

The Adventures Harry Richmond — Volume 1 eBook

The Adventures Harry Richmond — Volume 1 by George Meredith

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BOOK 1.

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CHAPTER I

I AM A SUBJECT OF CONTENTION

One midnight of a winter month the sleepers in Riversley Grange were awakened by a ringing of the outer bell and blows upon the great hall-doors. Squire Beltham was master there: the other members of the household were, his daughter Dorothy Beltham; a married daughter Mrs. Richmond; Benjamin Sewis, an old half-caste butler; various domestic servants; and a little boy, christened Harry Lepel Richmond, the squire's grandson. Riversley Grange lay in a rich watered hollow of the Hampshire heath-country; a lonely circle of enclosed brook and pasture, within view of some of its dependent farms, but out of hail of them or any dwelling except the stables and the head-gardener's cottage. Traditions of audacious highwaymen, together with the gloomy surrounding fir-scenery, kept it alive to fears of solitude and the night; and there was that in the determined violence of the knocks and repeated bell-peals which assured all those who had ever listened in the servants' hall to prognostications of a possible night attack, that the robbers had come at last most awfully. A crowd of maids gathered along the upper corridor of the main body of the building: two or three footmen hung lower down, bold in attitude. Suddenly the noise ended, and soon after the voice of old Sewis commanded them to scatter away to their beds; whereupon the footmen took agile leaps to the post of danger, while the women, in whose bosoms intense curiosity now supplanted terror, proceeded to a vacant room overlooking the front entrance, and spied from the window.

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

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

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

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



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

Sewis spoke impressively: 'There's a gentleman downstairs; a gentleman downstairs, sir. He has come rather late.'

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grasping his bedclothes in a lump, the squire cried:

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

'No, sir.'

'You have!'

'He is not in the house, sir.'

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

'Out of my window, sir.'

'What place here is the scoundrel soiling now?'

'He is on the doorstep outside the house.'

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



'Yes, sir.'

'Let him rot there!'

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

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

Sewis held the garment ready. The squire jumped from the bed, fuming speechlessly, chafing at gaiters and braces, cravat and coat, and allowed his buttons to be fitted neatly on his calves; the hammering at the hall-door and plucking at the bell going on without intermission. He wore the aspect of one who assumes a forced composure under the infliction of outrages on his character in a Court of Law, where he must of necessity listen and lock his boiling replies within his indignant bosom.

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



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'Your hat, sir?'

'My horsewhip, I said.'

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

'I asked you for my horsewhip.'

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

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

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

'Who's there?' he demanded.

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

'Your name?'

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

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

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



The following conversation passed between them.

'You now behold who it is, Mr. Beltham, that acknowledges to the misfortune of arousing you at an unseemly hour—unbetimes, as our gossips in mother Saxon might say—and with profound regret, sir, though my habit is to take it lightly.'

'Have you any accomplices lurking about here?'

'I am alone.'

'What 's your business?'

'I have no business.'

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

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



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'What brought you here at all?'

'Can you ask me?'

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

'True, I might have slept at Ewling.'

'Why didn't you?'

'For the reason, Mr. Beltham, which brought me here originally. I could not wait-not a single minute. So far advanced to the neighbourhood, I would not be retarded, and I came on. I crave your excuses for the hour of my arrival. The grounds for my coming at all you will very well understand, and you will applaud me when I declare to you that I come to her penitent; to exculpate myself, certainly, but despising self-justification. I love my wife, Mr. Beltham. Yes; hear me out, sir. I can point to my unhappy star, and say, blame that more than me. That star of my birth and most disastrous fortunes should plead on my behalf to you; to my wife at least it will.'

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

'My wife, sir.'

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

'You compel her to come out to me?'

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

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

'Scamp!'

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

'Mr. Beltham, I implore you, be merciful. I submit to any conditions: only let me see her. I will walk the park till morning, but say that an interview shall be granted in the morning. Frankly, sir, it is not my intention to employ force: I throw myself utterly on your mercy. I love the woman; I have much to repent of. I see her, and I go; but once I must see her. So far I also speak positively.'

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

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

'Can't they!' said the squire.

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

The squire whistled for his dogs.

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

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

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

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

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

'I insist.'

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

'I repeat, I insist.'

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



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

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



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The squire seized one of the boy's hands to present him and retain him at the same time: but the stranger plucked him from his grandfather's hold, and swinging him high, exclaimed, 'Here he is! This is Harry Richmond. He has grown a grenadier.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Shall I see my wife?'

'No, you shan't.'

'You remain faithful to your word, sir, do you?'

'I do.'

'Then I do similarly.'

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

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



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

'Silence concerning a father insinuates dishonour, Mr. Beltham.'

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

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

'That gentleman,' he said, pointing to the squire, 'is your grandpapa. I am your papa. You must learn at any cost to know and love your papa. If I call for you to-morrow or next day they will have played tricks with Harry Richmond, and hid him. Mr. Beltham, I request you, for the final time, to accord me your promise observe, I accept your promise—that I shall, at my demand, to-morrow or the next day, obtain an interview with my wife.'



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

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

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

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

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



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The door slammed violently on such further speech as he had in him to utter. He seemed at first astonished; but finding the terrified boy about to sob, he drew a pretty box from one of his pockets and thrust a delicious sweetmeat between the whimpering lips. Then, after some moments of irresolution, during which he struck his chest soundingly and gazed down, talked alternately to himself and the boy, and cast his eyes along the windows of the house, he at last dropped on one knee and swaddled the boy in the folds of the shawl. Raising him in a business-like way, he settled him on an arm and stepped briskly across gravel-walk and lawn, like a horse to whose neck a smart touch of the whip has been applied.

The soft mild night had a moon behind it somewhere; and here and there a light-blue space of sky showed small rayless stars; the breeze smelt fresh of roots and heath. It was more a May-night than one of February. So strange an aspect had all these quiet hill-lines and larch and fir-tree tops in the half-dark stillness, that the boy's terrors were overlaid and almost subdued by his wonderment; he had never before been out in the night, and he must have feared to cry in it, for his sobs were not loud. On a rise of the park-road where a fir-plantation began, he heard his name called faintly from the house by a woman's voice that he knew to be his aunt Dorothy's. It came after him only once: 'Harry Richmond'; but he was soon out of hearing, beyond the park, among the hollows that run dipping for miles beside the great highroad toward London. Sometimes his father whistled to him, or held him high and nodded a salutation to him, as though they had just discovered one another; and his perpetual accessibility to the influences of spicy sugarplums, notwithstanding his grief, caused his father to prognosticate hopefully of his future wisdom. So, when obedient to command he had given his father a kiss, the boy fell asleep on his shoulder, ceasing to know that he was a wandering infant: and, if I remember rightly, he dreamed he was in a ship of cinnamon-wood upon a sea that rolled mighty, but smooth immense broad waves, and tore thing from thing without a sound or a hurt.

CHAPTER II

AN ADVENTURE ON MY OWN ACCOUNT

That night stands up without any clear traces about it or near it, like the brazen castle of romance round which the sea-tide flows. My father must have borne me miles along the road; he must have procured food for me; I have an idea of feeling a damp forehead and drinking new milk, and by-and-by hearing a roar of voices or vehicles, and seeing a dog that went alone through crowded streets without a master, doing as he pleased, and stopping every other dog he met. He took his turning, and my father and I took ours. We were in a house that, to my senses, had the smell of dark corners, in a street where all the house-doors were painted black, and shut with a bang. Italian organ-men and milk-men paraded the street regularly, and made it sound hollow to their music.

Milk, and no cows anywhere; numbers of people, and no acquaintances among them; my thoughts were occupied by the singularity of such things.



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My father could soon make me forget that I was transplanted; he could act dog, tame rabbit, fox, pony, and a whole nursery collection alive, but he was sometimes absent for days, and I was not of a temper to be on friendly terms with those who were unable to captivate my imagination as he had done. When he was at home I rode him all round the room and upstairs to bed, I lashed him with a whip till he frightened me, so real was his barking; if I said 'Menagerie' he became a caravan of wild beasts; I undid a button of his waistcoat, and it was a lion that made a spring, roaring at me; I pulled his coat-tails and off I went tugging at an old bear that swung a hind leg as he turned, in the queerest way, and then sat up and beating his breast sent out a mew-moan. Our room was richer to me than all the Grange while these performances were going forward. His monkey was almost as wonderful as his bear, only he was too big for it, and was obliged to aim at reality in his representation of this animal by means of a number of breakages; a defect that brought our landlady on the scene. The enchantment of my father's companionship caused me to suffer proportionately in his absence. During that period of solitude, my nursemaid had to order me to play, and I would stumble about and squat in the middle of the floor, struck suddenly by the marvel of the difference between my present and my other home. My father entered into arrangements with a Punch and Judy man for him to pay me regular morning visits opposite our window; yet here again his genius defeated his kind intentions; for happening once to stand by my side during the progress of the show, he made it so vivid to me by what he said and did, that I saw no fun in it without him: I used to dread the heralding crow of Punch if he was away, and cared no longer for wooden heads being knocked ever so hard.

On Sundays we walked to the cathedral, and this was a day with a delight of its own for me. He was never away on the Sunday. Both of us attired in our best, we walked along the streets hand in hand; my father led me before the cathedral monuments, talking in a low tone of British victories, and commending the heroes to my undivided attention. I understood very early that it was my duty to imitate them. While we remained in the cathedral he talked of glory and Old England, and dropped his voice in the middle of a murmured chant to introduce Nelson's name or some other great man's and this recurred regularly. 'What are we for now?' he would ask me as we left our house. I had to decide whether we took a hero or an author, which I soon learnt to do with capricious resolution. We were one Sunday for Shakespeare; another for Nelson or Pitt. 'Nelson, papa,' was my most frequent rejoinder, and he never dissented, but turned his steps toward Nelson's cathedral dome, and uncovered his head there, and said: 'Nelson, then, to-day'; and we went straight to his monument to perform the act of homage. I chose Nelson



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in preference to the others because near bed-time in the evening my father told me stories of our hero of the day, and neither Pitt nor Shakespeare lost an eye, or an arm, or fought with a huge white bear on the ice to make himself interesting. I named them occasionally out of compassion, and to please my father, who said that they ought to have a turn. They were, he told me, in the habit of paying him a visit, whenever I had particularly neglected them, to learn the grounds for my disregard of their claims, and they urged him to intercede with me, and imparted many of their unpublished adventures, so that I should be tempted to give them a chance on the following Sunday.

'Great Will,' my father called Shakespeare, and 'Slender Billy,' Pitt. The scene where Great Will killed the deer, dragging Falstaff all over the park after it by the light of Bardolph's nose, upon which they put an extinguisher if they heard any of the keepers, and so left everybody groping about and catching the wrong person, was the most wonderful mixture of fun and tears. Great Will was extremely youthful, but everybody in the park called him, 'Father William'; and when he wanted to know which way the deer had gone, King Lear (or else my memory deceives me) punned, and Lady Macbeth waved a handkerchief for it to be steeped in the blood of the deer; Shylock ordered one pound of the carcass; Hamlet (the fact was impressed on me) offered him a three-legged stool; and a number of kings and knights and ladies lit their torches from Bardolph; and away they flew, distracting the keepers and leaving Will and his troop to the deer. That poor thing died from a different weapon at each recital, though always with a flow of blood and a successful dash of his antlers into Falstaff; and to hear Falstaff bellow! But it was mournful to hear how sorry Great Will was over the animal he had slain. He spoke like music. I found it pathetic in spite of my knowing that the whole scene was lighted up by Bardolph's nose. When I was just bursting out crying—for the deer's tongue was lolling out and quick pantings were at his side; he had little ones at home—Great Will remembered his engagement to sell Shylock a pound of the carcass; determined that no Jew should eat of it, he bethought him that Falstaff could well spare a pound, and he said the Jew would not see the difference: Falstaff only got off by hard running and roaring out that he knew his unclean life would make him taste like pork and thus let the Jew into the trick.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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A gentleman of his acquaintance called on him one evening to take him out for a walk. My father happened to be playing with me when this gentleman entered our room: and he jumped up from his hands and knees, and abused him for intruding on his privacy, but afterwards he introduced him to me as Shylock's great-great-great-grandson, and said that Shylock was satisfied with a pound, and his descendant wanted two hundred pounds, or else all his body: and this, he said, came of the emigration of the family from Venice to England. My father only seemed angry, for he went off with Shylock's very great grandson arm-in-arm, exclaiming, 'To the Rialto!' When I told Mrs. Waddy about the visitor, she said, 'Oh, dear! oh, dear! then I'm afraid your sweet papa won't return very soon, my pretty pet.' We waited a number of days, until Mrs. Waddy received a letter from him. She came full-dressed into my room, requesting me to give her twenty kisses for papa, and I looked on while she arranged her blue bonnet at the glass. The bonnet would not fix in its place. At last she sank down crying in a chair, and was all brown silk, and said that how to appear before a parcel of dreadful men, and perhaps a live duke into the bargain, was more than she knew, and more than could be expected of a lone widow woman. 'Not for worlds!' she answered my petition to accompany her. She would not, she said, have me go to my papa there for anything on earth; my papa would perish at the sight of me; I was not even to wish to go. And then she exclaimed, 'Oh, the blessed child's poor papa!' and that people were cruel to him, and would never take into account his lovely temper, and that everybody was his enemy, when he ought to be sitting with the highest in the land. I had realized the extremity of my forlorn state on a Sunday that passed empty of my father, which felt like his having gone for ever. My nursemaid came in to assist in settling Mrs. Waddy's bonnet above the six crisp curls, and while they were about it I sat quiet, plucking now and then at the brown silk, partly to beg to go with it, partly in jealousy and love at the thought of its seeing him from whom I was so awfully separated. Mrs. Waddy took fresh kisses off my lips, assuring me that my father would have them in twenty minutes, and I was to sit and count the time. My nursemaid let her out. I pretended to be absorbed in counting, till I saw Mrs. Waddy pass by the window. My heart gave a leap of pain. I found the street-door open and no one in the passage, and I ran out, thinking that Mrs. Waddy would be obliged to take me if she discovered me by her side in the street.



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

Toward sunset my frame was struck as with an arrow by the sensations of hunger on passing a cook's-shop. I faltered along, hoping to reach a second one, without knowing why I had dragged my limbs from the first. There was a boy in ragged breeches, no taller than myself, standing tiptoe by the window of a very large and brilliant pastry-cook's. He persuaded me to go into the shop and ask for a cake. I thought it perfectly natural to do so, being hungry; but when I reached the counter and felt the size of the shop, I was abashed, and had to repeat the nature of my petition twice to the young woman presiding there.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

My alarm at having left the savoury street of shops was not soothed until I found myself sitting at table with him, and a nice young lady, and an old one who wore a cap, and made loud remarks on my garments and everything I did. I was introduced to them as the little boy dropped from the sky. The old gentleman would not allow me to be questioned before I had eaten. It was a memorable feast. I had soup, fish, meat, and pastry, and, for the first time in my life, a glass of wine. How they laughed to see me blink and cough after I had swallowed half the glass like water. At once my tongue was unloosed. I seemed to rise right above the roofs of London, beneath which I had been but a wandering atom a few minutes ago. I talked of my wonderful father, and Great Will, and Pitt, and the Peerage. I amazed them with my knowledge. When I finished a long recital of Great Will's chase of the deer, by saying that I did not care about politics (I meant, in my own mind, that Pitt was dull in comparison), they laughed enormously, as if I had fired them off. 'Do you know what you are, sir?' said the old gentleman; he had frowning eyebrows and a merry mouth 'you're a comical character.'

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

'Are you in the Peerage?' said I.

'Not yet,' he replied.

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

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

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



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



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'And who lies outside?' she asked.

'That's my papa,' I was beginning to say, but broke the words with a sob, for I seemed to be separated from him now by the sea itself.

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

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



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I was assured by Mr. Bannerbridge that my father's health and appetite were excellent; he gave me a number of unsatisfying messages, all the rest concerning his interview he whispered to his daughter and his sister, Miss Bannerbridge, who said they hoped they would have news from Hampshire very early, so that the poor child might be taken away by the friends of his infancy. I could understand that my father was disapproved of by them, and that I was a kind of shuttlecock flying between two battledores; but why they pitied me I could not understand. There was a great battle about me when Mrs. Waddy appeared punctual to her appointed hour. The victory was hers, and I, her prize, passed a whole day in different conveyances, the last of which landed us miles away from London, at the gates of an old drooping, mossed and streaked farmhouse, that was like a wall-flower in colour.

CHAPTER III

DIPWELL FARM

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

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

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

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



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

'Change loads on the road, you mean,' said John Thresher. 'Na, na, he's come to settle nigh a weedy field, if you like, but his crop ain't nigh reaping yet. Hark you, Mary Waddy, who're a widde, which 's as much as say, an unocc'pied mind, there's cockney, and there's country, and there 's school. Mix the three, strain, and throw away the sediment. Now, yon 's my view.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mrs. Waddy put her mouth to his ear.

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

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

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

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



have been happier than there, dining and supping with John and Martha and the farm-labourers, expecting my father across the hills, and yet satisfied with the sun. To hope, and not be impatient, is really to believe, and this was my feeling in my father's absence. I knew he would come, without wishing to hurry him. He had the world



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beyond the hills; I this one, where a slow full river flowed from the sounding mill under our garden wall, through long meadows. In Winter the wild ducks made letters of the alphabet flying. On the other side of the copses bounding our home, there was a park containing trees old as the History of England, John Thresher said, and the thought of their venerable age enclosed me comfortably. He could not tell me whether he meant as old as the book of English History; he fancied he did, for the furrow-track follows the plough close upon; but no one exactly could swear when that (the book) was put together. At my suggestion, he fixed the trees to the date of the Heptarchy, a period of heavy ploughing. Thus begirt by Saxon times, I regarded Riversley as a place of extreme baldness, a Greenland, untrodden by my Alfred and my Harold. These heroes lived in the circle of Dipwell, confidently awaiting the arrival of my father. He sent me once a glorious letter. Mrs. Waddy took one of John Thresher's pigeons to London, and in the evening we beheld the bird cut the sky like an arrow, bringing round his neck a letter warm from him I loved. Planet communicating with planet would be not more wonderful to men than words of his to me, travelling in such a manner. I went to sleep, and awoke imagining the bird bursting out of heaven.

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

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



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

John Thresher had a laborious mind; it cost him beads on his forehead to mount to these heights of meditation. He told me once that he thought one's country was like one's wife: you were born in the first, and married to the second, and had to learn all about them afterwards, ay, and make the best of them. He recommended me to mix, strain, and throw away the sediment, for that was the trick o' brewery. Every puzzle that beset him in life resolved to this cheerful precept, the value of which, he said, was shown by clear brown ale, the drink of the land. Even as a child I felt that he was peculiarly an Englishman. Tales of injustice done on the Niger river would flush him in a heat of wrath till he cried out for fresh taxes to chastise the villains. Yet at the sight of the beggars at his gates he groaned at the taxes existing, and enjoined me to have pity on the poor taxpayer when I lent a hand to patch the laws. I promised him I would unreservedly, with a laugh, but with a sincere intention to legislate in a direct manner on his behalf. He, too, though he laughed, thanked me kindly.

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



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Under such affectionate treatment I betrayed the alarming symptom that my imagination was set more on my mother than on my father: I could not help thinking that for any one to go to heaven was stranger than to drive to Dipwell, and I had this idea when my father was clasping me in his arms; but he melted it like snow off the fields. He came with postillions in advance of him wearing crape rosettes, as did the horses. We were in the cricket-field, where Dipwell was playing its first match of the season, and a Dipwell lad, furious to see the elevens commit such a breach of the rules and decency as to troop away while the game was hot, and surround my father, flung the cricket-ball into the midst and hit two or three of the men hard. My father had to shield him from the consequences. He said he liked that boy; and he pleaded for him so winningly and funnily that the man who was hurt most laughed loudest.

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

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

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

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

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

She spoke very faintly, and was red in the face up to the time of our departure. John stood like a soldier. We drove away from a cheering crowd of cricketers and farm-labourers, as if discharged from a great gun. 'A royal salvo!' said my father, and asked me earnestly whether I had forgotten to reward and take a particular farewell of any one of my friends. I told him I had forgotten no one, and thought it was true, until on our way up the sandy lane, which offered us a last close view



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of the old wall-flower farm front, I saw little Mabel Sweetwinter, often my playfellow and bedfellow, a curly-headed girl, who would have danced on Sunday for a fairing, and eaten gingerbread nuts during a ghost-story. She was sitting by a furze-bush in flower, cherishing in her lap a lamb that had been worried. She looked half up at me, and kept looking so, but would not nod. Then good-bye, thought I, and remembered her look when I had forgotten that of all the others.

CHAPTER IV

I HAVE A TASTE OF GRANDEUR

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

Mrs. Waddy welcomed us when we alighted. Do not imagine that it was at the door of her old house. It was in a wide street opening on a splendid square, and pillars were before the houses, and inside there was the enchantment of a little fountain playing thin as whipcord, among ferns, in a rock-basin under a window that glowed with kings of England, copied from boys' history books. All the servants were drawn up in the hall to do homage to me. They seemed less real and living than the wonder of the sweet-smelling chairs, the birds, and the elegant dogs. Richest of treats, a monkey was introduced to me. 'It 's your papa's whim,' Mrs. Waddy said, resignedly; 'he says he must have his jester. Indeed it is no joke to me.'

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

me presented himself only to carry my recollections of the Dipwell of yesterday as far back into the past as the old Norman days.



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

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

I said 'Yes,' in turn; and then we left off answering, but questioned one another, which is a quicker way of getting at facts; I know it is with boys and women. Mrs. Waddy cared much less to hear of Dipwell and its inhabitants than of the sensation created everywhere by our equipage. I noticed that when her voice was not melancholy her face was. She showed me a beautiful little pink bed, having a crown over it, in a room opening to my father's. Twenty thousand magnificent dreams seemed to flash their golden doors when I knew that the bed was mine. I thought it almost as nice as a place by my father's side.

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

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

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

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

They drank to me heartily, but my father had fallen mournful before I left the room.

Pony-riding, and lessons in boxing and wrestling, and lessons in French from a French governess, at whose appearance my father always seemed to be beginning to dance a minuet, so exuberantly courteous was he; and lessons in Latin from a tutor, whom my father invited to dinner once a fortnight, but did not distinguish otherwise than occasionally to take down Latin sentences in a notebook from his dictation, occupied my mornings. My father told the man who instructed me in the art of self-defence that our family had always patronized his profession. I wrestled ten minutes every day with this man's son, and was regularly thrown. On fine afternoons I was dressed in black velvet for a drive in the park, where my father uncovered his head to numbers of people, and



was much looked at. 'It is our duty, my son, never to forget names and persons; I beg you to bear that in mind, my dearest Richie,' he said. We used to go to his opera-box; and we visited the House of Lords and the House of Commons; and my father, though he complained of the decay of British eloquence, and mourned for the days of Chatham, and William Pitt (our old friend of the cake and the raspberry jam), and Burke, and Sheridan, encouraged the orators with approving murmurs.



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My father no longer laid stress on my studies of the Peerage. 'Now I have you in the very atmosphere, that will come of itself,' he said. I wished to know whether I was likely to be transported suddenly to some other place. He assured me that nothing save a convulsion of the earth would do it, which comforted me, for I took the firmness of the earth in perfect trust. We spoke of our old Sunday walks to St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey as of a day that had its charm. Our pew among a fashionable congregation pleased him better. The pew-opener curtseyed to none as she did to him. For my part, I missed the monuments and the chants, and something besides that had gone—I knew not what. At the first indication of gloom in me, my father became alarmed, and, after making me stand with my tongue out before himself and Mrs. Waddy, like a dragon in a piece of tapestry, would resume his old playfulness, and try to be the same that he had been in Mrs. Waddy's lodgings. Then we read the Arabian Nights together, or, rather, he read them to me, often acting out the incidents as we rode or drove abroad. An omission to perform a duty was the fatal forgetfulness to sprinkle pepper on the cream-tarts; if my father subjected me to an interrogation concerning my lessons, he was the dread African magician to whom must be surrendered my acquisition of the ring and the musty old lamp. We were quite in the habit of meeting fair Persians. He would frequently ejaculate that he resembled the Three Calendars in more respects than one. To divert me during my recovery from measles, he one day hired an actor in a theatre, and put a cloth round his neck, and seated him in a chair, rubbed his chin with soap, and played the part of the Barber over him, and I have never laughed so much in my life. Poor Mrs. Waddy got her hands at her sides, and kept on gasping, 'Oh, sir! oh!' while the Barber hurried away from the half-shaved young man to consult his pretended astrolabe in the next room, where we heard him shouting the sun's altitude, and consulting its willingness for the impatient young man to be further shaved; and back he came, seeming refreshed to have learnt the sun's favourable opinion, and gabbling at an immense rate, full of barber's business. The servants were allowed to be spectators; but as soon as the young man was shaved, my father dismissed them with the tone of a master. No wonder they loved him. Mrs. Waddy asked who could help it?

I remember a pang I had when she spoke of his exposure to the risk of marrying again; it added a curious romantic tenderness to my adoration of him, and made me feel that he and I stood against the world. To have his hand in mine was my delight. Then it was that I could think earnestly of Prince Ahmed and the kind and beautiful Peribanou, whom I would not have minded his marrying. My favourite dream was to see him shooting an arrow in a match for a prize, and losing the prize because of not finding



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his arrow, and wondering where the arrow had flown to, and wandering after it till he passed out of green fields to grassy rocks, and to a stony desert, where at last he found his arrow at an enormous distance from the shooting line, and there was the desert all about him, and the sweetest fairy ever imagined going to show herself to him in the ground under his feet. In his absence I really hungered for him, and was jealous.

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

Twelve dozen of splendid Burgundy were the fruit of our tour, to be laid down at Dipwell farm for my arrival at my majority, when I should be a legal man, embarked in my own ship, as my father said. I did not taste the wine. ‘Porter for me that day, please God!’ cried Mrs. Waddy, who did. My father eyed her with pity, and ordered her to send the wine down to Dipwell, which was done. He took me between his knees, and said impressively, ‘Now, Richie, twelve dozen of the best that man can drink await you at the gates of manhood. Few fathers can say that to their sons, my boy!’



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If we drink it together, blessings on the day! If I'm gone, Richie, shut up in the long box,' his voice shook, and he added, 'gone to Peribanou underneath, you know, remember that your dada saw that the wine was a good vintage, and bought it and had it bottled in his own presence while you were asleep in the Emperor's room in the fine old Burgundy city, and swore that, whatever came to them both, his son should drink the wine of princes on the day of his majority.' Here my father's tone was highly exalted, and he sat in a great flush.

I promised him I would bend my steps toward Dipwell to be there on my twenty-first birthday, and he pledged himself to be there in spirit at least, bodily if possible. We sealed the subject with some tears. He often talked of commissioning a poet to compose verses about that wonderful coming day at Dipwell. The thought of the day in store for us sent me strutting as though I had been in the presence of my drill-master. Mrs. Waddy, however, grew extremely melancholy at the mention of it.

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

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

To judge by the instantaneous composure of her whole appearance, he did produce a temporary abatement of her malady. The good soul bustled out of the room in attendance upon M. Alphonse, and never complained while the dinners lasted, but it was whispered that she had fits in the upper part of the house. No sooner did my father hear the rumour than he accused her to her face of this enormity, telling her that he was determined to effect a permanent cure, even though she should drive him to unlimited expense. We had a Ball party and an Aladdin supper, and for a fortnight my father hired postillions; we flashed through London. My father backed a horse to run in the races on Epsom Downs named Prince Royal, only for the reason that his name was Prince Royal, and the horse won, which was, he said, a proof to me that in our country it was common prudence to stick to Royalty; and he bade me note that if he went in a carriage and two, he was comparatively unnoticed, whereas when he was beheld in a carriage and four, with postillions, at a glance from him the country



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people tugged their forelocks, and would like, if he would let them, to kiss his hand. 'We will try the scarlet livery on one of our drives, Richie,' said he. Mrs. Waddy heard him. 'It is unlawful, sir,' she said. 'For whom, ma'am?' asked my father. 'None but Royal . . .' she was explaining, but stopped, for he showed her an awful frown, and she cried so that my heart ached for her. My father went out to order the livery on the spot. He was very excited. Then it was that Mrs. Waddy, embracing me, said, 'My dear, my own Master Richmond, my little Harry, prepare your poor child's heart for evil days.' I construed her unintelligible speech as an attack upon my father, and abused her violently.

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

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

I looked on her forehead for the wreath of white flowers my mother used to wear, and thought of my father's letter with the prayer written on the black-bordered page. I said I would go, but my joy in going was gone. We were stopped in the doorway by Mrs. Waddy. Nothing would tempt her to surrender me. Mr. Bannerbridge tried reasoning with her, and, as he said, put the case, which seemed to have perched on his forefinger. He talked of my prospects, of my sole chance of being educated morally and virtuously as became the grandson of an English gentleman of a good old family, and of my father having spent my



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mother's estate, and of the danger of his doing so with mine, and of religious duty and the awfulness of the position Mrs. Waddy stood in. He certainly subdued me to very silent breathing, but did not affect me as my aunt Dorothy's picturing of Riversley had done; and when Mrs. Waddy, reduced to an apparent submissiveness, addressed me piteously, 'Master Richmond, would you leave papa?' I cried out, 'No, no, never leave my papa,' and twisted away from my aunt's keeping. My father's arrival caused me to be withdrawn, but I heard his offer of his hospitality and all that was his; and subsequently there was loud talking on his part. I was kissed by my aunt before she went. She whispered, 'Come to us when you are free; think of us when you pray.' She was full of tears. Mr. Bannerbridge patted my head.

The door closed on them and I thought it was a vision that had passed. But now my father set my heart panting with questions as to the terrible possibility of us two ever being separated. In some way he painted my grandfather so black that I declared earnestly I would rather die than go to Riversley; I would never utter the name of the place where there was evil speaking of the one I loved dearest. 'Do not, my son,' he said solemnly, 'or it parts us two.' I repeated after him, 'I am a Roy and not a Beltham.' It was enough to hear that insult and shame had been cast on him at Riversley for me to hate the name of the place. We cried and then laughed together, and I must have delivered myself with amazing eloquence, for my father held me at arms' length and said, 'Richie, the notion of training you for a General commandership of the British army is a good one, but if you have got the winning tongue, the woosack will do as well for a whisper in the ear of the throne. That is our aim, my son. We say,—you will not acknowledge our birth, you shall acknowledge our worth.' He complained bitterly of my aunt Dorothy bringing a lawyer to our house. The sins of Mrs. Waddy were forgiven her, owing to her noble resistance to the legal gentleman's seductive speech. So I walked up and down stairs with the kings of England looking at me out of the coloured windows quietly for a week; and then two ugly men entered the house, causing me to suffer a fearful oppression, though my father was exceedingly kind to them and had beds provided for them, saying that they were very old retainers of his.

But the next day our scarlet livery appeared. After exacting particular attention to his commands, my father quitted Mrs. Waddy, and we mounted the carriage, laughing at her deplorable eyes and prim lips, which he imitated for my amusement. 'A load is off my head,' he remarked. He asked me if splendour did not fatigue me also. I caught the answer from his face and replied that it did, and that I should like to go right on to Dipwell 'The Burgundy sleeps safe there,' said my father, and thought over it. We had an extraordinary



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

CHAPTER V

I MAKE A DEAR FRIEND

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



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

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

Julia shed tears at his cruelty, called him cruel, wicked, false to his word. She wrote, but the letter did not please him, and his reply was scornful. At prayers morning and evening, it was pitiful to observe her glance of entreaty and her downfallen eyelashes. I guessed that in Heriot's letters to her he wanted to make her confess something, which she would not do. 'Now I write to him no more; let him know it, my darling,' she said, and the consequence of Heriot's ungrateful obstinacy was that we all beheld her, at the ceremony of the consecration of the new church, place her hand on Mr. Boddy's arm and allow him to lead her about. Heriot kept his eyes on them; his mouth was sharp, and his arms stiff by his sides. I was the bearer of a long letter to her that evening. She tore it to pieces without reading it. Next day Heriot walked slowly past Mr. Boddy holding the portrait in his hands. The usher called to him!

'What have you there, Heriot?'

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

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

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

'Look at me, sir,' cried Boddy.

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

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



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

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

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

'Like a rascal detected in an act of felony,' roared Boddy, 'you concealed it, sir . . .'



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'Conceal it, sir.'

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

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

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

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

Heriot was merely reported guilty of insolence. He took his five hundred lines of Virgil with his usual sarcastic dignity: all he said to Mr. Rippenger was, 'Let it be about Dido, sir,' which set several of the boys upon Dido's history, but Heriot was condemned to the battles with Turnus. My share in this event secured Heriot's friendship to me without costing me the slightest inconvenience. 'Papa would never punish you,' Julia said; and I felt my rank. Nor was it wonderful I should when Mr. Rippenger was constantly speaking of my father's magnificence in my presence before company. Allowed to draw on him largely for pocket-money, I maintained my father's princely reputation in the school. At times, especially when the holidays arrived and I was left alone with Julia, I had fits of mournfulness, and almost thought the boys happier than I was. Going home began to seem an unattainable thing to me. Having a father, too, a regular father, instead of a dazzling angel that appeared at intervals, I considered a benefaction, in its way, some recompense to the boys, for their not possessing one like mine. My anxiety was relieved by my writing letters to my father, addressed to the care of Miss Julia Rippenger, and posting them in her work-basket. She favoured me with very funny replies, signed, 'Your own ever-loving Papa,' about his being engaged killing Bengal tigers and capturing white elephants, a noble occupation that gave me exciting and consolatory dreams of him.

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



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Gradually a kind of cloud stole over me. I no longer liked to ask for pocket-money; I was clad in a suit of plain cloth; I was banished from the parlour, and only on Sunday was I permitted to go to Julia. I ceased to live in myself. Through the whole course of lessons, at play-time, in my bed, and round to morning bell, I was hunting my father in an unknown country, generally with the sun setting before me: I ran out of a wood almost into a brook to see it sink as if I had again lost sight of him, and then a sense of darkness brought me back to my natural consciousness, without afflicting me much, but astonishing me. Why was I away from him? I could repeat my lessons in the midst of these dreams quite fairly; it was the awakening among the circle of the boys that made me falter during a recital and ask myself why I was there and he absent? They had given over speculating on another holiday and treat from my father; yet he had produced such an impression in the school that even when I had descended to the level of a total equality with them, they continued to have some consideration for me. I was able to talk of foreign cities and could tell stories, and I was, besides, under the immediate protection of Heriot. But now the shadow of a great calamity fell on me, for my dear Heriot announced his intention of leaving the school next half.

'I can't stand being prayed at, morning and evening, by a fellow who hasn't the pluck to strike me like a man,' he said. Mr. Rippenger had the habit of signaling offenders, in his public prayers, as boys whose hearts he wished to be turned from callousness. He perpetually suspected plots; and to hear him allude to some deep, long-hatched school conspiracy while we knelt motionless on the forms, and fetch a big breath to bring out, 'May the heart of Walter Heriot be turned and he comprehend the multitudinous blessings,' *etc.*, was intensely distressing. Together with Walter Heriot, Andrew Saddlebank, our best bowler, the drollest fellow in the world, John Salter, and little Gus Temple, were oftenest cited. They declared that they invariably uttered 'Amen,' as Heriot did, but we none of us heard this defiant murmur of assent from their lips. Heriot pronounced it clearly and cheerfully, causing Julia's figure to shrink as she knelt with her face in the chair hard by her father's desk-pulpit. I received the hearty congratulations of my comrades for singing out 'Amen' louder than Heriot, like a chorister, though not in so prolonged a note, on hearing to my stupefaction Mr. Rippenger implore that the heart of 'him we know as Richmond Roy' might be turned. I did it spontaneously. Mr. Rippenger gazed at me in descending from his desk; Julia, too, looking grieved. For my part, I exulted in having done a thing that gave me a likeness to Heriot.

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



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He hugged me up to him.

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

'All right,' he answered, never meaning me to suffer on his account. He had an inimitable manner of sweet speaking that endeared him to younger boys capable of appreciating it, with the supernatural power of music. It endeared him, I suppose, to young women also. Julia repeated his phrases, as for instance, 'Silly boy, silly boy,' spoken with a wave of his hand, when a little fellow thanked him for a kindness. She was angry at his approval of what she called my defiance of her father, and insisted that I was the catspaw of one of Heriot's plots to vex him. 'Tell Heriot you have my command to say you belong to me and must not be misled,' she said. His answer was that he wanted it in writing. She requested him to deliver up her previous letters. Thereupon he charged me with a lengthy epistle, which plunged us into boiling water. Mr. Boddy sat in the schoolroom while Heriot's pen was at work, on the wet Sunday afternoon. His keen little eyes were busy in his flat bird's head all the time Heriot continued writing. He saw no more than that Heriot gave me a book; but as I was marching away to Julia he called to know where I was going.

'To Miss Rippenger,' I replied.

'What have you there?'

'A book, sir.'

'Show me the book.'

I stood fast.

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

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

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

He was warned to avoid insolence.



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

The next minute she was addressing my enemy:

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

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

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

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

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

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

'And I do love him,' I answered.



'Not with me?' she asked.

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

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

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

She said that he sat very near her in church.

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

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

We talked of his courage.

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



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'Good! Oh, so kind!'

This appeared to convince her.

'Very generous to you and every one, is he not?' she said; and from that moment was all questions concerning his kind treatment of the boys, and as to their looking up to him.

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

Heriot frowned on hearing me repeat it.

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

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

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

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

There was soon a secret to be read in Heriot's face for one who loved it as I did. Julia's betrayed nothing. I was not taken into their confidence, and luckily not; otherwise I fear I should have served them ill, I was so poor a dissembler and was so hotly plied with interrogations by the suspicious usher. I felt sure that Heriot and Julia met. His eyes were on her all through prayer-time, and hers wandered over the boys' heads till they rested on him, when they gave a short flutter and dropped, like a bird shot dead. The boys must have had some knowledge that love was busy in their midst, for they spoke of Heriot and Julia as a jolly couple, and of Boddy as one meaning to play the part of old Nick the first opportunity. She was kinder to them than ever. It was not a new thing that she should send in cakes of her own making, but it was extraordinary that we should get these thoughtful presents as often as once a fortnight, and it became usual to hear a boy exclaim, either among a knot of fellows or to himself, 'By jingo, she is a pretty girl!' on her passing out of the room, and sometimes entirely of his own idea. I am persuaded that if she had consented to marry Boddy, the boys would have been seriously disposed to conspire to jump up in the church and forbid the banns. We should have preferred to hand her to the junior usher, Catman, of whom the rumour ran in the school that he once drank a bottle of wine and was sick after it, and he was therefore a weak creature to our minds; the truth of the rumour being confirmed by his pale complexion. That we would have handed our blooming princess to him was full proof of our abhorrence of Boddy. I might have thought with the other boys that she was growing prettier, only I never could imagine her so delicious as when she smiled at my father.



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



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

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

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

Boddy told him he was taking lessons in the school.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

My only feeling was jealousy of the superior knowledge of the sex possessed by Temple, for I could not fathom the meaning of coquette; but he had sisters. Temple and I walked the grounds together, mutually declaring how much we would forfeit for Heriot's sake. By this time my Sunday visits to Julia had been interdicted: I was plunged, as it were, in the pit of the school, and my dreams of my father were losing distinctness. A series of boxes on the ears from Boddy began to astound and transform me. Mr.



Rippenger, too, threatened me with carvings, though my offences were slight. 'Yes,' said Temple and I, in chorus, 'but you daren't strike Heriot!' This was our consolation, and the sentiment of the school. Fancy, then, our amazement to behold him laying the cane on Heriot's shoulders as fiercely as he could, and Boddy seconding him. The scene was terrible. We were all at our desks doing evening tasks for the morrow, a great matchday at cricket, Boddy watching over us, and bellowing, 'Silence at your work, you lazy fellows, if you want lessons to be finished at ten in the morning!' A noise came growing up to us from below, up the stairs from the wet-weather shed, and Heriot burst into the room, old Rippenger after him, panting.



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

'Hit away, sir,' he said, during the storm of blows, and I, through my tears, imagined him (or I do now) a young eagle forced to bear the thunder, but with his face to it. Then we saw Boddy lay hands on him, and in a twinkling down pitched the usher, and the boys cheered—chirped, I should say, they exulted so, and merely sang out like birds, without any wilfulness of delight or defiance. After the fall of Boddy we had no sense of our hero suffering shame. Temple and I clutched fingers tight as long as the blows went on. We hoped for Boddy to make another attempt to touch Heriot; he held near the master, looking ready to spring, like a sallow panther; we kept hoping he would, in our horror of the murderous slashes of the cane; and not a syllable did Heriot utter. Temple and I started up, unaware of what we were going to do, or of anything until we had got a blow a-piece, and were in the thick of it, and Boddy had us both by the collars, and was knocking our heads together, as he dragged us back to our seats. But the boys told us we stopped the execution. Mr. Rippenger addressed us before he left the school-room. Saddlebank, Salter, and a good many others, plugged their ears with their fists. That night Boddy and Catman paced in the bedchambers, to prevent plotting and conspiracy, they said. I longed to get my arms about Heriot, and thought of him, and dreamed of blood, and woke in the morning wondering what made me cry, and my arms and back very stiff. Heriot was gay as ever, but had fits of reserve; the word passed round that we were not to talk of yesterday evening. We feared he would refuse to play in the match.

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

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

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

Julia did not appear at morning prayers.

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

We supposed we should not see Julia at the match. She came, however, and talked to everybody. I could not contain myself, I wanted so to tell her what had befallen Heriot

overnight, while he was batting, and the whole ground cheering his hits. I on one side of her whispered:



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

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

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

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

'Richie, are you ill?'

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

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

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

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

'Was any name mentioned?' she asked, with her mouth working, and to my 'No,' said 'No, she knew there was none,' and seemed to drink and choke, and was one minute calm, all but a trembling hanging underlip, next smiling on me, and next having her face carved in grimaces by the jerking little tugs of her mouth, which I disliked to see, for she would say nothing of what she thought of Heriot, and I thought to myself, though I forbore to speak unkindly, 'It's no use your making yourself look ugly, Julia.' If she had talked of Heriot, I should have thought that crying persons' kisses were agreeable.

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



conscience; which he did for three days, and then asked him if he was in a fit state of mind to beg Mr. Boddy's pardon publicly.

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

A murmur of exultation passed through the school. Mr. Rippenger seized little Temple, and flogged him. Far from dreading the rod, now that Heriot and Temple had tasted it, I thought of punishment as a mad pleasure, not a bit more awful than the burning furze-bush plunged into by our fellows in a follow-my-leader scamper on the common; so I caught Temple's hand as he went by me, and said, eagerly, 'Shall I sing out hurrah?'



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

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

'Oh, the sordid old brute!' said he of Mr. Rippenger. 'How can he know the habits and feelings of gentlemen? Your father's travelling, and can't write, of course. My father's in India, and I get a letter from him about once a year. We know one another, and I know he's one of the best officers in the British army. It's just the way with schoolmasters and tradesmen: they don't care whether a man is doing his duty to his country; he must attend to them, settle accounts with them—hang them! I'll send you money, dear little lad, after I've left.'

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

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

'A letter from the colonel in India!'

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

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

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

'What if it is, sir?'

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Tell me you love me,' said Heriot.

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

'Will you love me faithfully?'

'I will; I do.'

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

'I love you, Walter.'

'For ever.'

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

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

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

'Do you dream of me in your bed?'

'Yes, every night.'



'God bless the bed!'

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

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

'Yes. She would have loved you.'

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

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

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

'Part with my mother's portrait?'

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

'But you are younger than me, Heriot.'

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

'Walter, I will fetch it.'

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

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

Heriot laughed, and pressed for the portrait.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Well, if I pick up a gentleman, I can't be doing a bad business,' said the man, hauling him in tenderly.



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

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

CHAPTER VI



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A TALE OF A GOOSE

From that hour till the day Heriot's aunt came to see me, I lived systematically out of myself in extreme flights of imagination, locking my doors up, as it were, all the faster for the extremest strokes of Mr. Rippenger's rod. He remarked justly that I grew an impenetrably sullen boy, a constitutional rebel, a callous lump: and assured me that if my father would not pay for me, I at least should not escape my debts. The title of little impostor, transmitted from the master's mouth to the school in designation of one who had come to him as a young prince, and for whom he had not received one penny's indemnification, naturally caused me to have fights with several of the boys. Whereupon I was reported: I was prayed at to move my spirit, and flogged to exercise my flesh. The prayers I soon learnt to laugh to scorn. The floggings, after they were over, crowned me with delicious sensations of martyrdom. Even while the sting lasted I could say, it's for Heriot and Julia! and it gave me a wonderful penetration into—the mournful ecstasy of love. Julia was sent away to a relative by the sea-side, because, one of the housemaids told me, she could not bear to hear of my being beaten. Mr. Rippenger summoned me to his private room to bid me inform him whether I had other relatives besides my father, such as grandfather, grandmother, uncles, or aunts, or a mother. I dare say Julia would have led me to break my word to my father by speaking of old Riversley, a place I half longed for since my father had grown so distant and dim to me; but confession to Mr. Rippenger seemed, as he said of Heriot's behaviour to him, a gross breach of trust to my father; so I refused steadily to answer, and suffered the consequences now on my dear father's behalf. Heriot's aunt brought me a cake, and in a letter from him an extraordinary sum of money for a boy of my age. He wrote that he knew I should want it to pay my debts for treats to the boys and keep them in good humour. He believed also that his people meant to have me for the Christmas holidays. The sum he sent me was five pounds, carefully enclosed. I felt myself a prince again. The money was like a golden gate through which freedom twinkled a finger. Forthwith I paid my debts, amounting to two pounds twelve shillings, and instructed a couple of day-boarders, commercial fellows, whose heavy and mysterious charges for commissions ran up a bill in no time, to prepare to bring us materials for a feast on Saturday. Temple abominated the trading propensities of these boys. 'They never get licked and they've always got money, at least I know they always get mine,' said he; 'but you and I and Heriot despise them.' Our position toward them was that of an encumbered aristocracy, and really they paid us great respect. The fact was that, when they had trusted us, they were compelled to continue obsequious, for Heriot had instilled the sentiment in the school, that gentlemen



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never failed to wipe out debts in the long run, so it was their interest to make us feel they knew us to be gentlemen, who were at some time or other sure to pay, and thus also they operated on our consciences. From which it followed that one title of superiority among us, ranking next in the order of nobility to the dignity conferred by Mr. Rippenger's rod, was the being down in their books. Temple and I walked in the halo of unlimited credit like more than mortal twins. I gave an order for four bottles of champagne.

On the Friday evening Catman walked out with us. His studious habits endeared him to us immensely, owing to his having his head in his book on all occasions, and a walk under his superintendence was first cousin to liberty. Some boys roamed ahead, some lagged behind, while Catman turned over his pages, sounding the return only when it grew dark. The rumour of the champagne had already intoxicated the boys. There was a companion and most auspicious rumour that Boddy was going to be absent on Saturday. If so, we said, we may drink our champagne under Catman's nose and he be none the wiser. Saddlebank undertook to manage our feast for us. Coming home over the downs, just upon twilight, Temple and I saw Saddlebank carrying a long withy upright. We asked him what it was for. He shouted back: 'It's for fortune. You keep the rear guard.' Then we saw him following a man and a flock of geese, and imitating the action of the man with his green wand. As we were ready to laugh at anything Saddlebank did, we laughed at this. The man walked like one half asleep, and appeared to wake up now and then to find that he was right in the middle of his geese, and then he waited, and Saddlebank waited behind him. Presently the geese passed a lane leading off the downs. We saw Saddlebank duck his wand in a coaxing way, like an angler dropping his fly for fish; he made all sorts of curious easy flourishes against the sky and branched up the lane. We struck after him, little suspecting that he had a goose in front, but he had; he had cut one of the loiterers off from the flock; and to see him handle his wand on either side his goose, encouraging it to go forward, and remonstrating, and addressing it in bits of Latin, and the creature pattering stiff and astonished, sent us in a dance of laughter.

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

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

'What do you mean—a slice?' said we.

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

'A walk on the downs,' said Saddlebank.

Temple and I echoed him, and Saddlebank motioned his hand as though he were wheedling his goose along. Saddlebank spoke a word to my commissioners. I was to leave the arrangements for the feast to him, he said. John Salter was at home unwell, so Saddlebank was chief. No sooner did we stand on the downs than he gathered us all in a circle, and taking off his cap threw in it some slips of paper. We had to draw lots who should keep by Catman out of twenty-seven; fifteen blanks were marked. Temple dashed his hand into the cap first 'Like my luck,' he remarked, and pocketed both fists as he began strutting away to hide his desperation at drawing a blank. I bought a substitute for him at the price of half-a-crown,—Drew, a fellow we were glad to get rid of; he wanted five shillings. The feast was worth fifty, but to haggle about prices showed the sneak. He begged us to put by a taste for him; he was groaned out of hearing. The fifteen looked so wretched when they saw themselves divided from us that I gave them a shilling a-piece to console them. They took their instructions from Saddlebank as to how they were to surround Catman, and make him fancy us to be all in his neighbourhood; and then we shook hands, they requesting us feebly to drink their healths, and we saying, ay, that we would.

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



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

At last Saddlebank came running over the hill-side, making as if he meant to bowl down what looked a black body of a baby against the sky, and shouting, 'See, you fellows, here's a find!' He ran through us, swinging his goose up to the hampers, saying that he had found the goose under a furze-bush. While the words were coming out of his mouth, he saw the tramps, and the male tramp's eyes and his met.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'The truth is, Temple,' I confided to him, 'I've an uncle—I mean a grandfather-of enormous property; he owns half Hampshire, I believe, and hates my father like poison. I won't stand it. You've seen my father, haven't you? Gentlemen never forget their servants, Temple. Let's drink lots more champagne. I wish you and I were knights riding across that country there, as they used to, and you saying, "I wonder whether your father's at home in the castle expecting our arrival."' "

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

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



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

'Treat your superiors respectfully,' Saddlebank retorted.

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



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

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

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

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

Temple and I contemplated these proceedings as matters belonging to the ordinary phenomena of feasting. We agreed that gentlemen were always the last to drop, and were assured, therefore, of our living out the field; but I dreaded the moment of the goose's appearance, and I think he did also. Saddlebank's pertinacity in withholding the cool ginger-beer and the apples offended us deeply; we should have conspired against him had we reposed confidence in our legs and our tongues.

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

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

I perspired coldly.

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



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

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

We stared at the black opening of the dell.

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

'Old Rippenger!' breathed Temple.

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

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

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

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

With the instinct to defeat the master, I crawled in the line of the shadows to the farther side of a tent, where I felt a hand clutch mine. 'Hide me,' said I; and the curtain of the tent was raised. After squeezing through boxes and straw, I lay flat, covered by a mat smelling of abominable cheese, and felt a head outside it on my chest. Several times Mr. Rippenger pronounced my name in the way habitual to him in anger: 'Rye!'

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

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



ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A stew's a stew, and not a boiling to shreds
I can't think brisk out of my breeches
Kindness is kindness, all over the world
Learn all about them afterwards, ay, and make the best of them
To hope, and not be impatient, is really to believe
Unseemly hour—unbetimes