come away, man; the police have, for once in a way, caught the right offender; don’t let’s get mixed up with it any more.”

“Very well,” said Dick, calmly. “I feel better now; but I should have liked to soundly thrash that scoundrel.”

“It’s done for you,” said Pratt. “Now let’s go and get in your bets.”

“I’m afraid, Franky,” said Trevor, “that you are not only a mercenary man, but a great – I mean little coward.”

“Quite right – you’re quite right,” said Pratt. “I am mercenary because the money’s useful, and enables a man to pay his laundress; and as to being a coward, I am – a dreadful coward. I wouldn’t mind if it were only skin, that will grow again; but fancy being ragged about and muddled in tussle with that fellow! Why, my dear Dick, I should have been six or seven pounds out of pocket in no time.”

"I wonder who those girls were in the barouche," said Trevor, after a pause.

"Daresay you do," was the reply; "so do I. Sweet girls – very; but you may make yourself quite easy; you will never see either of them again."

"Don't know," said Trevor, slowly. "This is a very little place, this world, and I have often run against people I knew in the most out-of-the-way places."

"Yes, you may do so abroad," said Pratt; "but here, in England, you never do anything of the kind, except in novels. I saw a girl once at the chrysanthemum show in the Temple, and hoped I should ran against her again some day, but I never did. She wasn't so nice, though, as these."

Trevor smiled, and then, encountering one or two gentlemen with whom he had made bets, a little pecuniary business followed, after which the friends strolled along the course.

"By the way," said Trevor, "I was just thinking it rather hard upon our friend of the omnibus; those policemen pounced upon him and walked him off, without much consideration of the case. Well, I don't want to see the fellow again; he made my blood boil to-day."

"Then you will see him, you may depend upon it," said Pratt. "That's just the awkwardness of fate, or whoever the lady is that manages these matters. Owe a man ten pounds, and you will meet him every day like clock-work."

"Why, Franky," said Trevor, laying his hand upon the other's

arm, and speaking with the old schoolboy familiarity, "I can't help noticing these money allusions. Have you been very short at times?"

There was a pause of a few moments' duration, and then Pratt said, shortly – "Awfully!"

They walked on then in silence, which was broken at last by Pratt, who said in a hurried way —

"That accounts for my shabby, screwy ways, Dick, so forgive me for having developed into such a mean little beggar. You see, the governor died and left madam with barely enough to live on, and then she pinched for my education, and she had to fight through it all to get ready for my call to the bar, where, in our innocence – bless us! – we expected that briefs would come showering in, and that, once started in chambers in the Temple, my fortune would be made."

"And the briefs do not shower down yet, Franky?" said Trevor.

"Don't come even in drops. Haven't had occasion for an umbrella once yet. So I went out to Egypt with Landells, you know, and wrote letters and articles for the Geographical; and, somehow, I got elected to the 'Wanderers,' and – here's the gorgeous Van and little Flick."

"Ah, Trevor, my dear boy!" said the first-named gentleman, sauntering up, "thought we should see you somewhere. Flick, have the goodness to slip that into the case for me."

As he spoke, he handed the race-glass he held in his delicately-gloved hands to the young baronet, who looked annoyed, but

closed the glass, and slipped it into the sling-case hanging at his companion's side.

"We should have seen you before, but we came upon a pair of rural houris in a barouche."

"Where?" said Pratt, sharply.

"Ah, Pratt – you there? How do?" said the Captain, coolly. "Over the other side of the course, in a lane. I couldn't get Landells away."

"Oh – come!" drawled the young baronet.

"Had his glass turned upon them, and there he was, perfectly transfixed."

"Boot was on the other foot, 'sure you," said Sir Felix. "It was Van first made the discovery. It was so, indeed."

"What, going?" said Vanleigh, as Trevor moved on.

"Yes; we were going to walk all round the course."

"No use to go houri hunting," said Vanleigh, maliciously. "The barouche has gone."

Trevor coloured slightly, and then more deeply, as he saw a smile on the Captain's lip.

"We shall see you again, I daresay, by the stand," he said, taking no notice of the allusion; and, laying a hand upon Pratt's shoulder, he strolled away.

"Well," he said, after a few minutes, "the barouche had not quite disappeared, Franky."

"No," said the other, shortly. "Better for its occupants if it had. I say, Dick, if I had sisters, it would make me feel mad every

time that fellow looked at them.”

“What – Landells?”

“Oh no, Felix is a good sort of fellow enough; getting spoiled, but I don’t think there’s a great deal of harm in him. I’ve taken a dislike to Van, and I’m afraid I’m rather bitter, and – look, there goes, the barouche! Quick, lend me your glass!”

“Thanks, no, Franky,” said Trevor, quietly, raising it to his eyes, and watching the carriage, which was going down a lane to their left, the owner having apparently given orders for the postboy to drive them from place to place, where they could get a view of the races, which had succeeded each other pretty quickly. “Thanks, no, I will keep it; but, for your delectation, I may mention that the ladies look very charming, the old gentleman very important; and – now they are gone.”

He replaced the glass in its case, smiled good-humouredly at his companion, and they walked on.

“Dick,” said Pratt, after a few moments’ silence, “if I were a good-looking fellow like you, I should get married.”

“And how about yourself?” said the other, smiling.

“Self? I marry? My dear old fellow, marriage is a luxury for the rich. I should be very sorry to starve a wife, and – I say, though, I’m as hungry as a hunter. Take me back to London, old fellow, and feed me, without you want to stay.”

“Stay – not I!” said Trevor; “a very little of this sort of thing goes a long way with me. But about those two fellows?”

“Let them try to exist without our company, for once in a

way,” said Pratt, looking earnestly at his friend, who was busy once more with the glass; but, catching his companion’s eye, Trevor closed the binocular, and they left the course.

# The Writer of the Letter

“Woa! d’ye hear? woa! I’m blest if I ever did see sich a ’oss as you are, Ratty, ’ang me if I did. If a chap could drive you without swearing, he must be a downright artch-angel. Holt still, will yer? Look at that now!”

A jig here at the reins, and Ratty went forward; a lash from the whip, and the horse, a wall-eyed, attenuated beast, with a rat-tail, went backwards, ending by backing the hansom cab, in whose shafts he played at clay mill, going round and round in a perfect slough of a new unmade road, cut into ruts by builders’ carts.

“Now, look’ee here,” said the driver, our friend of the Pall Mall accident; “on’y one on us can be master, yer know. If you’ll on’y say as yer can drive, and will drive, why, I’ll run in the sharps, and there’s an end on’t. Hold still, will yer? Yer might be decent to-day.”

The horse suddenly stood still – bogged, with the slushy mud over his fetlocks, and the cab wheels half-way down to the nave.

“Thenky,” said the driver, standing up on his perch; “much obliged. I’m blessed!” he muttered. “Buddy may well say as mine’s allus the dirtiest keb as comes inter the yard, as well as the shabbiest. ’Struth, what a place! Now, then, get on, will yer?”

The horse gave his Roman-profiled head a shake, and remained motionless.

“Just like yer,” said the cabman. “When I want yer to go, yer

stop; and when I don't want yer to go, off yer do go, all of a shy, and knocks 'alf a dozen people into the mud, and gets yer driver nearly took up for reckless driving, as the bobbies calls it. Come, get on."

Another shake of the head, but the four legs seemed planted as if they were to grow.

"Well, there's one thing, Ratty," said the driver, "we're about square, mate; for if ever I've give yer too much of the whip, yer've had it outer me with obstinacy. Look at this now, just when yer oughter be on yer best manners, seeing as I've come about the mischief as yer did; and then, to make it wus, yer takes advantage of yer poor master's weakness, and goes a-leading of him inter temptation sore as can't be bore, and pulls up close aside of a public."

For the spot at which the horse had stopped was at the opening of one of those new suburban streets run up by speculative builders – a street of six and seven-roomed houses, with a flaring tavern at the corner; and the houses, starting from the commencement of the street, in every stage from finished and inhabited, through finished and uninhabited, down to unfinished skeletons with the bricks falling out – foundations just above the ground, foundations merely dug, to end only with a few scaffold poles, and a brick-field in frill work.

"Stops right in front of a public, yer do," said the driver; "and me as thirsty as a sack o' sawdust."

The cabman looked at the public-house, to read golden

announcements of "Tipkin's Entire," of "The Celebrated Fourpenny Ale," and the "Brown London Stout, threepence per pot in your own jugs," and his whip-hand was drawn across his lips. Then the whip-hand was set free, and forced its way into his pockets, where it rattled some halfpence.

"Must have 'alf pint now, anyhow," he muttered, and he made as if to fasten the reins to the roof of the cab, but only to plump himself down into his seat again, jig the reins, and give his whip, a sharp crack.

"I'll tell the missus on you, Hatty, see if I don't?" he said, "a-trying to get your master back into his old ways. Get on with yer, or yer'll get it directly."

He gave his whip such a vigorous crack in the air that Ratty consented to go, and dragging the muddy cab partially down the new street, its driver pulled up by where a knot of shoeless boys were ornamenting, and amusing themselves with, the new ill-laid pavement. One was standing like a small Colossus of Rhodes, with his grimy feet at either corner of a loose slab, making the liquid mud beneath squirt out into a puddle, while a companion carefully turned a naked foot into a stamp, dipped it in the mud, and printed a pattern all along the pave, till a third smudged it out, and a fight ensued.

"Hallo, yer young dogs," roared the cabman, and his long whip gave a crack which stopped the fray; "a-fightin' like that! Where's Whaley's Place?"

"First turn to the left, and first to the right," shouted two boys.

“And is it all like this here?” said the cabman.

“No; you should have gone round Brick Street. I’ll show yer.”

“Hook on, then,” said the cabman, turning his horse; and, to the extreme envy of his companions, the little speaker “hooked on” behind, his muddy feet slipping about on the step; but he clung fast, shouting his directions till the driver reached the main road, made a *détour*, and arrived at last in Whaley’s Place, where the present of a copper sent the boy off in high glee to spend it in some coveted luxury.

“Nice sorter cheerful spot this,” said the cabman, taking an observation of the street, which was of a similar class to the new one he had left, only that the houses had fallen into a state of premature decay; quite half, too, had declined from the genteel private and taken to trade, with or without the bow window of shop life. For instance, one displayed a few penny illustrated sheets and an assortment of fly-specked clay pipes, the glass panes bearing the legends, “Tobacco” and “Cigars.” Another house had the door wide open, and sundry squeaks issued therefrom – squeaks of a manufacturing tendency, indicative of grinding, the process being explained by a red and yellow board, having an artistic drawing of the machinery used, and the words, “Mangling Done Here.” Then, after an interval of private houses, there was a fishmonger’s, with a stock-in-trade of four plaice and ten bloaters, opposite to a purveyors, in whose open window – the parlour by rights, with the sashes out – were displayed two very unpleasant-looking decapitations of the gentle sheep, and three

trays of pieces, labelled ninepence, sevenpence, and sixpence individually, apparently not from any variation of quality, but the amount of bone.

“A werry nice sorter place,” said the cabman, gazing down at the numerous children, and the preternaturally big-headed, tadpoleish babies, whose porters were staring at him. “Said it was a little groshers shop. Ah, here we are.”

It was only four doors farther on, and at this establishment there was a shop front, with the name “B. Sturt” on the fascia. The stock here did not seem to be extensive, though the place was scrupulously clean. There was a decorative and pictorial aspect about the trade carried on, which was evidently that of a chandler’s shop; for, in attenuated letters over the door, you read that Barnabas Sturt was licenced by the Board of Inland Revenue to deal in tea, coffee, pepper, vinegar, and tobacco. The panes of the windows were gay with show cards, one of which displayed the effects of Tomkins’s Baking Powder, while in another a lady was holding up fine linen got up with Winks’s Prussian Blue, and smiling sweetly at a neighbouring damsel stiff with regal starch. There were pictorial cards, too, telling of the celebrated Unadulterated Mustard, the Ho-fi Tea Company, and Fort’s Popular Coffee.

Descending from his perch, the cabman stroked and patted his horse, and then entered the shop, setting a bell jingling, and standing face to face with a counter, a pair of scales, and a box of red herrings.

Nobody came, so he tapped the floor with his whip, and a voice growled savagely from beyond a half-glass door which guarded an inner room —

Waiting patiently for a few moments, the cabman became aware of the fact that Barnabas Sturt consumed his tobacco as well as dealt in it; and at last, growing impatient, he peered through the window, to perceive that a very thin, sour-looking woman, with high cheek bones, was dipping pieces of rag into a tea-cup of vinegar and water, and applying them to the contused countenance of a bull-headed gentleman, who lay back in a chair smoking, and making the woman wince and sneeze by puffing volumes of the coarse, foul vapour into her face.

“Better mind what you are doing!” he growled.

“Can’t help it, dear,” said the woman, plaintively, “if you smoke me so. Well, what now?” she said, waspishly, and changing her tone to the metallic aggressive common amongst some women.

“Been having a — ?” the cabman finished his sentence by grinning, and giving his arms a pugilistic flourish.

“What’s that got to do with you?” growled Mr Sturt. “What d’yer come into people’s places like that for?”

“Because people says as they sells the werry best tobacco at threepence a hounce,” said the cabman. “Give’s half-hounce.”

“Go an’ weigh it,” said Mr Sturt.

The woman dropped the piece of rag she held, and passed shrinkingly into the shop, took the already weighed-out tobacco

from a jar, and held out her hand for the money.

“Now then,” growled Mr Sturt from the back room, “hand that over here, will yer?”

The cabman walked into the room and laid down the money, slowly emptying the paper afterwards into a pouch, which he took from a side pocket.

“This here’s twenty-seven, ain’t it?” said the cabman then.

“Yes, it is twenty-seven,” cried Mr Sturt – our friend Barney of the steeplechase – and he seemed so much disturbed that he leaped up and backed into a corner of the room. “You ain’t got nothin’ again’ me, come, now.”

“No, I ain’t got nothin’ again’ yer,” said the cabman, quietly, but with his eye twinkling. “Did yer think I was – ?”

He finished his sentence with a wink.

“Never you mind what I thought,” said Barney. “What d’ yer want here?”

“Only to know if Mrs Lane lives here.”

“Yes, she do,” cried the woman, spitefully; “and why couldn’t you ring the side bell, and not come bothering us?”

“Because I wanted some tobacco, mum,” said the cabman, quietly.

“Oh!” said the woman, in a loud voice; “with their cabs, indeed, a-comin’ every day: there’ll be kerridges next!”

“Just you come and go on with your job,” said Barney, with a snarl.

“I’m coming!” said the woman, sharply. Then to the cabman –

“You can go this way;” and she flung open a side door and called up the stairs – “Here, Mrs Lane, another cab’s come for you. There, I s’pose you can go up,” she added; and then, in a voice loud enough to be heard upstairs, “if people would only pay their way instead of riding in cabs, it would be better for some of us.”

A door had been heard to open on the first floor, and then, as the vinegary remark of Mrs Sturt rose, voices were heard whispering. The cabman went straight up the uncarpeted stairs, to pause before the half-open door, as he heard, in a low conversation, the words —

“Mamma – dear mamma, pray don’t notice it.”

The next moment the door opened fully, and the pale, worn-looking woman of the accident stood before the cabman, who shuffled off his hat, and stood bowing.

“Jenkles, mum,” he said – “Samuel Jenkles, nine ’underd seven six, as knocked you down in Pall Mall.”

The woman stepped back and laid her hand upon her side, seeming about to fall, when the cabman started forward and caught her, helping her to a chair in the shabbily-furnished room, as the door swung to.

“Oh, mamma,” cried a girl of about seventeen, springing forward, the work she had been engaged upon falling on the floor.

“It is nothing, my dear,” gasped the other; though her cheek was ashy pale, and the dew gathered on her forehead.

“She’s fainting, my dear,” said the cabman. “Got anything in

the house?"

"Yes, some water," said the girl, supporting the swooning woman, and fanning her face.

"Water!" ejaculated the cabman, in a tone of disgust. "Here, I'll be back directly."

He caught up a little china mug from a side table, and ran out, nearly upsetting Mrs Sturt on the landing and Barney at the foot of the stairs, to return at the end of a few minutes, and find the passage vacant; so he hastily ran up, to see that Mrs Lane had come to in his absence, though she looked deadly pale.

"Here, mum," he said, earnestly, "drink this; don't be afeard, it's port wine. A drop wouldn't do you no harm neither, Miss," he added, as he glanced at the pale, thin face and delicate aspect of the girl.

Mrs Lane put the mug to her lips, and then made an effort, and sat up.

"You was hurt, then, mum?" said the cabman, anxiously.

"Only shaken – frightened," she said, in a feeble voice.

"And my coming brought it all up again, and upset you. It's jest like me, mum, I'm allus a-doing something; ask my missus if I ain't."

"It did startle me," said Mrs Lane, recovering herself. "But you wished to see me. I am better now, Netta," she said to the girl, who clung to her. "Place a chair."

"No, no, arter you, Miss," said the cabman; "I'm nobody;" and he persisted in standing. "Scuse me, but I knows a real lady

when I sees one; I'll stand, thanky. You see, it was like this: I saw Tommy Runce on the stand – him, you know, as brought you home from the front of the club there – and I ast him, and he told me where he brought you. And when I was talking to the missus last night, she says, says she, 'Well, Sam,' she says, 'the least you can do is to drive up and see how the poor woman is, even if you lose half a day.' 'Well,' I says, 'that's just what I was a thinking,' I says, 'only I wanted to hear you say it too.' So you see, mum, thinking it was only decent like, I made bold to come and tell you how sorry I am, and how it was all Ratty's fault; for he's that beast of a horse – begging your pardon, mum, and yours too, Miss – as it's impossible to drive. He oughter ha' been called Gunpowder, for you never know when he's going off."

"It was *very* kind and very thoughtful of you, and – and your wife," said Mrs Lane; "and indeed I thank you; but I was not hurt, only shaken."

"Then it shook all the colour outer your face, mum, and outer yours too, Miss," he said, awkwardly. "You'll excuse me, but you look as if you wanted a ride every day out in the country."

As he spoke, the girl glanced at a bundle of violets in a broken glass of water in the window; then the tears gathered in her eyes. She seemed to struggle for a moment against her emotion, and then started up and burst into a passion of weeping.

"My darling!" whispered Mrs Lane, catching her in her arms, and trying to soothe her, "pray – pray don't give way."

"I've done it again," muttered Jenkles – "I'm allus a-doing it

– it is my natur’ to.”

The girl made a brave effort, dashed away the tears, shook back her long dark hair, and tried to smile in the speaker’s face, but so piteous and sad a smile that Jenkles gave a gulp; for he had been glancing round the room, and in that glance had seen a lady and her daughter living in a state of semi-starvation, keeping life together evidently by sewing the hard, toilsome slop-work which he saw scattered upon the table and chairs.

“She has been ill,” said Mrs Lane, apologetically, “and has not quite recovered. We are very much obliged to you for calling.”

“Well, you see, mum,” said Jenkles, “it was to set both of us right, like – you as I didn’t mean to do it, and me and my missus that you warn’t hurt. And now I’m here, mum, if you and the young lady there would like a drive once or twice out into the country, why, mum, you’ve only got to say the word, and – ”

“You’ll excuse me, ma’am,” said the sharp voice of Mrs Sturt, laying great stress on the “ma’am,” “but my ’usban’ is below, and going out on business, and he’d be much obliged if you’d pay us the rent.”

The girl looked in a frightened way at her mother, who rose, and said, quietly —

“Mrs Sturt, you might have spared me this – and before a stranger, too.”

“I don’t know nothing about no strangers, ma’am,” said Mrs Sturt, defiantly. “I only know that my master sent me up for the rent; for he says if people can afford to come home in cabs, and

order cabs, and drink port wine, they can afford to pay their rent; so, if you please, ma'am, if you'll be kind – ”

“Why, them two cabs warn't nothing to do with the lady at all,” said Jenkles, indignantly; “and as for the wine, why, that was mine – and – and I paid for it.”

“And drunk it too, I dessay,” said Mrs Sturt. “Which it's four weeks at seven-and-six, if you please, ma'am – thirty shillings, if you please.” The girl stood up, her eyes flashing, and a deep flush in her cheeks; but at a sign from her mother she was silent.

“Mrs Sturt,” she said, “I cannot pay you now; give me till Saturday.”

“That won't do for my master, ma'am; he won't be put off.”

“But the work I have in hand, Mrs Sturt, will half pay you – you shall receive that.”

“I'm tired on it,” said Mrs Sturt, turning to the door; “p'r'aps I'd better send him up.”

“Oh, mamma,” said the girl, in a low, frightened voice, and she turned of a waxen pallor, “don't let him come here.”

And she clung trembling to her arm as the retreating footsteps of Mrs Sturt were heard, and, directly after, her vinegary voice in colloquy with her husband.

“Here, I'll soon let 'em know,” he was heard to say, roughly.

The trembling girl hid her face on her mother's shoulder; but only to start up directly, very pale and firm, as Barney's heavy step was heard.

“Blame me if I can stand this,” muttered Jenkles.

Then without a word he stuck his hat on his head and walked out of the room, in time to meet the master of the house on the stairs.

“Now, then?” said Barney, as Jenkles stopped short.

“Now, then,” said Jenkles, “where are you going?”

“In there,” said Barney, savagely; and he nodded towards the room.

“No, you ain’t,” said Jenkles; “you’re a-going downstairs.”

“Oh, am I? I’ll just show you about that.”

He rushed up two more of the stairs; but Jenkles did not budge an inch – only met the brute with such a firm, unflinching look in his ugly eyes that the bully was cowed, puzzled at the opposition.

“You’re a-going downstairs to send yer missus up; and jest you tell her to go and take a spoonful o’ treacle out o’ the shop afore she does come up, so as she’ll be a little bit sweeter when the ladies pays her.”

Then Jenkles walked back into the room, rammed his hand into his pocket, and pulled out a dirty canvas bag, out of which he fished a piece of rag tied tightly, in one corner of which was a sovereign, which had to be set free with his teeth. From another corner he tried to extricate a half-sovereign, but it would not come, the knot was too tight.

“Here, lends a pair o’ scissors,” he exclaimed, angrily.

“What are you going to do?” said Mrs Lane.

“To cut this here out,” said Jenkles; “there, that’s it. Here’s a sov and a arf, mum, as was saved up for our rent. I never did

such a thing afore, but that's nothing to you. I'll lend it you, and you'll pay me again when you can. There's my name on that dirty envelope, and you'll send it, I know."

"No," exclaimed Mrs Lane, in a choking voice, "I —"

At this moment Mrs Sturt entered the room, looking very grim; but no sooner did she see the money lying upon the table than she walked up, took it, said "Thanky," shortly, and jerked a letter upon the table.

Jenkles was following her, when Mrs Lane cried "Stop!" seized the letter, tore it open, and read it.

It was in reply to the second she had written, both of which had reached Captain Vanleigh, though she believed the first had been lost.

Her letter had been brief —

"Help us — we are destitute.

"A.V."

The reply was —

"Do what I wish, and I will help you."

No signature.

Mrs Lane clenched her teeth as she crushed the letter in her hand, then raised her eyes to see the cabman at the door, with her daughter kissing his hand.

"Oh, God!" she moaned, "has it come to this!"

The next minute Netta was clinging to her, and they wept in unison as the sound of wheels was heard; and Sam Jenkles

apostrophised his ugly steed.

“Ratty,” he said, “I wonder what it feels like to be a fool – whether it’s what I feels just now?”

There was a crack of the whip here, and the hansom trundled along.

“How many half-pints are there in thirty bob, I wonder?” said Sam again.

And then, as he turned into the main road at Upper Holloway, he pulled up short – to the left London, to the right over the hills to the country.

“Not above four or five mile, Ratty, and then there’ll be no missus to meet. Ratty, old man, I think I’d better drive myself to Colney Hatch.”

# All among the Ferns

An autumn morning in a lane. A very prosaic beginning. But there are lanes and lanes; so let not the reader imagine a dreary, clayey way between two low-cropped hedges running right across the flat landscape with mathematical severity, and no more exciting object in view than a heap of broken stones ready for repairs. Our lane is a very different affair, for it is a Cornish lane.

Do you know what a Cornish lane is like – a lane in a valley? Perhaps not; so we will describe the winding road, where, basket in hand, Tiny and Fin Rea, walking home, were seeking ferns.

In this land of granite, a clear field is an exception – the great bare bones of earth peer out in all directions; and however severe the taste of the first maker of a beaten track, unless he were ready with engineering tools and blasting appliances, instead of making his way straight forward, he would have to go round and dodge about, to avoid the masses of stone. Hence, then, many of the lanes wind and double between piled-up heaps of granite, through steep gorges, and rise and fall in the most eccentric way; while – Nature having apparently scoured the hill-tops, and swept the fertile soil into the vales along these dell-like lanes – the verdure is thick and dense; trees interlace overhead till you walk in a pale green twilight flecked with golden rays; damp dripping stones are covered with velvet moss; a tiny

spring trickles here, and forms crystal pools, mirroring delicate fronds of fern; gnarled oaks twist tortuous trunks in the great banks, and throw distorted arms across the road; half hidden from sight – here five, there fifty feet below the *toad*– a rapid stream goes musically onward towards the sea, singing silvery songs to the little speckly trout which hide beneath the granite shelves in their crystal homes. Verdure rich and bright on every side, and above all ferns – ferns of the tiniest, and ferns tall and towering, spreading luxuriant fronds, and sending up spikes of flowers, while lesser neighbours form patches of wondrous beauty – tropic palm forests in miniature.

“Now, then, who’s going to take my picture?” cried Fin Rea, plumping herself down on a mossy stone, and snatching off her hat. “Should I do now, Tiny?”

Undoubtedly: for her lithe, slight form, in its grey muslin, stood out from the ashy brown of the oak trunk that formed the background, while a wondrous beauty of light and shade fell through the leafy network above.

“Oh, isn’t it heavenly to be back? I couldn’t live in London. I liked the theatres, and going to the race, and seeing pictures, but I should soon be tired of it all. It makes you so cross. I believe the blacks get into your temper. I say, Tiny, I wonder what Aunt Matty would be like if she lived in London?”

“Don’t make fun of poor Aunt Matty,” said her sister. “She has had a good deal of trouble in her life.”

“And made it,” said Fin, jumping up. “Oh, I say, look down

there," she cried, pointing through the ferns at her feet to a cool, dark pool, twenty feet below; "there's a place. Oh, Tiny, if I thought I should ever grow into such a screwy, cross old maid as Aunt Matty, I think I should jump down there and let the fishes eat."

"Fin, that little tongue of yours goes too fast," said her sister.

"Let it," was the laconic reply. "Tongues were made to talk with. Let's go on; I'm tired of digging up ferns. Wasn't it funny, seeing Humphrey Lloyd at that race? And I wonder who those gentlemen were."

"Do you mean the people who stared at us so through the race-glass?"

"No, I don't, Miss Forgetful. I mean the big, dark man, and the funny, little fierce fellow with his hair brushed into points. You don't remember, I suppose?"

"Oh yes," said Tiny, quietly. "I remember, for I was very much frightened."

"Ah, I hope the knight-errant wasn't hurt; and, oh, do look, Tiny," Fin cried, putting down her basket. "What's that growing in that tree?"

As she spoke, she climbed from stone to stone up the steep bank, till she was stopped short by her dress being caught by a bramble.

"Oh, Tiny, come and unloose me, do. I'm caught."

There was nothing for it but that her sister should clamber up the bank, and unhook the dress, which she did, when Fin gave

her a hand, and drew her up to her side.

“What a tomboy you do keep, Fin,” said Tiny, panting; “see how my dress is torn.”

“Never mind, I’ll sew it up for you. What’s the good of living in the country if you can’t be free as the birds? Sweet, sweet, sweet! Oh, you beauty!” she cried, as a goldfinch sounded his merry lay. “Tiny, shouldn’t you like to be a bird?”

“No,” was the quiet reply. “I would rather be what I am.”

“I should like to be a bird,” said Fin, placing one foot on an excrescence of a stumpy pollard oak, and, making a jump, she caught hold of a low bough.

“But not now,” cried Tiny. “What are you going to do?”

“Going to do?” laughed Fin. “Why, climb this tree;” and she got a step higher.

“Oh, Fin, how foolish! Whatever for? Suppose some one came by?”

“Nobody comes along here at this time of the day, my dear; so here goes, and if I fall pick up my pieces, and carry them safely home to dear Aunt Matty. ‘And the dicky-bird sang in the tree,’” she trilled out, as step by step she drew herself up into the crown of the stumpy, gnarled pollard.

“Oh, Fin!” exclaimed her sister.

“It’s all right, Miss Timidity. I’m safe, and I came on purpose,” cried Fin, from up in her perch, her face glowing, and eyes sparkling with merriment.

“But what are you trying to do?”

“To get some of this, sweet innocent. You can’t see, I suppose, what it is?”

“No, indeed, I cannot,” said Tiny – “yes, I can. Why, it’s mistletoe.”

“Mistletoe, is it, Miss? Ahem!” cried Finn, resting one little fist upon her hip, – and stretching out the other – “Tableau – young Druid priestess about to cut the sacred plant with a fern trowel.”

“Fin, dear, do come down. Don’t touch it.”

“Not touch it? But I will. There!” she cried, tearing off a piece of the pretty parasite. “I’ll wear that in my hat all the way home as a challenge to nobody, and on purpose to make Aunt Matty cross. She’ll – ”

“Hist, Fin; oh, be quiet,” whispered Tiny.

“Eh? What’s the matter?” cried Fin, from her perch.

“Oh, pray be quiet; here’s somebody coming.”

“Never mind,” said Fin. “You stand behind the tree – they can’t see us – till I shout ‘Hallo!’”

But Fin kept very quiet, peering down squirrel-wise, as a step was heard coming along the lane, and she caught glimpses through the trees of a man in a rough tweed suit and soft felt hat. The face was that of a keen, earnest man of eight-and-forty, with a full beard, just touched by life’s frost, sharp dark eyes, and altogether a countenance not handsome, but likely to win confidence.

The newcomer was walking with an easy stride, humming

scraps of some ditty, and he swung by his side an ordinary tin can, holding about a quart of some steaming compound.

“It’s Saint Timothy,” whispered Fin, from her perch. “Keep close.”

Tiny drew her dress closer together, and pressed to the tree trunk, looking terribly guilty, while her sister went on watching.

The steps came nearer, and the stepper’s eyes were busy with a keen look for everything, as he seemed to feast on the beauties of Nature around him.

“I love the merry, merry sunshine,” he sang, in a bold, bluff voice; “and – Hallo, what the dickens have we here?” he cried, stopping short, and setting two hearts beating quickly. “Lady’s basket and ferns dug up – yes, within the last hour. Why, that must be – Hallo, I spy, hi!”

For as he spoke his eyes had been wandering about, amongst the brakes and bushes, and he had caught sight of a bit of muslin dress peeping out from behind a gnarled oak.

The result of his summons was that the scrap of dress was softly drawn out of sight, and a voice from up in the ties whispered —

“Oh, go down, Tiny, and then he won’t see me.”

“Hallo! whispers in the wind,” cried the newcomer, glancing higher, and seeing a bit of Fin. “Is it a bird? By Jove, I wish I’d a gun. No: poachers – trespassers. Here, you fellows, come out!”

# Jenkles's Confession

Sam Jenkles always boasted that he never kept anything from his wife; but he was silent for two days; and then, after a hard day's work, he was seated in his snug kitchen, watching the browning of a half-dozen fine potatoes in a Dutch oven before the fire, when Mrs Jenkles, a plump, bustling little woman, who was stitching away at a marvellous rate, her needle clicking at every stroke, suddenly exclaimed —

“Sam, you'd better give me that two pound you've got, and I'll put it with the rest.”

Sam didn't answer, only tapped his pipe on the hob.

Mrs Jenkles glanced at him, and then said —

“Did you hear what I said, Sam?”

“Yes.”

“Then why don't you give it me? Draw that oven back an inch.”

“Aint got it – only half a sov,” said Sam, leaving the potatoes to burn.

Mrs Jenkles dropped her work upon her lap, and her face grew very red.

“Didn't you say, Sam, that if I'd trust you, you wouldn't do so any more?”

“Yes.”

“And you've broke your word, Sam.”

“I aint, 'pon my soul, I aint, Sally,” cried Sam, earnestly. “I've

had my pint for dinner, and never touched a drop more till I had my pint at home.”

“Then where’s that money?”

“Spent it,” said Sam, laconically.

“Yes, at the nasty public-houses, Sam. An’ it’s too bad, and when I’d trusted you!”

“Wrong!” said Sam.

“Then where is it?”

“Fooled it away.”

“Yes, of course. But I didn’t expect it, Sam; I didn’t, indeed.”

“All your fault,” said Sam.

“Yes, for trusting you,” said Mrs Jenkles, bitterly. “Nice life we lead: you with the worst horse and the worst cab on the rank, and me with the worst husband.”

“Is he, Sally?” said Sam, with a twinkle of the eye.

“Yes,” said Mrs Jenkles, angrily; “and that makes it all the worse, when he might be one of the best. Oh, Sam,” she said, pitifully, “do I ever neglect you or your home?”

“Not you,” he said, throwing down his pipe, and looking round at the shining tins, bright fireplace, and general aspect of simple comfort and cleanliness. “You’re the best old wife in the world.”

And he got up and stood behind her chair with his arms round her neck.

“Don’t touch me, Sam. I’m very, very much hurt.”

“Well, it was all your fault, little woman,” he said, holding the comely face, so that his wife could not look round at him.

“And how, pray?” said she.

“Didn’t you send me up to see that poor woman as Ratty knocked down?”

“Yes; but did you go?”

“To be sure I did – you told me to go.”

“Then why didn’t you tell me you had been?”

“Didn’t like to,” said Sam.

“Such stuff!” cried Mrs Jenkles. “But what’s that got to do with it?”

Sam remained silent.

“What’s that got to do with it, Sam?”

Silence still.

“Now, Sam, you’ve got something on your mind, so you’d better tell me. Have you been drinking?”

“No, I haven’t,” said Sam, “and I don’t mean to again.”

“Then I’m very sorry for what I said.”

“I know that,” said Sam.

“But what does it all mean?”

“Well, you see,” said Sam, “I’ve been a fool.”

And after a little more hesitation, he told all about his visit.

Mrs Jenkles sat looking at the fire, rubbing her nose with her thimble, both she and Sam heedless that the potatoes were burning.

“You’ve been took in, Sam, I’m afraid,” she said at last.

“Think so?” he said.

“Well, I hope not; but you’ve either been took in, or done a

very, very kind thing.”

“Well, we shall see,” he said.

“Yes, we shall see.”

“You aint huffy with me?”

“I don’t know yet,” said Mrs Jenkles; “but I shall go up and see them.”

“Ah, do,” said Sam.

“Yes, I mean to see to the bottom of it,” said Mrs Jenkles. “I haven’t patience with such ways.”

“They can’t help being poor.”

“I don’t mean them; I mean those people they’re with. I couldn’t do it.”

“Not you,” said Sam. “But I say, don’t Mr Lacy go next week?”

“Yes.”

“And the rooms will be empty?”

“Yes,” said Mrs Jenkles. “I have put the bill up in the window; he said he didn’t mind.”

Sam Jenkles went and sat down in his chair with an air of relief and looked at his wife.

Mrs Jenkles looked at Sam, as if the same idea was in both hearts. Then she jumped up suddenly.

“Oh, Sam, the potatoes are spoiling!”

They were, but they were not spoiled; and Sam Jenkles made a very hearty meal, washing it down with the pint of beer which he termed his allowance.

“Ah!” he said, speaking like a man with a load off his mind,

“this here’s a luxury as the swells never gets – a regular good, hot, mealy tater, fresh from the fire. It’s a wonderful arrangement of nature that about taters.”

“Why?” said Mrs Jenkles, as she emptied the brown coat of another potato on her husband’s plate. “What do you mean?”

“Why, the way in which roast potatoes and beer goes together. Six mouthfuls of tater, and then a drink of beer to get rid of the dryness.”

“I wish you wouldn’t be so fond of talking about beer, Sam,” said Mrs Jenkles.

“All right, my dear,” said Sam; and he finished his supper, retook his place by the fireside, filled his pipe, glanced at the Dutch clock swinging its pendulum to and fro; and then, as he lit the tobacco – “Ah! this is cheery. Glad I aint on the night shift.”

Mrs Jenkles was very quiet as she bustled about and cleared the table, before once more taking her place on the other side of the fire.

“Ratty went first-rate to-day,” said Sam, after a few puffs.

But Mrs Jenkles did not take any notice; she only made her needle click, and Sam kept glancing at her as he went on smoking. At last she spoke.

“I shall go up and see those people, Sam, for I’m afraid you’ve been taken in. Was she a married woman.”

“Yes,” said Sam; “I saw her ring. But I say, you know, ’taint my fault, Sally,” he said, plaintively. “I was born a soft un.”

“Then it’s time you grew hard, Sam,” said Mrs Jenkles,

bending over her work. "Thirty shillings takes a deal of saving with people like us."

"Yes," said Sam, "it do, 'specially when you has so many bad days to make up."

"You ought not to have to pay more than twelve shillings a day for that cab, Sam."

"I told the gov'nor so, and he said as it oughter be eighteen, and plenty would be glad to get it at that."

Mrs Jenkles tightened her mouth, and shook her head.

"Oh! I say, Sally," said Sam, plaintively, "I've been worried about that money; and now it was off my mind, I did think as it was all right. You've reglarly put my pipe out."

Mrs Jenkles rose, took a splint from the chimney-piece, lit it, and handed it to her husband.

"No," he said, rubbing his ear with the stem of his pipe, "it aint that, my dear; I meant figgeratively, as old Jones says."

Mrs Jenkles threw the match into the fire, and resumed her work for a few minutes; then glanced at the clock, and put away her work.

"Yes, Sam, I shall go to Upper Holloway to-morrow, and see what I think."

"Do, my lass, do," said Sam, drearily. Then, in an undertone, as he tapped his pipe-bowl on the hob, "Well, it's out now, and no mistake. Shall we go to bed?"

## **“Our next meeting.”**

Fin Rea stood gazing down for a few moments, and then said – “No, indeed, I can’t, Mr Mervyn. Pray go.”

“Oh, Mr Mervyn,” said Tiny, softly, “don’t tease her any more.”

“It is hard to refuse such a request,” said the newcomer; “but, as trespassers, you must leave me to administer punishment. And, besides, I owe Miss Fin here a grudge. She has been laughing at me, I hear.”

“I’ll never do so any more, Mr Mervyn – I won’t indeed,” cried Fin; “only let me off this time.”

“Jump, you little gipsy, jump,” cried Mr Mervyn.

“It’s too high – I daren’t,” cried Fin.

“I have seen you leap down from a place twice as high, my little fawn. Now, then, jump at once.”

Fin looked despairingly round for a few moments, then made a piteous grimace, and lastly sprang boldly down into the strong arms, which held her as if she had been a child.

“Now,” said Mr Mervyn, “about the mistletoe?”

“Mr Mervyn, pray. Oh, it’s too bad. I...”

“Don’t be frightened, little one,” he said, tenderly, as he retained her with one hand, to smooth her breeze-blown hair with the other. “There, come along; let me help you down.”

But Fin started from him, like the fawn he had called her, and

sprang down the great bank.

“Mind my soup,” shouted Mr Mervyn; and only just in time, for it was nearly upset. Then he helped Tiny down, blushing and vexed; but no sooner were they in the lane, than Fin clapped her hands together, and exclaimed —

“Oh, Mr Mervyn, don’t go and tell everybody what a rude tomboy of a sister Tiny is blessed with. I am so ashamed.”

“Come along, little ones,” he said, laughing, as he stooped to pick up the tin, and at the same time handed Fin her basket.

“How nice the soup smells,” said Fin, mischievously.

“Yes; you promised to come and taste it some day,” said Mr Mervyn; “but you have never been. I’m very proud of my soup, young ladies, and have many a hard fight with Mrs Dykes about it.”

“Do you?” said Tiny, for he looked seriously at her as he spoke.

“What about?” said Fin, coming to her sister’s help.

“About the quantity of water,” said Mr Mervyn. “You know we’ve a big copper for the soup; and Mrs Dykes has an idea in her head that eight quarts of water go to the gallon, mine being that there are only four.”

“Why, of course,” laughed Fin.

“So,” said Mr Mervyn, “she says I have the soup too strong, while I say she wants to make it too weak.”

“And what does old Mrs Trelyan say?”

“Say?” laughed Mr Mervyn. “Oh, the poor old soul lets me

take it to her as a favour, and says she eats it to oblige me.”

“It’s so funny with the poor people about,” said Fin; “they want things, but they won’t take them as if you were being charitable to them; they all try to make it seem like a favour they are doing you.”

“Well, I don’t know that I object to that much,” said Mr Mervyn.

“They’re all pleased enough to see us,” continued Fin; “but when Aunt Matty and papa go they preach at them, and the poor people don’t like it.”

“Fin!” said Tiny, in a warning voice.

“I don’t care,” said Fin; “it’s only Mr Mervyn, and we may speak to him. I say, Mr Mervyn, did you hear about old Mrs Poltrene and Aunt Matty?”

“Fin!” whispered Tiny, colouring.

“I *will* tell Mr Mervyn; it isn’t any harm,” cried downright Fin. And her sister, seeing that she only made matters worse, remained silent.

“Mr Mervyn, you know old Mrs Poltrene, of course?”

“Oh yes, the old fisherman’s wife down by the cliff.”

“Yes; and Aunt Matty went to see her, and talked to her in her way, and it made the old lady so cross that – that – oh, I mustn’t tell you.”

“Nonsense, child, go on.”

“She – she told Aunt Matty to go along and get married,” tittered Fin, “and she could stay at home and mend her husband’s

stockings, and leave people alone; and Aunt Matty thought it so horrible that she came home and went to bed.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed Mr Mervyn. “Mrs Poltrene has a temper; but here we are – you’ll come in?”

Tiny was for drawing back, but her sister prevailed. They had been walking along the lane, and had now reached a long, low cottage, built after the fashion of the district, with massive blocks of granite, and roofed with slabs of the same. There was a strip of garden, though gardens were almost needless, banked up as the place was on all sides with the luxuriant wild growth of the valley. On one side, though, of the doorway was the simple old fuchsia of bygone days, with a stem here as thick as a man’s wrist – a perfect fuchsia tree, in fact; and on the other side, leafing and flowering right over the roof, a gigantic hydrangea, the flower we see in eastern England in pots, but here of a delicious blue.

“Any one at home,” said Mr Mervyn, walking straight in. “Here, Mrs Trelyan, I’ve brought you two visitors,” and a very old, white-haired woman, who was making a pilchard net, held her hand over her forehead.

“Sit down, girls – sit down,” she said, in the melodious sing-song voice of the Cornish people. “I know them – they come and see me sometimes. Eh? How am I? But middling – but middling. It’s been a bad season for me. Oh, soup? Ah, you’ve brought me some more soup; you may empty it into that basin. I didn’t want it; but you may leave it. They’ve brought me up some hake and a few herrings, so I could have got on without. That last soup was

too salt, master.”

“Was it?” said Mr Mervyn, giving a merry glance at Fin. “Well, never mind, I’ll speak to Mrs Dykes about it.”

“Ay, she’s an east-country woman. Those folks don’t know much about cooking. Well, young ladies, I hear you have been to London.”

“Yes, Mrs Trelyan.”

“And you’re glad to come back?”

“Yes, that we are,” said Fin.

“Ay, I’ve heard it’s a poor, lost sort of place, London,” said the old lady. “I never went, and I never would. My son William wanted to take me once in his boot; but I wouldn’t go. Your father was a wise man to buy Tolcarne; but it’ll never be such a place as Penreife.”

“You know young Trevor’s coming back?” said Mr Mervyn.

“Ay, I know,” said the old lady. “Martha Lloyd came up to tell me, as proud as a peacock, about her young master, talking about his fine this and fine that, till she nearly made me sick. I should get rid of her and her man if I was him.”

“What, Lloyd, the butler?” said Mr Mervyn, smiling.

“Yes,” said the old lady, grimly, “they’re Welsh people; so’s that young farm-bailiff of his.”

“You know the whole family?” said Mr Mervyn.

“Why, I was born here!” said the old lady, “and I ought to. We’ve been here for generations. Ah! and so the young squire’s coming back. Time he did; going gadding off into foreign

countries all this time. Why, he's six or seven and twenty now. Ay, how time goes," continued the old lady, who was off now on her hobby. "Why, it was like yesterday that the Lloyds got Mrs Trevor to send for their sister from some place with a dreadful name; and she did, and I believe it was her death, when she might have had a good Cornish nurse; and the next thing we heard was that there was a son, and the very next week there was a grand funeral, and the poor squire was never the same man again. Ah! it was an artful trick that – sending for the nurse because Mrs Lloyd wanted her too; and young Humphrey Lloyd was born the same week. Ay, they were strange times. It seemed directly after that we had the news about the squire, who got reckless-like, always out in his yacht, a poor matchwood sort of a thing, not like our boots, and it was blown on the Longships one night, and there wasn't even a body came ashore."

"Rather a sad family history," said Mr Mervyn.

"Ay, sad enough," said the woman; "and now the young squire's coming home at last from sea, but he'll never be such a man as his father."

"Think not?" said Mr Mervyn, musing.

"Sure not," said the old woman. "Why, he was petted and spoiled by those Lloyds while he was a boy, and a pretty limb he was. Him and that young Lloyd was always in some mischief. Pretty pranks they played me. I've been out with the stick to 'em scores of times; but he was generous – I will say that – and many's the conger and bass he's brought me here, proud of 'em as could

be, because he caught them himself.”

“Well, Mrs Trelyan, we must say good morning,” said Tiny, rising and taking the old lady’s hand. “Is there anything you would like – anything we can bring you?”

“No, child, no,” said the old lady; “I don’t want anything. If you’d any good tea, I’d use a pinch; but I’m not asking for it, mind that.”

“Where’s your snuff-box, granny?” said Mr Mervyn, bringing out a small canister from his pocket.

“Oh, it’s here,” said the old lady, fishing out and opening her box to show it was quite empty. “I don’t know that I want any, though.”

“Try that,” said Mr Mervyn, filling it full; and the old lady took a pinch. “That’s not bad, is it?”

“N-n-no, it’s not bad,” said the old lady, “but I’ve had better.”

“No doubt,” said Mr Mervyn, smiling.

“By the way, Mrs Trelyan, how old are you?”

“Ninety next month,” said the old lady; “and – dear, dear, what a bother visitors are. Here’s somebody else coming.”

For at that moment there was a firm step heard without, and some one stooped and entered the doorway, hardly seeing the group on his left in the gloomy room.

“Is Mrs Trelyan at home?” he said; and Tiny Rea laid her hand upon her sisters arm.

“Yes, young man,” said the old lady, shading her eyes, and gazing at the strongly-built figure before her. “I’m Mrs Trelyan,

and what may you want?"

"To see how you are, granny. I'm Richard Trevor."

"And – and – " cried the old woman, letting fall her net as she rose slowly and laid her hand upon his arm; "and only a minute ago I was talking about you, and declaring you'd never be such a man as your father. My dear boy, how you have grown."

"One does grow in twelve years, granny," said the young man. "Well, I'm glad to see you alive and hearty."

"Thank you, my boy," said the old lady; and then turning and pointing to the wall, "Look!" she said, "that's the very stick that I took away from you one day for teasing my hens. You were a bad boy. You know you were."

"I suppose I was," said the young man, smiling. "But I beg pardon; you have company, granny."

"Oh, that's only Mr Mervyn, my dear, and he's going; and those are only the two girls from Tolcarne. I let them come and see me sometimes, but they're going now."

"Mr Mervyn," said the young man, holding out his hand, which was taken in a strong grip, "I am glad to meet so near a neighbour; perhaps you will introduce me to the ladies?"

"That I will," said Mr Mervyn, heartily. "Mr Trevor!"

"It's Squire Trevor now, Mr Mervyn," said the old lady, with some show of impatience.

"I beg pardon," said Mr Mervyn, smiling. "Squire Trevor, your very near neighbours, Miss Rea, Miss Finetta Rea, of Tolcarne."

"Ladies whom I have had the pleasure of meeting before,"

said Trevor, with a smile.

And then, in a confusion of bows, the two girls made their retreat, followed by Mr Mervyn.

“Oh, Fin, how strange!” exclaimed Tiny; “it’s the gentleman who struck that man at the race.”

“Yes,” exclaimed Fin; “and that horrid little creature’s sure to be close behind.”

## Sam Jenkles Prepares for an Expedition

“There you are, Ratty,” said Sam Jenkles, sticking a small yellow sunflower in each of his horse’s blinkers, before mounting to his perch and driving out of the yard. “Now you look ’andsome. Only recklect ’andsome is as ’andsome does; so just putt your right leg fust for once in a way.”

He walked round the horse, giving it a smooth here and a smooth there with his worn-out glove, and patting its neck, before walking back, and beginning to button-up for the day.

“Blest if ever I see such a tail in my life as he’s got,” he muttered. “Wonder what a hartificial one ’ud cost. It aint no kind o’ use to comb it, ’thout you want to comb it all out and leave no tail at all I wouldn’t care if it warn’t so ragged.”

It certainly was a melancholy-looking tail, but only in keeping with the rest of the horse’s personal appearance, which was of the most dejected – dispirited. If it had only been black, the steed would have been the beau ideal beast for a workhouse hearse; as he was of a dingy brown, he was relegated to a cab.

“What’s the matter, Sam?” said a cleaner, coming up – a man with a stable pail of water in one hand, a spoke-brush in the other, and a general exemplification of how, by degrees, Nature will make square people fit into round holes, and the reverse; for, by

the constant carriage of stable pails, the man's knees had gone in, and out of the perpendicular, so as to allow for the vessels' swing.

"What's the matter, Buddy? Why, everythink. Look at that there 'oss – look at his tail."

"Well, he aint 'andsome, suttunly," said the helper.

"Andsome!" exclaimed Sam; "no, nor he aint anythink else. He won't go, nor he won't stop. If you wants him to 'old 'is 'ead up, he 'angs it down; and if you wants him to 'old it down, he shoves it up in the air, and goes shambling along like a sick camel. He's all rules of contrairy."

"Oppin' about like a little canary," chimed in the helper.

"Oppin' about!" said Sam, in a tone of disgust. "I should just like to see him, if on'y for once in a way. I tell yer what it is, Buddy, I believe sometimes all he does is to lift his legs up, one at a time, an' lean up agin his collar. Natur' does the rest."

"Werry likely," said Buddy; "but you can't expect everything in a cab 'oss."

"Heverythink?" said Sam. "I don't expect everythink; I only want some-think; and all you've got there," he continued, pointing with one thumb over his shoulder at the unfortunate Ratty, "is so much walking cats'-meat."

"Yes, he aint 'andsome, suttunly," said Buddy again, screwing up one side of his face. "But why don't you smooth him over? Try kindness, and give the whip a 'ollerday."

"Kindness – whip – 'ollerday! Why, I'm like a father to 'im. Look here."

Sam went to the little boot at the back of his cab, and tugged out the horse's nose-bag, which was lined at the bottom with tin, so that it would have held water.

"See that?" said Sam.

"Yes: what's it for?" said Buddy.

"Beer," said Sam, fiercely, "beer! Many's the 'arf pint I've poured in there along of his chopped meat, jest to cheer him up a bit, and he aint got no missus to smell his breath. I thought that 'ud make 'im go if anythink would."

"Well, didn't it?" said Buddy, rubbing his ear with the spoke-brush.

"Didn't it?" said Sam. "Lets out at me with his orf 'ind leg, and then comes clay mill, and goes round and round till he oughter 'ave been dizzy, but he worn't. There never was sech a ungrateful beast."

Buddy grinned as Sam stuffed back the nose-bag, the horse shaking his head the while.

"Try it on me, Sam," said Buddy, as the driver prepared to mount. "I won't let out with no orf 'ind legs."

Sam winked, and climbed to his perch.

"What's the flowers for, Sam?" said the helper.

"The missus. Goin' to call for her, and drive her to Upper 'ollerway," said Sam, "afore I goes on the rank."

"Oh, will you tell her," said Buddy, earnestly, "as Ginger's ever so much better, and can a'most putt his little leg to the ground? He eats that stuff she brought him like fun."

“What stuff was that?” said Sam, gathering up the reins.

“Sorter yaller jally,” said Buddy.

“What, as smells o’ lemons?” said Sam.

“Yes, that’s it,” said Buddy; “he just do like it.”

“How long’s he been bad now?”

“Twelve weeks,” said Buddy; “and he’s been ’most worn to skin and bone; but he’s pulling up now. Takes his corn.”

“Mornin’,” said Sam.

He tried to start; but Batty moved sidewise, laid a blinker against the whitewashed wall of the yard, and rubbed it up and down, so that it had to be wiped over with a wet leather by Buddy; and when that was done, he tried to back the cab into a narrow stable door. After that, though, he seemed better, and began to go in a straight line.

“Tried that there game at a plate-glass winder t’other day,” said Sam, shouting over his shoulder as he left the yard. “He’d ha’ done it, too, if it hadn’t been for a lamp-post.”

Sam and his steed went gently out of Grey’s Inn Lane towards Pentonville, where, in a little quiet street, Mrs Jenkles resided, and Sam began musing as he went along —

“I smelt that there stuff in the cupboard, and meant to ask her what it was, but I forgot. On’y to think of her making that up, and taking it to poor Buddy’s little bairn! Well, she’s a good sort, is the missus, on’y she will be so hard on me about a drop o’ beer. ’Old that there ’ead still, will yer? What are yer lookin’ arter, there? Oh! that cats-meat barrer. Ah! yer may well shy at

that, Ratty; I don't wonder at it. Now, then, get on, old boy, the missus 'll be waiting."

On reaching Spring Place, where Sam dwelt, the horse objected. He was sawing along in a straightforward way, when Sam drew one rein, with the consequence that the horse's head came round, his long neck bending till the animal's face was gazing at him in a dejected, lachrymose fashion: Ratty seeming to say, as plainly as looks would express it, "What are you doing?" while all the time the legs went straight forward up Pentonville Hill.

They had got twenty yards past Spring Place before Sam could pull the horse up; and then he had to get down to take it by the head and turn it in a very ignominious fashion.

"Jest opposite a public, too," said Sam. "I never did see such a haggravating beast as you are, Ratty. Here, come along. It aint no wonder as fellows drinks, with a place offering 'em the stuff every five minutes of their lives, and when they've got a Ratty to lead 'em right up to it. Come on, will yer?"

Mrs Jenkles was standing at the door ready, in a blue bonnet and red Paisley shawl – for she was a woman of her word. She had said that she would go up and see those people, and Sam had promised to drive her.

## Going the Rounds

Fin was quite right. They had not gone above a couple of hundred yards down the lane, with Mr Mervyn between them, swinging his empty soup tin, when they became aware of a loud whistling, as of some one practising a polka. Then it would cease for a few moments, and directly after begin again.

“There’s somebody,” said Fin; and then, turning a sharp corner, they came suddenly on Mr Frank Pratt, perched in a sitting posture on the top of a huge, round lith of granite, with his back to them, and his little legs stretching out almost at right angles. He was in his threatened tweeds, a natty little deerstalker’s hat was cocked on one side of his head; in one hand he held a stick, and in the other a large pipe, from which he drew refreshment between the strains of the polka he tried to whistle.

Mr Frank Pratt was evidently enjoying the beauty of the place after his own particular fashion; for, being a short man, he had a natural love for elevated places. As a boy, he had delighted in climbing trees, and sitting in the highest fork that would bear him, eating cakes or munching apples; as a man, cakes and apples had given way to extremely black pipes, in company with which he alternately visited the top of the Monument, the Duke of York’s column, and the golden gallery of Saint Paul’s, where he regretted that the cost was eighteen-pence to go any higher. In these places, where it was strictly forbidden, he indulged

in surreptitious smokes, from which his friends deduced the proposition that if not the cakes, probably the apples had been stolen.

The tail stone then being handy, Mr Pratt was enjoying himself, when he suddenly became aware of steps behind, and hopped down in a most ungraceful fashion to stare with astonishment so blank, that by the time he had raised his hat Fin had gone by with her chin raised in the air, and a very disdainful look upon her countenance, and her sister, with a slightly heightened colour, had plunged into conversation with Mr Mervyn.

Pratt stood half paralysed for a few moments, watching the party, until a turn in the lane hid them from sight, and then he refilled and lit his pipe, from which the burning weed had fallen.

“It’s a mistake,” he said at last, between tremendous puffs at his pipe. “It’s impossible. I don’t believe it. One might call it a hallucination, only that the beardless female face is so similar in one woman to another that a man easily makes a mistake. Those cannot be the same girls that we saw at the steeplechase – it isn’t possible; but there is a resemblance, certainly; and, treating the thing philosophically, I should say here we have the real explanation of what is looked upon as infidelity in the male being.”

A few puffs from the pipe, and then Mr Pratt reclimbed to his perch upon the stone.

“I’ll carry that out, and then write it down as a position worthy

of argument. Yes, to be sure. Here it is. A man falls in love – say, for the sake of argument, at first sight, with a pretty girl, quite unknown to him before, upon a racecourse. Symptoms: a feeling of sympathetic attraction; a throbbing of the pulses; and the heart beating bob and go one. Say he gets to know the girl; is engaged to her; and is then separated by three or four hundred miles.”

A few more puffs, and sundry nods of the head, and then Mr Pratt went on.

“He there encounters another girl, whose face and general appearance are so much like the face and general appearance of girl number one, that his secondary influences – to wit, heart, pulses, and sympathies generally – immediately give signals; love ensues, and he declares and is accepted by girl number two, while girl number one says he is unfaithful. The man is not unfaithful; it is simply an arrangement of Nature, and he can’t help himself. Infidelity, then, is the same thing in a state of change. Moral: Nature has no business to make women so much alike.”

Mr Pratt got down once more from his perch, and began to stroll up the lane, to encounter Trevor at the end of a few minutes.

“Did you meet any one?” was the inquiry.

“Yes,” said Pratt, “a gentleman and two ladies.”

“Well?”

“Well?”

“Did you not know them?”

“Ah!” said Pratt, “then you, too, noticed the similarity of feature, did you?”

“Similarity?”

“Yes; wonderfully like the ladies we met at the steeplechase, were they not?”

Richard Trevor looked hard in his friend’s face for a moment, and then they walked on side by side; for at a turn of the lane they met the young keeper, who had so suddenly changed the aspect of the encounter on the course.

“Ah, Humphrey!” said Trevor, “I’m glad I’ve met you. I’ll have a walk round the preserves.”

The young keeper touched his hat, changed the double gun from one shoulder of his well-worn velveteen coat to the other, whistled to a setter, and led the way to a stone stile.

“Another curious case of similarity of feature,” said Trevor, laughing.

“Well, no – I’ll give in now,” said Pratt; “but I say, Dick, old fellow, ought coincidences like this to occur out of novels?”

“Never mind that,” said Trevor, “the keeper here, who used to be my playmate as a boy, was as much astonished as I was – weren’t you, Humphrey?”

“Well, sir,” said the young man, “when I see you th’ other morning, I couldn’t believe my eyes like, that the gentleman who’d pummelled that fellow was the one I’d come up to London to meet. I saw you, too, sir,” he said, touching his hat to Pratt.

“Yes, my man,” said Pratt, “and felt my toe. I’m sorry to find you did, for you’ve blown up one of the most beautiful propositions I ever made in my life.”

“Well, now then,” said Trevor, “I’ll see about matters with you, Lloyd; but, by the way, you had better be Humphrey, on account of your father.”

“Yes, sir; Humphrey, please, sir,” said the young man.

“Well, now then, as we go on,” said Trevor, “if it don’t bore you, Pratt, we’ll have a talk about farm matters.”

“Won’t bore me,” said Pratt; “I’m going in for the country gentleman while I stay.”

“Well, then, Humphrey, how are the crops!”

“Well, sir,” said Humphrey. “Ah, Juno! what are you sniffing after there?” This to the young dog, which seemed to have been born with a mission to push its head up rabbit burrows too small for the passage. “Well, sir, begging your pardon, but that dog’s took more looking after than e’er a one I ever had.”

“All right, go on,” said Trevor, following the man across a broad, rock-sided ditch, with a little brook at the bottom.

“Well, sir,” said the keeper, “the corn is – ”

“Here, I say, hold hard a minute! This isn’t Pall Mall, Trevor,” shouted Pratt. “How the deuce am I to get over that place?”

“Jump, man,” cried Trevor, laughing and looking back. “That’s nothing to some of our ditches.”

Pratt looked at the ditch, then down at his little legs, and then blew out his cheeks.

“Risk it,” he said, laconically; and, stepping back a few yards, he took a run, jumped, came short, and had to scramble up the bank, a little disarranged, but smiling and triumphant. “All

right,” he said, “go on.”

“Corn is, on the whole, a fair crop, sir,” said Humphrey.

“And barley?”

“Plenty of that too, sir. But I’ve a deal of trouble with trespassers, sir.”

“How’s that?” said Trevor, looking round at the bright, rugged hill and dale, with trees all aglow with the touch of autumn’s hand.

“You see, sir, it’s the new people,” said the keeper.

“What new people?”

“The old gentleman as bought Tolcarne, sir.”

“Well, what of him?” said Trevor, rather anxiously.

“Well, sir, he’s a magistrate and a Sir, and a great City of London man, and he wants to be quite the squire. The very first thing he does is to get two men to work on the estate, and who does he get but that Dick Darley and Sam Kelynack; and a nice pair they are, as you may know, sir.”

“Seeing that I’ve been away for years, Humphrey, I don’t know,” said Trevor.

“Well, sir, they was both turned out of their last places – one for a bit o’ poaching, and the other for being always on the drink. They know I don’t like ’em – both of ’em,” said Humphrey, with the veins swelling in his white forehead; “and no sooner do they get took on, than they begin to worry me.”

“How?” said Trevor, smiling.

“Trespassing on my land, sir – I mean yours, sir, begging your

pardon, sir. They will do it, too, sir. You see, there's a bit of land at the corner where Penreife runs right into the Tolcarne estate – sort of tongue o' land, sir – and to save going round, they make a path right across there, sir, over our bit of pasture."

"Put up a fence, Humphrey," said Trevor.

"I do, sir, and bush it, and set up rails; but they knocks 'em down, and tramples all over the place. Sir Hampton's got an idea that he's a right to that bit, as his land comes nigh surrounding it, and that makes 'em so sarcy."

"Well, we must see to it," said Trevor. "I want to be good friends with all my neighbours."

"Then you've cut out your work," said Pratt, drily.

"You won't be with Sir Hampton, sir, you may reckon on that," said Humphrey. "Lady Rea is a kind, pleasant lady enough, and the young ladies is very nice, sir, and he's been civil enough to me; but he upsets everybody nearly – him and his sister."

"Never mind about that," said Trevor, checking him. "I wish to be on good terms with my neighbours, and if there be any trespass – any annoyance from Sir Hampton's people – tell me quietly, and I will lay the matter before their master."

"Or we might get up a good action for trespass," said Pratt. "But, by the way," he said, stopping short, and sticking one finger on his forehead, "is this Sir Hampton the chuffy old gentleman we saw at the steeplechase?"

"Yes, sir; and as told me I might get up on the box-seat. That was him, you know, as that blackguard prodded with his stick."

“Phew!” whistled Pratt. “I say, Dick,” he whispered, “the old chap did not see us under the best of auspices.”

“No; it’s rather vexing,” was the reply.

They walked on from dense copse to meadow, through goodly fields of grain, and down in deep little vales, with steep sides covered with fern, bramble, and stunted pollard oaks.

“Poor youth!” said Pratt, and stopped to mop his forehead. “How low-spirited you must feel to be the owner of such a place. It’s lovely. Nature’s made it very beautiful; but no wonder – see what practice she has had.”

Trevor laughed, and Humphrey smiled, saying —

“If you come a bit farther this way, sir, there’s a capital view of the house.”

Pratt followed the man; and there, at about half a mile distance, on the slope of a steep hill, was the rugged, granite-built seat – Penreife – half ancient, half modern; full of buttresses, gables, awkward chimney-stacks, and windows of all shapes, with the ivy clustering over it greenly, and a general look of picturesque comfort that no trimly-built piece of architecture could display. The house stood at the end of one of the steep valleys running up from the sea, which shone in the autumn sun about another half-mile farther, with grey cottages clustering on the cliff, and a little granite-built harbour, sheltering some half a dozen duck-shaped luggers and a couple of yachts.

“Ah,” said Pratt, “that’s pretty! Beats Ludgate Hill and Fleet Street all to fits. Is that your master’s yacht?”

“The big ’un is, sir – the *Sea Launce*,” said Humphrey; “the little ’un’s Mr Mervyn’s – the *Swallow*.”

“By the way, who is this Mr Mervyn?” said Trevor, who had sauntered up.

“Well, sir,” said Humphrey, taking off his hat and rubbing his brown curls, “I don’t kinder know what he is. He’s been in the navy, I think, for he’s a capital sailor; but he’s quite the gentleman, and wonderful kind to the poor people, and he lives in that little white house the other side of the cliff.”

“I can’t see any white house,” said Pratt.

“No, sir, you can’t see it, ’cause it’s the other side of the cliff; but that’s his flagstaff rigged up, as you can see, with the weathercock on it, and – Here, hi! you, sir, come out of that! Here, Juno, lass, come along.”

“Has he gone mad?” cried Pratt.

For Humphrey had suddenly set off down a steep slope towards a meadow, and went on shouting with all his might.

“No,” said Trevor, shading his eyes, “there’s a man – two men with billhooks there – labourers, I should think. Come along, or perhaps there’ll be a quarrel; and I can’t have that.”

# The Lion at Home

Sir Hampton Rea was out that morning, and very busy.

He had been round to the stables and seen the four horses that had arrived the night before, and bullied the coachman because he had said that one of them had a splinter in its leg, and that the mare meant for Miss Rea had rather a nasty look about the eye.

“You’re an ass, Thomas,” he said.

The man touched his hat, and Sir Hampton walked half across the stable-yard.

“Er-rum!” he ejaculated, half turning; and the coachman came up, obsequiously touching his hat again.

“Those horses, Thomas, were examined by a veterinary surgeon.”

“Yes, sir,” said the man.

“Er-rum! And I chose them and examined them myself.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You’ve made a mistake, Thomas.”

“Very like, sir,” said the man. “Very sorry, sir.”

Sir Hampton did not respond, but gave a sharp glance round the very new-looking stable-yard and buildings, saw nothing to find fault about; and then, clearing his throat, went into the garden as the coachman winked at the groom, and the groom raised a wen upon his cheek by the internal application of his tongue.

“Er-rum! – Sanders!” cried the knight.

And something that had worn the aspect of a huge boa constrictor in cord trousers, crawling into a melon-frame, slowly drew itself back, stood upright, and revealed a yellow-faced man with a scarlet head and whiskers.

Perhaps it is giving too decided a colour to the freckles which covered Mr Sanders’s face to say they were yellow, and to his hair to say it was scarlet; but they certainly approached those hues, “Er-rum! Sanders, come here,” said Sir Hampton.

Sanders leisurely closed the melon-frame and raised the light a few inches with a piece of wood, and then slowly approached his master, to stop in front of him and scrape his feet upon a spade.

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