

The Adventures Harry Richmond — Volume 2 eBook

The Adventures Harry Richmond — Volume 2 by George Meredith

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A FREE LIFE ON THE ROAD

I woke very early, though I had taken kindly to my pillow, as I found by my having an arm round my companion's neck, and her fingers intertwined with mine. For awhile I lay looking at her eyes, which had every imaginable light and signification in them; they advised me to lie quiet, they laughed at my wonder, they said, 'Dear little fellow!' they flashed as from under a cloud, darkened, flashed out of it, seemed to dip in water and shine, and were sometimes like a view into a forest, sometimes intensely sunny, never quite still. I trusted her, and could have slept again, but the sight of the tent stupefied me; I fancied the sky had fallen, and gasped for air; my head was extremely dizzy too; not one idea in it was kept from wheeling. This confusion of my head flew to my legs when, imitating her, I rose to go forth. In a fit of horror I thought, 'I've forgotten how to walk!'

Summoning my manful resolution, I made the attempt to step across the children swaddled in matting and straw and old gowns or petticoats. The necessity for doing it with a rush seized me after the first step. I pitched over one little bundle, right on to the figure of a sleeping woman. All she did was to turn round, murmuring, 'Naughty Jackie.' My companion pulled me along gravely, and once in the air, with a good breath of it in my chest, I felt tall and strong, and knew what had occurred. The tent where I had slept struck me as more curious than my own circumstances. I lifted my face to the sky; it was just sunrise, beautiful; bits of long and curling cloud brushed any way close on the blue, and rosy and white, deliciously cool; the grass was all grey, our dell in shadow, and the tops of the trees burning, a few birds twittering.

I sucked a blade of grass.

'I wish it was all water here,' I said.

'Come and have a drink and a bathe,' said my companion.

We went down the dell and over a juniper slope, reminding me of my day at John Salter's house and the last of dear Heriot. Rather to my shame, my companion beat me at running; she was very swift, and my legs were stiff.

'Can you swim?' she asked me.

'I can row, and swim, and fence, and ride, and fire a pistol,' I said.

'Oh, dear,' said she, after eyeing me enviously. I could see that I had checked a recital of her accomplishments.

We arrived at a clear stream in a gentleman's park, where grass rolled smooth as seawater on a fine day, and cows and horses were feeding.



'I can catch that horse and mount him,' she said.

I was astonished.

'Straddle?'

She nodded down for 'Yes.'

'No saddle?'

She nodded level for 'No.'

My respect for her returned. But she could not swim.

'Only up to my knees,' she confessed.

'Have a look at me,' said I; and I stripped and shot into the water, happy as a fish, and thinking how much nicer it was than champagne. My enjoyment made her so envious that she plucked off her stockings, and came in as far as she dared. I called to her.

'You're like a cow,' and she showed her teeth, bidding me not say that.

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'A cow! a cow !' I repeated, in my superior pleasure.

She spun out in a breath, ' If you say that, I 'll run away with every bit of your clothes, and you'll come out and run about naked, you will.'

'Now I float,' was my answer, 'now I dive'; and when I came up she welcomed me with a big bright grin.

A smart run in the heat dried me. I dressed, finding half my money on the grass. She asked me to give her one of those bits-a shilling. I gave her two, upon which she asked me, invitingly, if ever I tossed. I replied that I never tossed for money; but she had caught a shilling, and I could not resist guessing 'heads,' and won; the same with her second shilling. She handed them to me sullenly, sobbing, yet she would not take them back.

'By-and-by you give me another two,' she said, growing lively again. We agreed that it would be a good thing if we entered the village and bought something. None of the shops were open. We walked through the churchyard. I said, 'Here's where dead people are buried.'

'I'll dance if you talk about dead people,' said she, and began whooping at the pitch of her voice. On my wishing to know why she did it, her reply was that it was to make the dead people hear. My feelings were strange: the shops not open, and no living people to be seen. We climbed trees, and sat on a branch talking of birds' eggs till hunger drove us to the village street, where, near the public-house, we met the man-tramp, who whistled.

He was rather amusing. He remarked that he put no questions to me, because he put no question to anybody, because answers excited him about subjects that had no particular interest to him, and did not benefit him to the extent of a pipe of 'tobacco; and all through not being inquisitive, yesterday afternoon he had obtained, as if it had been chucked into his lap, a fine-flavoured fat goose honourably for his supper, besides bottles of ale, bottles of ginger-pop, and a fair-earned half-crown. That was through his not being inquisitive, and he was not going to be inquisitive now, knowing me for a gentleman: my master had tipped him half-a-crown.

Fortunately for him, and perhaps for my liberty, he employed a verb marvellously enlightening to a schoolboy. I tipped him another half-crown. He thanked me, observing that there were days when you lay on your back and the sky rained apples; while there were other days when you wore your fingers down to the first joint to catch a flea. Such was Fortune!

In a friendly manner he advised me to go to school; if not there, then to go home. My idea, which I had only partly conceived, was to have a look at Riversley over a hedge,

kiss my aunt Dorothy unaware, and fly subsequently in search of my father. Breakfast, however, was my immediate thought. He and the girl sat down to breakfast at the inn as my guests. We ate muttonchops and eggs, and drank coffee. After it, though I had no suspicions, I noticed that the man grew thoughtful. He proposed to me, supposing I had no objection against slow travelling, to join company for a couple of days, if I was for Hampshire, which I stated was the county I meant to visit.

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'Well then, here now, come along, d 'ye see, look,' said he, 'I mustn't be pounced on, and no missing young gentleman in my society, and me took half-a-crown for his absence; that won't do. You get on pretty well with the gal, and that 's a screaming farce: none of us do. Lord! she looks down on such scum as us. She's gipsy blood, true sort; everything's sausages that gets into their pockets, no matter what it was when it was out. Well then, now, here, you and the gal go t' other side o' Bed'Iming, and you wait for us on the heath, and we 'll be there to comfort ye 'fore dark. Is it a fister?'

He held out his hand; I agreed; and he remarked that he now counted a breakfast in the list of his gains from never asking questions.

I was glad enough to quit the village in a hurry, for the driver of the geese, or a man dreadfully resembling him, passed me near the public-house, and attacked my conscience on the cowardly side, which is, I fear, the first to awaken, and always the liveliest half while we are undisciplined. I would have paid him money, but the idea of a conversation with him indicated the road back to school. My companion related her history. She belonged to a Hampshire gipsy tribe, and had been on a visit to a relative down in the East counties, who died on the road, leaving her to be brought home by these tramps: she called them mumpers, and made faces when she spoke of them. Gipsies, she said, were a different sort: gipsies camped in gentlemen's parks; gipsies, horses, fiddles, and the wide world—that was what she liked. The wide world she described as a heath, where you looked and never saw the end of it I let her talk on. For me to talk of my affairs to a girl without bonnet and boots would have been absurd. Otherwise, her society pleased me: she was so like a boy, and unlike any boy I knew.

My mental occupation on the road was to calculate how many hill-tops I should climb before I beheld Riversley. The Sunday bells sounded homely from village to village as soon as I was convinced that I heard no bells summoning boarders to Rippenger's school. The shops in the villages continued shut; however, I told the girl they should pay me for it next day, and we had an interesting topic in discussing as to the various things we would buy. She was for bright ribands and draper's stuff, I for pastry and letter-paper. The smell of people's dinners united our appetites. Going through a village I saw a man carrying a great baked pie, smelling overpoweringly, so that to ask him his price for it was a natural impulse with me. 'What! sell my Sunday dinner?' he said, and appeared ready to drop the dish. Nothing stopped his staring until we had finished a plateful a-piece and some beer in his cottage among his family. He wanted to take me in alone. 'She's a common tramp,' he said of the girl.

'That's a lie,' she answered.

Of course I would not leave her hungry outside, so in the end he reluctantly invited us both, and introduced us to his wife.

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'Here's a young gentleman asks a bit o' dinner, and a young I-d'n-know-what 's after the same; I leaves it to you, missus.'

His wife took it off his shoulders in good humour, saying it was lucky she made the pie big enough for her family and strays. They would not accept more than a shilling for our joint repast. The man said that was the account to a farthing, if I was too proud to be a poor man's guest, and insisted on treating him like a public. Perhaps I would shake hands at parting? I did cordially, and remembered him when people were not so civil. They wanted to know whether we had made a runaway match of it. The fun of passing a boys'-school and hearing the usher threaten to punish one fellow for straying from ranks, entertained me immensely. I laughed at them just as the stupid people we met laughed at me, which was unpleasant for the time; but I knew there was not a single boy who would not have changed places with me, only give him the chance, though my companion was a gipsy girl, and she certainly did look odd company for a gentleman's son in a tea-garden and public-house parlour. At nightfall, however, I was glad of her and she of me, and we walked hand in hand. I narrated tales of Roman history. It was very well for her so say, 'I'll mother you,' as we lay down to sleep; I discovered that she would never have hooted over churchyard graves in the night. She confessed she believed the devil went about in the night. Our bed was a cart under a shed, our bed-clothes fern-leaves and armfuls of straw. The shafts of the cart were down, so we lay between upright and level, and awakening in the early light I found our four legs hanging over the seat in front. 'How you have been kicking!' said I. She accused me of the same. Next minute she pointed over the side of the cart, and I saw the tramp's horse and his tents beneath a broad roadside oak-tree. Her face was comical, just like a boy's who thinks he has escaped and is caught. 'Let's run,' she said. Preferring positive independence, I followed her, and then she told me that she had overheard the tramp last night swearing I was as good as a fistful of half-crowns lost to him if he missed me. The image of Rippenger's school overshadowed me at this communication. With some melancholy I said: 'You'll join your friends, won't you?'

She snapped her fingers: 'Mumpers !' and walked on carelessly.

We were now on the great heaths. They brought the memory of my father vividly; the smell of the air half inclined me to turn my steps toward London, I grew so full of longing for him. Nevertheless I resolved to have one gaze at Riversley, my aunt Dorothy, and Sewis, the old grey-brown butler, and the lamb that had grown a sheep; wonderful contrasts to my grand kings of England career. My first clear recollection of Riversley was here, like an outline of a hill seen miles away. I might have shed a tear or two out of love for my father, had not

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the thought that I was a very queer boy displaced his image. I could not but be a very queer boy, such a lot of things happened to me. Suppose I joined the gipsies? My companion wished me to. She had brothers, horse-dealers, beautiful fiddlers. Suppose I learnt the fiddle? Suppose I learnt their language and went about with them and became king of the gipsies? My companion shook her head; she could not encourage this ambitious idea because she had never heard of a king of the gipsies or a queen either. 'We fool people,' she said, and offended me, for our school believed in a gipsy king, and one fellow, Hackman, used to sing a song of a gipsy king; and it was as much as to say that my schoolfellows were fools, every one of them. I accused her of telling lies. She grinned angrily. 'I don't tell 'em to friends,' she said. We had a quarrel. The truth was, I was enraged at the sweeping out of my prospects of rising to distinction among the gipsies. After breakfast at an inn, where a waiter laughed at us to our faces, and we fed scowling, shy, and hungry, we had another quarrel. I informed her of my opinion that gipsies could not tell fortunes.

'They can, and you come to my mother and my aunt, and see if they can't tell your fortune,' said she, in a fury.

'Yes, and that's how they fool people,' said I. I enjoyed seeing the flash of her teeth. But my daring of her to look me in the eyes and swear on her oath she believed the fortunes true ones, sent her into a fit of sullenness.

'Go along, you nasty little fellow, your shadow isn't half a yard,' she said, and I could smile at that; my shadow stretched half across the road. We had a quarrelsome day wherever we went; rarely walking close together till nightfall, when she edged up to my hand, with, 'I say, I'll keep you warm to-night, I will.' She hugged me almost too tight, but it was warm and social, and helped to the triumph of a feeling I had that nothing made me regret running away from Rippenger's school.

An adventure befell us in the night. A farmer's wife, whom we asked for a drink of water after dark, lent us an old blanket to cover us in a dry ditch on receiving our promise not to rob the orchard. An old beggar came limping by us, and wanted to share our covering. My companion sank right under the blanket to peer at him through one of its holes. He stood enormous above me in the moonlight, like an apparition touching earth and sky.

'Cold, cold,' he whined: 'there's ne'er a worse off but there's a better off. Young un!' His words dispersed the fancy that he was something horrible, or else my father in disguise going to throw off his rags, and shine, and say he had found me. 'Are ye one, or are ye two?' he asked.

I replied that we were two.

‘Then I’ll come and lie in the middle,’ said he.

‘You can’t; there’s no room,’ I sang out.

‘Lord,’ said he, ‘there’s room for any reckoning o’ empty stomachs in a ditch.’

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'No, I prefer to be alone: good-night,' said I.

'Why!' he exclaimed, 'where ha' you been t' learn language? Halloa !'

'Please, leave me alone; it's my intention to go to sleep,' I said, vexed at having to conciliate him; he had a big stick.

'Oho!' went the beggar. Then he recommenced:

'Tell me you've stole nothing in your life! You've stole a gentleman's tongue, I knows the ring o' that. How comes you out here? Who's your mate there down below? Now, see, I'm going to lift my stick.'

At these menacing words the girl jumped out of the blanket, and I called to him that I would rouse the farmer.

'Why . . . because I'm goin' to knock down a apple or two on your head?' he inquired, in a tone of reproach. 'It's a young woman you've got there, eh? Well, odd grows odder, like the man who turned three shillings into five. Now, you gi' me a lie under your blanket, I 'll knock down a apple apiece. If ever you've tasted gin, you 'll say a apple at night's a cordial, though it don't intoxicate.'

The girl whispered in my ear, 'He's lame as ducks.' Her meaning seized me at once; we both sprang out of the ditch and ran, dragging our blanket behind us. He pursued, but we eluded him, and dropped on a quiet sleeping-place among furzes. Next morning, when we took the blanket to the farm-house, we heard that the old wretch had traduced our characters, and got a breakfast through charging us with the robbery of the apple-tree. I proved our innocence to the farmer's wife by putting down a shilling. The sight of it satisfied her. She combed my hair, brought me a bowl of water and a towel, and then gave us a bowl of milk and bread, and dismissed us, telling me I had a fair face and dare-devil written on it: as for the girl, she said of her that she knew gipsies at a glance, and what God Almighty made them for there was no guessing. This set me thinking all through the day, 'What can they have been made for?' I bought a red scarf for the girl, and other things she fixed her eyes on, but I lost a great deal of my feeling of fellowship with her. 'I dare say they were made for fun,' I thought, when people laughed at us now, and I laughed also.

I had a day of rollicking laughter, puzzling the girl, who could only grin two or three seconds at a time, and then stared like a dog that waits for his master to send him off again running, the corners of her mouth twitching for me to laugh or speak, exactly as a dog might wag his tail. I studied her in the light of a harmless sort of unaccountable creature; witness at any rate for the fact that I had escaped from school.

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We loitered half the morning round a cricketers' booth in a field, where there was moderately good cricketing. The people thought it of first-rate quality. I told them I knew a fellow who could bowl out either eleven in an hour and a half. One of the men frightened me by saying, 'By Gerge! I'll in with you into a gig, and off with you after that ther' faller.' He pretended to mean it, and started up. I watched him without flinching. He remarked that if I 'had not cut my lucky from school, and tossed my cap for a free life, he was ——' whatever may be expressed by a slap on the thigh. We played a single-wicket side game, he giving me six runs, and crestfallen he was to find himself beaten; but, as I let him know, one who had bowled to Heriot for hours and stood against Saddlebank's bowling, was a tough customer, never mind his age.

This man offered me his friendship. He made me sit and eat beside him at the afternoon dinner of the elevens, and sent platefuls of food to the girl, where she was allowed to squat; and said he, 'You and I'll tie a knot, and be friends for life.'

I replied, 'With pleasure.'

We nodded over a glass of ale. In answer to his questions, I stated that I liked farms, I would come and see his farm, I would stay with him two or three days, I would give him my address if I had one, I was on my way to have a look at Riversley Grange.

'Hey!' says he, 'Riversley Grange! Well, to be sure now! I'm a tenant of Squire Beltham's, and a right sort of landlord, too.'

'Oh!' says I, 'he's my grandfather, but I don't care much about him.'

'Lord!' says he. 'What! be you the little boy, why, Master Harry Richmond that was carried off in the night, and the old squire shut up doors for a fortnight, and made out you was gone in a hearse! Why, I know all about you, you see. And back you are, hurrah! The squire 'll be hearty, that he will. We've noticed a change in him ever since you left. Gout's been at his leg, off and on, a deal shrewder. But he rides to hounds, and dines his tenants still, that he does; he's one o' th' old style. Everything you eat and drink's off his estate, the day he dines his tenants. No humbug 'bout old Squire Beltham.'

I asked him if Sewis was alive.

'Why, old Sewis,' says he, 'you're acquainted with old Sewis? Why, of course you are. Yes, old Sewis 's alive, Master Harry. And you bet me at single-wicket! That 'll be something to relate to 'em all. By Gerge, if I didn't think I'd got a nettle in my fist when I saw you pitch into my stumps. Dash it! thinks I. But th' old squire 'll be proud of you, that he will. My farm lies three miles away. You look at a crow flying due South-east five minutes from Riversley, and he's over Throckham farm, and there I 'll drive ye to-night, and to-morrow, clean and tidy out o' my wife's soap and water, straight to

Riversley. Done, eh? My name's Eckerthy. No matter where you comes from, here you are, eh, Master Harry? And I see you last time in a donkey-basket, and here you come in breeches and defy me to singlewicket, and you bet me too!

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He laughed for jollity. An extraordinary number of emotions had possession of me: the most intelligible one being a restless vexation at myself, as the principal person concerned, for not experiencing anything like the farmer's happiness. I preferred a gipsy life to Riversley. Gipsies were on the road, and that road led to my father. I endeavoured to explain to Farmer Eckerthy that I was travelling in this direction merely to have a short look at Riversley; but it was impossible; he could not understand me. The more I tried, the more he pressed me to finish my glass of ale, which had nothing to do with it. I drank, nevertheless, and I suppose said many funny things in my anxiety that the farmer should know what I meant; he laughed enough.

While he was fielding against the opposite eleven, the tramp came into the booth, and we had a match of cunning.

'Schoolmaster's out after you, young gentleman,' said he, advising me to hurry along the road if I sought to baffle pursuit.

I pretended alarm, and then said, 'Oh, you'll stand by me,' and treated him to ale.

He assured me I left as many tracks behind me as if I went spilling a box of lucifer-matches. He was always for my hastening on until I ordered fresh ale for him. The girl and he grimaced at one another in contempt. So we remained seeing the game out. By the time the game ended, the tramp had drunk numbers of glasses of ale.

'A fine-flavoured fat goose,' he counted his gains since the commencement of our acquaintance, 'bottles of ale and ginger-pop, two half-crowns, more ale, and more to follow, let's hope. You only stick to your friends, young gentleman, won't you, sir? It's a hard case for a poor man like me if you don't. We ain't got such chances every morning of our lives. Do you perceive, sir? I request you to inform me, do you perceive, sir? I'm muddled a bit, sir, but a man must look after his interests.'

I perceived he was so muddled as to be unable to conceal that his interests were involved in my capture; but I was merry too. Farmer Eckerthy dealt the tramp a scattering slap on the back when he returned to the booth, elated at having beaten the enemy by a single run.

'Master Harry Richmond go to Riversley to his grandfather in your company, you scoundrel!' he cried in a rage, after listening to him. 'I mean to drive him over. It's a comfortable ten-mile, and no more. But I say, Master Harry, what do you say to a peck o' supper?'

He communicated to me confidentially that he did not like to seem to slink away from the others, who had made up their minds to stop and sup; so we would drive home by moonlight, singing songs. And so we did. I sat beside the farmer, the girl scrambled

into the hinder part of the cart, and the tramp stood moaning, 'Oh dear! oh dear! you goes away to Riversley without your best friend.'

I tossed him a shilling. We sang beginnings and ends of songs. The farmer looked at the moon, and said, 'Lord! she stares at us!' Then he sang:

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'The moon is shining on Latworth lea,
And where'll she see such a jovial three
As we, boys, we? And why is she pale?
It's because she drinks water instead of ale.'

'Where 's the remainder? There's the song!—

"Oh! handsome Miss Gammon
Has married Lord Mammon,
And jilted her suitors,
All Cupid's sharpshooters,
And gone in a carriage
And six to her marriage,
Singing hey! for I've landed my salmon, my salmon!"

Where's the remainder? I heard it th' only time I ever was in London town, never rested till I'd learnt it, and now it's clean gone. What's come to me?'

He sang to 'Mary of Ellingmere' and another maid of some place, and a loud song of Britons.

It was startling to me to wake up to twilight in the open air and silence, for I was unaware that I had fallen asleep. The girl had roused me, and we crept down from the cart. Horse and farmer were quite motionless in a green hollow beside the roadway. Looking across fields and fir plantations, I beheld a house in the strange light of the hour, and my heart began beating; but I was overcome with shyness, and said to myself, 'No, no, that's not Riversley; I'm sure it isn't'; though the certainty of it was, in my teeth, refuting me. I ran down the fields to the park and the bright little river, and gazed. When I could say, 'Yes, it is Riversley!' I turned away, hurt even to a sense of smarting pain, without knowing the cause. I dare say it is true, as the girl declared subsequently, that I behaved like one in a fit. I dropped, and I may have rolled my body and cried. An indefinite resentment at Riversley was the feeling I grew conscious of after very fast walking. I would not have accepted breakfast there.

About mid-day, crossing a stubble-field, the girl met a couple of her people-men. Near evening we entered one of their tents. The women set up a cry, 'Kiomi! Kiomi!' like a rising rookery. Their eyes and teeth made such a flashing as when you dabble a hand in a dark waterpool. The strange tongue they talked, with a kind of peck of the voice at a word, rapid, never high or low, and then a slide of similar tones all round, —not musical, but catching and incessant,—gave me an idea that I had fallen upon a society of birds, exceedingly curious ones. They welcomed me kindly, each of them looking me in the face a bright second or so. I had two helps from a splendid pot of broth that hung over a fire in the middle of the tent.



Kiomi was my companion's name. She had sisters Adeline and Eveleen, and brothers Osric and William, and she had a cousin a prizefighter. 'That's what I'll be,' said I. Fiddling for money was not a prospect that charmed me, though it was pleasant lying in Kiomi's arms to hear Osric play us off to sleep; it was like floating down one of a number of visible rivers; I could see them converging and breaking away while I floated

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smoothly, and a wonderful fair country nodded drowsy. From that to cock-crow at a stride. Sleep was no more than the passage through the arch of a canal. Kiomi and I were on the heath before sunrise, jumping gravel-pits, chasing sandpipers, mimicking pewits; it seemed to me I had only just heard the last of Osric's fiddle when yellow colour filled in along the sky over Riversley. The curious dark thrill of the fiddle in the tent by night seemed close up behind the sun, and my quiet fancies as I lay dropping to sleep, followed me like unobtrusive shadows during daylight, or, to speak truthfully, till about dinner-time, when I thought of nothing but the great stew-pot. We fed on plenty; nicer food than Rippenger's, minus puddings. After dinner I was ready for mischief. My sensations on seeing Kiomi beg of a gentleman were remarkable. I reproached her. She showed me sixpence shining in the palm of her hand. I gave her a shilling to keep her from it. She had now got one and sixpence, she said: meaning, I supposed upon reflection, that her begging had produced that sum, and therefore it was a good thing. The money remaining in my pocket amounted to five shillings and a penny. I offered it to Kiomi's mother, who refused to accept it; so did the father, and Osric also. I might think of them, they observed, on my return to my own house: they pointed at Riversley. 'No,' said I, 'I shan't go there, you may be sure.' The women grinned, and the men yawned. The business of the men appeared to be to set to work about everything as if they had a fire inside them, and then to stretch out their legs and lie on their backs, exactly as if the fire had gone out. Excepting Osric's practice on the fiddle, and the father's bringing in and leading away of horses, they did little work in my sight but brown themselves in the sun. One morning Osric's brother came to our camp with their cousin the prizefighter—a young man of lighter complexion, upon whom I gazed, remembering John Thresher's reverence for the heroical profession. Kiomi whispered some story concerning her brother having met the tramp. I did not listen; I was full of a tempest, owing to two causes: a studious admiration of the smart young prizefighter's person, and wrathful disgust at him for calling Kiomi his wife, and telling her he was prepared to marry her as soon as she played her harp like King David. The intense folly of his asking a girl to play like David made me despise him, but he was splendidly handsome and strong, and to see him put on the gloves for a spar with big William, Kiomi's brother, and evade and ward the huge blows, would have been a treat to others besides old John of Dipwell Farm. He had the agile grace of a leopard; his waistcoat reminded me of one; he was like a piece of machinery in free action. Pleased by my enthusiasm, he gave me a lesson, promising me more.

'He'll be champion some day,' said Kiomi, at gnaw upon an apple he had given her.

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I knocked the apple on the ground, and stamped on it. She slapped my cheek. In a minute we stood in a ring. I beheld the girl actually squaring at me.

'Fight away,' I said, to conceal my shame, and imagining I could slip from her hits as easily as the prizefighter did from big William's. I was mistaken.

'Oh! you think I can't defend myself,' said Kiomi; and rushed in with one, two, quick as a cat, and cool as a statue.

'Fight, my merry one; she takes punishment,' the prizefighter sang out. 'First blood to you, Kiomi; uncork his claret, my duck; straight at the nozzle, he sees more lamps than shine in London, I warrant. Make him lively, cook him; tell him who taught you; a downer to him, and I'll marry you to-morrow!'

I conceived a fury against her as though she had injured me by appearing the man's property—and I was getting the worst of it; her little fists shot straight and hard as bars of iron; she liked fighting; she was at least my match. To avoid the disgrace of seriously striking her, or of being beaten at an open exchange of blows, I made a feint, and caught her by the waist and threw her, not very neatly, for I fell myself in her grip. They had to pluck her from me by force.

'And you've gone a course of tuition in wrestling, squire?' the prizefighter said to me rather savagely.

The others were cordial, and did not snarl at me for going to the ropes, as he called it. Kiomi desired to renew the conflict. I said aloud:

'I never fight girls, and I tell you I don't like their licking me.'

'Then you come down to the river and wash your face,' said she, and pulled me by the fingers, and when she had washed my face clear of blood, kissed me. I thought she tasted of the prizefighter.

Late in the afternoon Osric proposed that he and I and the prizefighter should take a walk. I stipulated for Kiomi to be of the party, which was allowed, and the gipsy-women shook my hand as though I had been departing on a long expedition, entreating me not to forget them, and never to think evil of poor gipsy-folk.

'Why, I mean to stay with you,' said I.

They grinned delightedly, and said I must be back to see them break up camp in the evening. Every two or three minutes Kiomi nudged my elbow and pointed behind, where I saw the women waving their coloured neckerchiefs. Out of sight of our tents we came in view of the tramp. Kiomi said, 'Hide!' I dived into a furze dell. The tramp approached, calling out for news of me. Now at Rippenger's school, thanks to Heriot,

lying was not the fashion; still I had heard boys lie, and they can let it out of their mouths like a fish, so lively, simple, and solid, that you could fancy a master had asked them for it and they answered, 'There it is.' But boys cannot lie in one key spontaneously, a number of them to the same effect, as my friends here did. I was off, they said; all swung round to signify

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the direction of my steps; my plans were hinted at; particulars were not stated on the plea that there should be no tellings; it was remarked that I ought to have fair play and 'law.' Kiomi said she hoped he would not catch me. The tramp winced with vexation, and the gipsies chaffed him. I thanked them in my heart for their loyal conduct. Creeping under cover of the dell I passed round to the road over a knoll of firs as quick as my feet could carry me, and had just cried, 'Now I'm safe'; when a lady stepping from a carriage on the road, caught me in her arms and hugged me blind. It was my aunt Dorothy.

CHAPTER VIII

JANET ILCHESTER

I was a prisoner, captured by fraud, and with five shillings and a penny still remaining to me for an assurance of my power to enjoy freedom. Osric and Kiomi did not show themselves on the road, they answered none of my shouts.

'She is afraid to look me in the face,' I said, keeping my anger on Kiomi.

'Harry, Harry,' said my aunt, 'they must have seen me here; do you grieve, and you have me, dear?'

Her eager brown eyes devoured me while I stood panting to be happy, if only I might fling my money at Kiomi's feet, and tell her, 'There, take all I have; I hate you!' One minute I was curiously perusing the soft shade of a moustache on my aunt's upper lip; the next, we jumped into the carriage, and she was my dear aunt Dorothy again, and the world began rolling another way.

The gipsies had made an appointment to deliver me over to my aunt; Farmer Eckerthy had spoken of me to my grandfather; the tramp had fetched Mr. Rippenger on the scene. Rippenger paid the tramp, I dare say; my grandfather paid Rippenger's bill and for Saddlebank's goose; my aunt paid the gipsies, and I think it doubtful that they handed the tramp a share, so he came to the end of his list of benefits from not asking questions.

I returned to Riversley more of a man than most boys of my age, and more of a child. A small child would not have sulked as I did at Kiomi's behaviour; but I met my grandfather's ridiculous politeness with a man's indifference.

'So you're back, sir, are you!'

'I am, sir.'

'Ran like a hare, 'stead of a fox, eh?'

'I didn't run like either, sir.'

'Do you ride?'

'Yes, sir; a horse.'

That was his greeting and how I took it. I had not run away from him, so I had a quiet conscience.

He said, shortly after, 'Look here; your name is Harry Richmond in my house—do you understand? My servants have orders to call you Master Harry Richmond, according to your christening. You were born here, sir, you will please to recollect. I'll have no vagabond names here'—he puffed himself hot, muttering, 'Nor vagabond airs neither.'

I knew very well what it meant. A sore spirit on my father's behalf kept me alive to any insult of him; and feeling that we were immeasurably superior to the Beltham blood, I merely said, apart to old Sewis, shrugging my shoulders, 'The squire expects me to recollect where I was born. I'm not likely to forget his nonsense.'

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Sewis, in reply, counselled me to direct a great deal of my attention to the stables, and drink claret with the squire in the evening, things so little difficult to do that I moralized reflectively, 'Here 's a way of gaining a relative's affection!' The squire's punctilious regard for payments impressed me, it is true. He had saved me from the disgrace of owing money to my detested schoolmaster; and, besides, I was under his roof, eating of his bread. My late adventurous life taught me that I incurred an obligation by it. Kiomi was the sole victim of my anger that really seemed to lie down to be trampled on, as she deserved for her unpardonable treachery.

By degrees my grandfather got used to me, and commenced saying in approval of certain of my performances, 'There's Beltham in that—Beltham in that!' Once out hunting, I took a nasty hedge and ditch in front of him; he bawled proudly, 'Beltham all over!' and praised me. At night, drinking claret, he said on a sudden, 'And, egad, Harry, you must jump your head across hedges and ditches, my little fellow. It won't do, in these confounded days, to have you clever all at the wrong end. In my time, good in the saddle was good for everything; but now you must get your brains where you can—pick here, pick there—and sell 'em like a huckster; some do. Nature's gone—it's damned artifice rules, I tell ye; and a squire of our country must be three parts lawyer to keep his own. You must learn; by God, sir, you must cogitate; you must stew at books and maps, or you'll have some infernal upstart taking the lead of you, and leaving you nothing but the whiff of his tail.' He concluded, 'I'm glad to see you toss down your claret, my boy.'

Thus I grew in his favour, till I heard from him that I was to be the heir of Riversley and his estates, but on one condition, which he did not then mention. If I might have spoken to him of my father, I should have loved him. As it was, I liked old Sewis better, for he would talk to me of the night when my father carried me away, and though he never uttered the flattering words I longed to hear, he repeated the story often, and made the red hall glow with beams of my father's image. My walks and rides were divided between the road he must have followed toward London, bearing me in his arms, and the vacant place of Kiomi's camp. Kiomi stood for freedom, pointing into the darkness I wished to penetrate that I might find him. If I spoke of him to my aunt she trembled. She said, 'Yes, Harry, tell me all you are thinking about, whatever you want to know'; but her excessive trembling checked me, and I kept my feelings to myself—a boy with a puzzle in his head and hunger in his heart. At times I rode out to the utmost limit of the hour giving me the proper number of minutes to race back and dress for dinner at the squire's table, and a great wrestling I had with myself to turn my little horse's head from hills and valleys lying

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East; they seemed to have the secret of my father. Blank enough they looked if ever I despaired of their knowing more than I. My Winter and Summer were the moods of my mind constantly shifting. I would have a week of the belief that he was near Riversley, calling for me; a week of the fear that he was dead; long dreams of him, as travelling through foreign countries, patting the foreheads of boys and girls on his way; or driving radiantly, and people bowing. Radiantly, I say: had there been touches of colour in these visions, I should have been lured off in pursuit of him. The dreams passed colourlessly; I put colouring touches to the figures seen in them afterward, when I was cooler, and could say, 'What is the use of fancying things?' yet knew that fancying things was a consolation. By such means I came to paint the mystery surrounding my father in tender colours. I built up a fretted cathedral from what I imagined of him, and could pass entirely away out of the world by entering the doors.

Want of boys' society as well as hard head-work produced this mischief. My lessons were intermittent Resident tutors arrived to instruct me, one after another. They were clergymen, and they soon proposed to marry my aunt Dorothy, or they rebuked the squire for swearing. The devil was in the parsons, he said: in his time they were modest creatures and stuck to the bottle and heaven. My aunt was of the opinion of our neighbours, who sent their boys to school and thought I should be sent likewise.

'No, no,' said the squire; 'my life's short when the gout's marching up to my middle, and I'll see as much of my heir as I can. Why, the lad's my daughter's son: He shall grow up among his tenantry. We'll beat the country and start a man at last to drive his yard of learning into him without rolling sheep's eyes right and left.'

Unfortunately the squire's description of man was not started. My aunt was handsome, an heiress (that is, she had money of her own coming from her mother's side of the family), and the tenderest woman alive, with a voice sweeter than flutes. There was a saying in the county that to marry a Beltham you must po'chay her.

A great-aunt of mine, the squire's sister, had been carried off. She died childless. A favourite young cousin of his likewise had run away with a poor baronet, Sir Roderick Ilchester, whose son Charles was now and then our playmate, and was a scapegrace. But for me he would have been selected by the squire for his heir, he said; and he often 'confounded' me to my face on that account as he shook my hand, breaking out: 'I'd as lief fetch you a cuff o' the head, Harry Richmond, upon my honour!' and cursing at his luck for having to study for his living, and be what he called a sloppy curate now that I had come to Riversley for good.

He informed me that I should have to marry his sister Janet; for that they could not allow the money to go out of the family. Janet Ilchester was a quaint girl, a favourite of my aunt Dorothy, and the squire's especial pet; red-cheeked, with a good upright figure in

walking and riding, and willing to be friendly, but we always quarrelled: she detested hearing of Kiomi.

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'Don't talk of creatures you met when you were a beggar, Harry Richmond,' she said.

'I never was a beggar,' I replied.

'Then she was a beggar,' said Janet; and I could not deny it; though the only difference I saw between Janet and Kiomi was, that Janet continually begged favours and gifts of people she knew, and Kiomi of people who were strangers.

My allowance of pocket-money from the squire was fifty pounds a year. I might have spent it all in satisfying Janet's wishes for riding-whips, knives, pencil-cases, cairngorm buttons, and dogs. A large part of the money went that way. She was always getting notice of fine dogs for sale. I bought a mastiff for her, a brown retriever, and a little terrier. She was permitted to keep the terrier at home, but I had to take care of the mastiff and retriever. When Janet came to look at them she called them by their names; of course they followed me in preference to her; she cried with jealousy. We had a downright quarrel. Lady Ilchester invited me to spend a day at her house, Charley being home for his Midsummer holidays. Charley, Janet, and I fished the river for trout, and Janet, to flatter me (of which I was quite aware), while I dressed her rod as if she was likely to catch something, talked of Heriot, and then said:

'Oh! dear, we are good friends, aren't we? Charley says we shall marry one another some day, but mama's such a proud woman she won't much like your having such a father as you 've got unless he 's dead by that time and I needn't go up to him to be kissed.'

I stared at the girl in wonderment, but not too angrily, for I guessed that she was merely repeating her brother's candid speculations upon the future. I said: 'Now mind what I tell you, Janet: I forgive you this once, for you are an ignorant little girl and know no better. Speak respectfully of my father or you never see me again.'

Here Charley sang out: 'Hulloa! you don't mean to say you're talking of your father.'

Janet whimpered that I had called her an ignorant little girl. If she had been silent I should have pardoned her. The meanness of the girl in turning on me when the glaring offence was hers, struck me as contemptible beyond words. Charley and I met half way. He advised me not to talk to his sister of my father. They all knew, he said, that it was no fault of mine, and for his part, had he a rascal for a father, he should pension him and cut him; to tell the truth, no objection against me existed in his family except on the score of the sort of father I owned to, and I had better make up my mind to shake him off before I grew a man; he spoke as a friend. I might frown at him and clench my fists, but he did speak as a friend.

Janet all the while was nibbling a biscuit, glancing over it at me with mouse-eyes. Her short frock and her greediness, contrasting with the talk of my marrying her, filled me

with renewed scorn, though my heart was sick at the mention of my father. I asked her what she knew of him. She nibbled her biscuit, mumbling, 'He went to Riversley, pretending he was a singing-master. I know that's true, and more.'

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'Oh, and a drawing-master, and a professor of legerdemain,' added her brother. 'Expunge him, old fellow; he's no good.'

'No, I'm sure he's no good,' said Janet.

I took her hand, and told her, 'You don't know how you hurt me; but you're a child: you don't know anything about the world. I love my father, remember that, and what you want me to do is mean and disgraceful; but you don't know better. I would forfeit everything in the world for him. And when you're of age to marry, marry anybody you like—you won't marry me. And good-bye, Janet. Think of learning your lessons, and not of marrying. I can't help laughing.' So I said, but without the laughter. Her brother tried hard to get me to notice him.

Janet betook herself to the squire. Her prattle of our marriage in days to come was excuseable. It was the squire's notion. He used to remark generally that he liked to see things look safe and fast, and he had, as my aunt confided to me, arranged with Lady Ilchester, in the girl's hearing, that we should make a match. My grandfather pledged his word to Janet that he would restore us to an amicable footing. He thought it a light task. Invitations were sent out to a large party at Riversley, and Janet came with all my gifts on her dress or in her pockets. The squire led the company to the gates of his stables; the gates opened, and a beautiful pony, with a side-saddle on, was trotted forth, amid cries of admiration. Then the squire put the bridle-reins in my hands, bidding me present it myself. I asked the name of the person. He pointed at Janet. I presented the pony to Janet, and said, 'It's from the squire.'

She forgot, in her delight, our being at variance.

'No, no, you stupid Harry, I'm to thank you. He's a darling pony. I want to kiss you.'

I retired promptly, but the squire had heard her.

'Back, sir!' he shouted, swearing by this and that. 'You slink from a kiss, and you're Beltham blood?'

Back to her, lad. Take it. Up with her in your arms or down on your knees. Take it manfully, somehow. See there, she's got it ready for you.'

'I've got a letter ready for you, Harry, to say—oh! so sorry for offending you,' Janet whispered, when I reached the pony's head; 'and if you'd rather not be kissed before people, then by-and-by, but do shake hands.'

'Pull the pony's mane,' said I; 'that will do as well. Observe—I pull, and now you pull.'

Janet mechanically followed my actions. She grimaced, and whimpered, 'I could pull the pony's mane right out.'



'Don't treat animals like your dolls,' said I.

She ran to the squire, and refused the pony. The squire's face changed from merry to black.

'Young man,' he addressed me, 'don't show that worse half of yours in genteel society, or, by the Lord! you won't carry Beltham buttons for long. This young lady, mind you, is a lady by birth both sides.'

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'She thinks she is marriageable,' said I; and walked away, leaving loud laughter behind me.

But laughter did not console me for the public aspersion of him I loved. I walked off the grounds, and thought to myself it was quite time I should be moving. Wherever I stayed for any length of time I was certain to hear abuse of my father. Why not wander over the country with Kiomi, go to sea, mount the Andes, enlist in a Prussian regiment, and hear the soldiers tell tales of Frederick the Great? I walked over Kiomi's heath till dark, when one of our grooms on horseback overtook me, saying that the squire begged me to jump on the horse and ride home as quick as possible. Two other lads and the coachman were out scouring the country to find me, and the squire was anxious, it appeared. I rode home like a wounded man made to feel proud by victory, but with no one to stop the bleeding of his wounds: and the more my pride rose, the more I suffered pain. There at home sat my grandfather, dejected, telling me that the loss of me a second time would kill him, begging me to overlook his roughness, calling me his little Harry and his heir, his brave-spirited boy; yet I was too sure that a word of my father to him would have brought him very near another ejaculation concerning Beltham buttons.

'You're a fiery young fellow, I suspect,' he said, when he had recovered his natural temper. 'I like you for it; pluck's Beltham. Have a will of your own. Sweat out the bad blood. Here, drink my health, Harry. You're three parts Beltham, at least, and it'll go hard if you're not all Beltham before I die. Old blood always wins that race, I swear. We're the oldest in the county.'

Damn the mixing. My father never let any of his daughters marry, if he could help it, nor'll I, bar rascals.

Here's to you, young Squire Beltham. Harry Lepel Beltham—does that suit ye? Anon, anon, as they say in the play. Take my name, and drop the Richmond no, drop the subject: we'll talk of it by-and-by.'

So he wrestled to express his hatred of my father without offending me; and I studied him coldly, thinking that the sight of my father in beggar's clothes, raising a hand for me to follow his steps, would draw me forth, though Riversley should beseech me to remain clad in wealth.

CHAPTER IX

AN EVENING WITH CAPTAIN BULSTED

A dream that my father lay like a wax figure in a bed gave me thoughts of dying. I was ill and did not know it, and imagined that my despair at the foot of the stairs of ever

reaching my room to lie down peacefully was the sign of death. My aunt Dorothy nursed me for a week: none but she and my dogs entered the room. I had only two faint wishes left in me: one that the squire should be kept out of my sight, the other that she would speak to me of my mother's love for my father. She happened to say, musing, 'Harry, you have your mother's heart.'

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I said, 'No, my father's.'

From that we opened a conversation, the sweetest I had ever had away from him, though she spoke shyly and told me very little. It was enough for me in the narrow world of my dogs' faces, and the red-leaved creeper at the window, the fir-trees on the distant heath, and her hand clasping mine. My father had many faults, she said, but he had been cruelly used, or deceived, and he bore a grievous burden; and then she said, 'Yes,' and 'Yes,' and 'Yes,' in the voice one supposes of a ghost retiring, to my questions of his merits. I was refreshed and satisfied, like the parched earth with dews when it gets no rain, and I was soon well.

When I walked among the household again, I found that my week of seclusion had endowed me with a singular gift; I found that I could see through everybody. Looking at the squire, I thought to myself, 'My father has faults, but he has been cruelly used,' and immediately I forgave the old man; his antipathy to my father seemed a craze, and to account for it I lay in wait for his numerous illogical acts and words, and smiled visibly in contemplation of his rough unreasonable nature, and of my magnanimity. He caught the smile, and interpreted it.

'Grinning at me, Harry; have I made a slip in my grammar, eh?'

Who could feel any further sensitiveness at his fits of irritation, reading him as I did? I saw through my aunt: she was always in dread of a renewal of our conversation. I could see her ideas flutter like birds to escape me. And I penetrated the others who came in my way just as unerringly. Farmer Eckerthy would acknowledge, astonished, his mind was running on cricket when I taxed him with it.

'Crops was the cart-load of my thoughts, Master Harry, but there was a bit o' cricket in it, too, ne'er a doubt.'

My aunt's maid, Davis, was shocked by my discernment of the fact that she was in love, and it was useless for her to pretend the contrary, for I had seen her granting tender liberties to Lady Ilchester's footman.

Old Sewis said gravely, 'You've been to the witches, Master Harry'; and others were sure 'I had got it from the gipsies off the common.'

The maids were partly incredulous, but I perceived that they disbelieved as readily as they believed. With my latest tutor, the Rev. Simon Hart, I was not sufficiently familiar to offer him proofs of my extraordinary power; so I begged favours of him, and laid hot-house flowers on his table in the name of my aunt, and had the gratification of seeing him blush. His approval of my Latin exercise was verbal, and weak praise in comparison; besides I cared nothing for praises not referring to my grand natural

accomplishment. 'And my father now is thinking of me!' That was easy to imagine, but the certainty of it confirmed me in my conceit.

'How can you tell?—how is it possible for you to know people's thoughts?' said Janet Ilchester, whose head was as open to me as a hat. She pretended to be rather more frightened of me than she was.

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'And now you think you are flattering me!' I said.

She looked nervous.

'And now you're asking yourself what you can do better than I can!'

She said, 'Go on.'

I stopped.

She charged me with being pulled up short.

I denied it.

'Guess, guess!' said she. 'You can't.'

My reply petrified her. 'You were thinking that you are a lady by birth on both sides.'

At first she refused to admit it. 'No, it wasn't that, Harry, it wasn't really. I was thinking how clever you are.'

'Yes, after, not before.'

'No, Harry, but you are clever. I wish I was half as clever. Fancy reading people's ideas! I can read my pony's, but that's different; I know by his ears. And as for my being a lady, of course I am, and so are you—I mean, a gentleman. I was thinking—now this is really what I was thinking—I wished your father lived near, that we might all be friends. I can't bear the squire when he talks . . . And you quite as good as me, and better. Don't shake me off, Harry.'

I shook her in the gentlest manner, not suspecting that she had read my feelings fully as well as I her thoughts. Janet and I fell to talking of my father incessantly, and were constantly together. The squire caught one of my smiles rising, when he applauded himself lustily for the original idea of matching us; but the idea was no longer distasteful to me. It appeared to me that if I must some day be married, a wife who would enjoy my narratives, and travel over the four quarters of the globe, as Janet promised to do, in search of him I loved, would be the preferable person. I swore her to secrecy; she was not to tell her brother Charley the subject we conversed on.

'Oh dear, no!' said she, and told him straightway.

Charley, home for his winter holidays, blurted out at the squire's table: 'So, Harry Richmond, you're the cleverest fellow in the world, are you? There's Janet telling everybody your father's the cleverest next to you, and she's never seen him!'

'How? hulloa, what 's that?' sang out the squire.

'Charley was speaking of my father, sir,' I said, preparing for thunder.

We all rose. The squire looked as though an apoplectic seizure were coming on.

'Don't sit at my table again,' he said, after a terrible struggle to be articulate.

His hand was stretched at me. I swung round to depart. 'No, no, not you; that fellow,' he called, getting his arm level toward Charley.

I tried to intercede—the last who should have done it.

'You like to hear him, eh?' said the squire.

I was ready to say that I did, but my aunt, whose courage was up when occasion summoned it, hushed the scene by passing the decanter to the squire, and speaking to him in a low voice.

'Biter's bit. I've dished myself, that's clear,' said Charley; and he spoke the truth, and such was his frankness that I forgave him.

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He and Janet were staying at Riversley. They left next morning, for the squire would not speak to him, nor I to Janet.

'I 'll tell you what; there 's no doubt about one thing,' said Charley; 'Janet's right—some of those girls are tremendously deep: you're about the cleverest fellow I've ever met in my life. I thought of working into the squire in a sort of collateral manner, you know. A cornetcy in the Dragoon Guards in a year or two. I thought the squire might do that for me without much damaging you;—perhaps a couple of hundred a year, just to reconcile me to a nose out of joint. For, upon my honour, the squire spoke of making me his heir—or words to that effect neatly conjugated— before you came back; and rather than be a curate like that Reverend Hart of yours, who hands raisins and almonds, and orange-flower biscuits to your aunt the way of all the Reverends who drop down on Riversley—I 'd betray my bosom friend. I'm regularly "hoist on my own petard," as they say in the newspapers. I'm a curate and no mistake. You did it with a turn of the wrist, without striking out: and I like neat boxing. I bear no malice when I'm floored neatly.'

Five minutes after he had spoken it would have been impossible for me to tell him that my simplicity and not my cleverness had caused his overthrow. From this I learnt that simplicity is the keenest weapon and a beautiful refinement of cleverness; and I affected it extremely. I pushed it so far that I could make the squire dance in his seat with suppressed fury and jealousy at my way of talking of Venice, and other Continental cities, which he knew I must have visited in my father's society; and though he raged at me and pshawed the Continent to the deuce, he was ready, out of sheer rivalry, to grant anything I pleased to covet. At every stage of my growth one or another of my passions was alert to twist me awry, and now I was getting a false self about me and becoming liker to the creature people supposed me to be, despising them for blockheads in my heart, as boys may who preserve a last trace of the ingenuousness denied to seasoned men.

Happily my aunt wrote to Mr. Rippenger for the address of little Gus Temple's father, to invite my schoolfellow to stay a month at Riversley. Temple came, everybody liked him; as for me my delight was unbounded, and in spite of a feeling of superiority due to my penetrative capacity, and the suspicion it originated, that Temple might be acting the plain well-bred schoolboy he was, I soon preferred his pattern to my own. He confessed he had found me changed at first. His father, it appeared, was working him as hard at Latin as Mr. Hart worked me, and he sat down beside me under my tutor and stumbled at Tacitus after his fluent Cicero. I offered excuses for him to Mr. Hart, saying he would soon prove himself the better scholar. 'There's my old Richie!' said Temple, fondling me on the shoulder, and my nonsensical airs fell away from me at once.

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We roamed the neighbourhood talking old school-days over, visiting houses, hunting and dancing, declaring every day we would write for Heriot to join us, instead of which we wrote a valentine to Julia Rippenger, and despatched a companion one composed in a very different spirit to her father. Lady Ilchester did us the favour to draw a sea-monster, an Andromeda, and a Perseus in the shape of a flying British hussar, for Julia's valentine. It seemed to us so successful that we scattered half-a-dozen over the neighbourhood, and rode round it on the morning of St. Valentine's Day to see the effect of them, meeting the postman on the road. He gave me two for myself. One was transparently from Janet, a provoking counterstroke of mine to her; but when I opened the other my heart began beating. The standard of Great Britain was painted in colours at the top; down each side, encircled in laurels, were kings and queens of England with their sceptres, and in the middle I read the initials, A. F-G. R. R., embedded in blue forget-me-hots. I could not doubt it was from my father. Riding out in the open air as I received it, I could fancy in my hot joy that it had dropped out of heaven.

'He's alive; I shall have him with me; I shall have him with me soon!' I cried to Temple. 'Oh! why can't I answer him? where is he? what address? Let's ride to London. Don't you understand, Temple? This letter's from my father. He knows I'm here. I'll find him, never mind what happens.'

'Yes, but,' said Temple, 'if he knows where you are, and you don't know where he is, there's no good in your going off adventuring. If a fellow wants to be hit, the best thing he can do is to stop still.'

Struck by the perspicacity of his views, I turned homeward. Temple had been previously warned by me to avoid speaking of my father at Riversley; but I was now in such a boiling state of happiness, believing that my father would certainly appear as he had done at Dipwell farm, brilliant and cheerful, to bear me away to new scenes and his own dear society, that I tossed the valentine to my aunt across the breakfast-table, laughing and telling her to guess the name of the sender. My aunt flushed.

'Miss Bannerbridge?' she said.

A stranger was present. The squire introduced us.

'My grandson, Harry Richmond, Captain William Bulsted, frigate Polyphemus; Captain Bulsted, Master Augustus Temple.'

For the sake of conversation, Temple asked him if his ship was fully manned.

'All but a mate,' said the captain.

I knew him by reputation as the brother of Squire Gregory Bulsted of Bulsted, notorious for his attachment to my aunt, and laughing-stock of the county.

‘So you’ve got a valentine,’ the captain addressed me. ‘I went on shore at Rio last year on this very day of the month, just as lively as you youngsters for one. Saltwater keeps a man’s youth in pickle. No valentine for me! Paid off my ship yesterday at Spithead, and here I am again on Valentine’s Day.’

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Temple and I stared hard at a big man with a bronzed skin and a rubicund laugh who expected to receive valentines.

My aunt thrust the letter back to me secretly. 'It must be from a lady,' said she.

'Why, who'd have a valentine from any but a lady?' exclaimed the captain.

The squire winked at me to watch his guest. Captain Bulsted fed heartily; he was thoroughly a sailor-gentleman, between the old school and the new, and, as I perceived, as far gone in love with my aunt as his brother was. Presently Sewis entered carrying a foaming tankard of old ale, and he and the captain exchanged a word or two upon Jamaica.

'Now, when you've finished that washy tea of yours, take a draught of our October, brewed here long before you were a lieutenant, captain,' said the squire.

'Thank you, sir,' the captain replied; 'I know that ale; a moment, and I will gladly. I wish to preserve my faculties; I don't wish to have it supposed that I speak under fermenting influences. Sewis, hold by, if you please.'

My aunt made an effort to retire.

'No, no, fair play; stay,' said the squire, trying to frown, but twinkling; my aunt tried to smile, and sat as if on springs.

'Miss Beltham,' the captain bowed to her, and to each one as he spoke, 'Squire Beltham, Mr. Harry Richmond; Mr. Temple; my ship was paid off yesterday, and till a captain's ship is paid off, he 's not his own master, you are aware. If you think my behaviour calls for comment, reflect, I beseech you, on the nature of a sailor's life. A three-years' cruise in a cabin is pretty much equivalent to the same amount of time spent in a coffin, I can assure you; with the difference that you're hard at work thinking all the time like the—hum.'

'Ay, he thinks hard enough,' the squire struck in.

'Pardon me, sir; like the—hum—plumb-line on a leeshore, I meant to observe. This is now the third—the fourth occasion on which I have practised the observance of paying my first visit to Riversley to know my fate, that I might not have it on my conscience that I had missed a day, a minute, as soon as I was a free man on English terra firma. My brother Greg and I were brought up in close association with Riversley. One of the Beauties of Riversley we lost! One was left, and we both tried our luck with her; honourably, in turn, each of us, nothing underhand; above-board, on the quarter-deck, before all the company. I 'll say it of my brother, I can say it of myself. Greg's chances, I need not remark, are superior to mine; he is always in port. If he wins, then I tell him —" God bless you, my boy; you've won the finest woman, the handsomest, and the

best, in or out of Christendom!" But my chance is my property, though it may be value only one farthing coin of the realm, and there is always pity for poor sinners in the female bosom. Miss Beltham, I trespass on your kind attention. If I am to remain a bachelor

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and you a maiden lady, why, the will of heaven be done! If you marry another, never mind who the man, there's my stock to the fruit of the union, never mind what the sex. But, if you will have one so unworthy of you as me, my hand and heart are at your feet, ma'am, as I have lost no time in coming to tell you.' So Captain Bulsted concluded. Our eyes were directed on my aunt. The squire bade her to speak out, for she had his sanction to act according to her judgement and liking.

She said, with a gracefulness that gave me a little aching of pity for the poor captain: 'I am deeply honoured by you, Captain Bulsted, but it is not my intention to marry.'

The captain stood up, and bowing humbly, replied 'I am ever your servant, ma'am.'

My aunt quitted the room.

'Now for the tankard, Sewis,' said the captain.

Gradually the bottom of the great tankard turned up to the ceiling. He drank to the last drop in it.

The squire asked him whether he found consolation in that.

The captain sighed prodigiously and said: 'It 's a commencement, sir.'

'Egad, it's a commencement 'd be something like a final end to any dozen of our fellows round about here. I'll tell you what: if stout stomachs gained the day in love-affairs, I suspect you'd run a good race against the male half of our county, William. And a damned good test of a man's metal, I say it is! What are you going to do to-day?'

'I am going to get drunk, sir.'

'Well, you might do worse. Then, stop here, William, and give my old Port the preference. No tongue in the morning, I promise you, and pleasant dreams at night.' The captain thanked him cordially, but declined, saying that he would rather make a beast of himself in another place.

The squire vainly pressed his hospitality by assuring him of perfect secrecy on our part, as regarded my aunt, and offering him Sewis and one of the footmen to lift him to bed. 'You are very good, squire,' said the captain; 'nothing but a sense of duty restrains me. I am bound to convey the information to my brother that the coast is clear for him.'

'Well, then, fall light, and for'ard,' said the squire, shaking him by the hand. Forty years ago a gentleman, a baronet, had fallen on the back of his head and never recovered.

'Ay, ay, launch stern foremost, if you like!' said the captain, nodding; 'no, no, I don't go into port pulled by the tail, my word for it, squire; and good day to you, sir.'

'No ill will about this bothering love-business of yours, William?'

'On my soul, sir, I cherish none.'

Temple and I followed him out of the house, fascinated by his manners and oddness. He invited us to jump into the chariot beside him. We were witnesses of the meeting between him and his brother, a little sniffing man, as like the captain as a withered nut is like a milky one.

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'Same luck, William?' said Squire Gregory.

'Not a point of change in the wind, Greg,' said the captain.

They wrenched hands thereupon, like two carpet-shakers, with a report, and much in a similar attitude.

'These young gentlemen will testify to you solemnly, Greg, that I took no unfair advantage,' said the captain; 'no whispering in passages, no appointments in gardens, no letters. I spoke out. Bravely, man! And now, Greg, referring to the state of your cellar, our young friends here mean to float with us to-night. It is now half-past eleven A.M. Your dinner-hour the same as usual, of course? Therefore at four P.M. the hour of execution. And come, Greg, you and I will visit the cellar. A dozen and half of light and half-a-dozen of the old family—that will be about the number of bottles to give me my quietus, and you yours—all of us! And you, young gentlemen, take your guns or your rods, and back and be dressed by the four bell, or you 'll not find the same man in Billy Bulsted.'

Temple was enraptured with him. He declared he had been thinking seriously for a long time of entering the Navy, and his admiration of the captain must have given him an intuition of his character, for he persuaded me to send to Riversley for our evening-dress clothes, appearing in which at the dinner-table, we received the captain's compliments, as being gentlemen who knew how to attire ourselves to suit an occasion. The occasion, Squire Gregory said, happened to him too often for him to distinguish it by the cut of his coat.

'I observe, nevertheless, Greg, that you have a black tie round your neck instead of a red one,' said the captain.

'Then it came there by accident,' said Squire Gregory.

'Accident! There's no such thing as accident. If I wander out of the house with a half dozen or so in me, and topple into the brook, am I accidentally drowned? If a squall upsets my ship, is she an accidental residue of spars and timber and old iron? If a woman refuses me, is that an accident? There's a cause for every disaster: too much cargo, want of foresight, want of pluck. Pooh! when I'm hauled prisoner into a foreign port in time of war, you may talk of accidents. Mr. Harry Richmond, Mr. Temple, I have the accidental happiness of drinking to your healths in a tumbler of hock wine. Nominative, hic, haec, hoc.'

Squire Gregory carried on the declension, not without pride. The Vocative confused him.



'Claret will do for the Vocative,' said the captain, gravely; 'the more so as there is plenty of it at your table, Greg. Ablative hoc, hac, hoc, which sounds as if the gentleman had become incapable of speech beyond the name of his wine. So we will abandon the declension of the article for a dash of champagne, which there's no declining, I hope. Wonderful men, those Romans! They fought their ships well, too. A question to you, Greg. Those heathen Pagan dogs had a religion that encouraged them to swear. Now, my experience of life pronounces it to be a human necessity to rap out an oath here and there. What do you say?'

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Squire Gregory said: 'Drinking, and no thinking, at dinner, William.' The captain pledged him.

'I 'll take the opportunity, as we're not on board ship, of drinking to you, sir, now,' Temple addressed the captain, whose face was resplendent; and he bowed, and drank, and said,

'As we are not on board ship? I like you!'

Temple thanked him for the compliment.

'No compliment, my lad. You see me in my weakness, and you have the discernment to know me for something better than I seem. You promise to respect me on my own quarter-deck. You are of the right stuff. Do I speak correctly, Mr. Harry?'

'Temple is my dear friend,' I replied.

'And he would not be so if not of the right stuff! Good! That 's a way of putting much in little. By Jove! a royal style.'

'And Harry's a royal fellow!' said Temple.

We all drank to one another. The captain's eyes scrutinized me speculatively.

'This boy might have been yours or mine, Greg,' I heard him say in a faltering rough tone.

They forgot the presence of Temple and me, but spoke as if they thought they were whispering. The captain assured his brother that Squire Beltham had given him as much fair play as one who holds a balance. Squire Gregory doubted it, and sipped and kept his nose at his wineglass, crabbedly repeating his doubts of it. The captain then remarked, that doubting it, his conscience permitted him to use stratagems, though he, the captain, not doubting it, had no such permission.

'I count I run away with her every night of my life,' said Squire Gregory. 'Nothing comes of it but empty bottles.'

'Court her, serenade her,' said the captain; 'blockade the port, lay siege to the citadel. I'd give a year of service for your chances, Greg. Half a word from her, and you have your horses ready.'

'She's past po'chaises,' Squire Gregory sighed.

'She's to be won by a bold stroke, brother Greg.'



'Oh, Lord, no! She's past po'chaises.'

'Humph! it's come to be half-bottle, half-beauty, with your worship, Greg, I suspect.'

'No. I tell you, William, she's got her mind on that fellow. You can't po'chay her.'

'After he jilted her for her sister? Wrong, Greg, wrong. You are muddled. She has a fright about matrimony—a common thing at her age, I am told. Where's the man?'

'In the Bench, of course. Where'd you have him?'

'I, sir? If I knew my worst enemy to be there, I'd send him six dozen of the best in my cellar.'

Temple shot a walnut at me. I pretended to be meditating carelessly, and I had the heat and roar of a conflagration round my head.

Presently the captain said, 'Are you sure the man's in the Bench?'

'Cock,' Squire Gregory replied.

'He had money from his wife.'

'And he had the wheels to make it go.' Here they whispered in earnest.

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'Oh, the Billings were as rich as the Belthams,' said the captain, aloud.

'Pretty nigh, William.'

'That's our curse, Greg. Money settled on their male issue, and money in hand; by the Lord! we've always had the look of a pair of highwaymen lurking for purses, when it was the woman, the woman, penniless, naked, mean, destitute; nothing but the woman we wanted. And there was one apiece for us. Greg, old boy, when will the old county show such another couple of Beauties! Greg, sir, you're not half a man, or you'd have carried her, with your, opportunities. The fellow's in the Bench, you say? How are you cocksure of that, Mr. Greg?'

'Company,' was the answer; and the captain turned to Temple and me, apologizing profusely for talking over family matters with his brother after a separation of three years. I had guessed but hastily at the subject of their conversation until they mentioned the Billings, the family of my maternal grandmother. The name was like a tongue of fire shooting up in a cloud of smoke: I saw at once that the man in the Bench must be my father, though what the Bench was exactly, and where it was, I had no idea, and as I was left to imagination I became, as usual, childish in my notions, and brooded upon thoughts of the Man in the Iron Mask; things I dared not breathe to Temple, of whose manly sense I stood in awe when under these distracting influences.

'Remember our feast in the combe?' I sang across the table to him.

'Never forget it!' said he; and we repeated the tale of the goose at Rippenger's school to our entertainers, making them laugh.

'And next morning Richie ran off with a gipsy girl,' said Temple; and I composed a narrative of my wanderings with Kiomi, much more amusing than the real one. The captain vowed he would like to have us both on board his ship, but that times were too bad for him to offer us a prospect of promotion. 'Spin round the decanters,' said he; 'now's the hour for them to go like a humming-top, and each man lend a hand: whip hard, my lads. It's once in three years, hurrah! and the cause is a cruel woman. Toast her; but no name. Here's to the nameless Fair! For it's not my intention to marry, says she, and, ma'am, I'm a man of honour or I'd catch you tight, my nut-brown maid, and clap you into a cage, fal-lal, like a squirrel; to trot the wheel of mat-trimony. Shame to the first man down!'

'That won't be I,' said Temple.

'Be me, sir, me,' the captain corrected his grammar.

'Pardon me, Captain Bulsted; the verb "To be" governs the nominative case in our climate,' said Temple.



'Then I'm nominative hic . . . I say, sir, I'm in the tropics, Mr. Tem . . . Mr. Tempus. Point of honour, not forget a man's name. Rippenger, your schoolmaster? Mr. Rippenger, you've knocked some knowledge into this young gentleman.' Temple and I took counsel together hastily; we cried in a breath: ' Here 's to Julia Rippenger, the prettiest, nicest girl living!' and we drank to her.

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'Julia!' the captain echoed us. 'I join your toast, gentlemen. Mr. Richmond, Mr. Tempus-Julia! By all that's holy, she floats a sinking ship! Julia consoles me for the fairest, cruellest woman alive. A rough sailor, Julia! at your feet.'

The captain fell commendably forward. Squire Gregory had already dropped. Temple and I tried to meet, but did not accomplish it till next morning at breakfast. A couple of footmen carried us each upstairs in turn, as if they were removing furniture.

Out of this strange evening came my discovery of my father, and the captain's winning of a wife.

CHAPTER X

AN EXPEDITION

I wondered audibly where the Bench was when Temple and I sat together alone at Squire Gregory's breakfast-table next morning, very thirsty for tea. He said it was a place in London, but did not add the sort of place, only that I should soon be coming to London with him; and I remarked, 'Shall I?' and smiled at him, as if in a fit of careless affection. Then he talked runningly of the theatres and pantomimes and London's charms.

The fear I had of this Bench made me passingly conscious of Temple's delicacy in not repeating its name, though why I feared it there was nothing to tell me. I must have dreamed of it just before waking, and I burned for reasonable information concerning it. Temple respected my father too much to speak out the extent of his knowledge on the subject, so we drank our tea with the grandeur of London for our theme, where, Temple assured me, you never had a headache after a carouse overnight: a communication that led me to think the country a far less favourable place of abode for gentlemen. We quitted the house without seeing our host or the captain, and greatly admired by the footmen, the maids, and the grooms for having drunk their masters under the table, which it could not be doubted that we had done, as Temple modestly observed while we sauntered off the grounds under the eyes of the establishment. We had done it fairly, too, with none of those Jack the Giant-Killer tricks my grandfather accused us of.

The squire would not, and he could not, believe our story until he heard the confession from the mouth of the captain. After that he said we were men and heroes, and he tipped us both, much to Janet Ilchester's advantage, for the squire was a royal giver, and Temple's money had already begun to take the same road as mine.

Temple, in fact, was falling desperately in love; for this reason he shrank from quitting Riversley. I perceived it as clearly as a thing seen through a windowpane. He was always meditating upon dogs, and what might be the price of this dog or that, and

whether lapdogs were good travellers. The fashionable value of pugs filled him with a sort of despair. 'My goodness!' he used an exclamation more suitable to women, 'forty or fifty pounds you say one costs, Richie?'

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I pretended to estimate the probable cost of one. 'Yes, about that; but I'll buy you one, one day or other, Temple.'

The dear little fellow coloured hot; he was too much in earnest to laugh at the absurdity of his being supposed to want a pug for himself, and walked round me, throwing himself into attitudes with shrugs and loud breathings. 'I don't . . . don't think that I . . . I care for nothing but Newfoundlands and mastiffs,' said he. He went on shrugging and kicking up his heels.

'Girls like pugs,' I remarked.

'I fancy they do,' said Temple, with a snort of indifference.

Then I suggested, 'A pocket-knife for the hunting-field is a very good thing.'

'Do you think so?' was Temple's rejoinder, and I saw he was dreadfully afraid of my speaking the person's name for whom it would be such a very good thing.

'You can get one for thirty shillings. We'll get one when we're in London. They're just as useful for women as they are for us, you know.'

'Why, of course they are, if they hunt,' said Temple.

'And we mustn't lose time,' I drew him to the point I had at heart, 'for hunting 'll soon be over. It 's February, mind!'

'Oh, lots of time!' Temple cried out, and on every occasion when I tried to make him understand that I was bursting to visit London, he kept evading me, simply because he hated saying good-bye to Janet Ilchester. His dulness of apprehension in not perceiving that I could not commit a breach of hospitality by begging him downright to start, struck me as extraordinary. And I was so acute. I saw every single idea in his head, every shift of, his mind, and how he half knew that he profited by my shunning to say flatly I desired to set out upon the discovery of the Bench. He took the benefit of my shamefacedness, for which I daily punished his. I really felt that I was justified in giving my irritability an airing by curious allusions to Janet; yet, though I made him wince, it was impossible to touch his conscience. He admitted to having repeatedly spoken of London's charms, and 'Oh, yes! you and I'll go back together, Richie,' and saying that satisfied him: he doubled our engagements with Janet that afternoon, and it was a riding party, a dancing-party, and a drawing of a pond for carp, and we over to Janet, and Janet over to us, until I grew so sick of her I was incapable of summoning a spark of jealousy in order the better to torture Temple.

Now, he was a quick-witted boy. Well, I one day heard Janet address my big dog, Ajax, in the style she usually employed to inform her hearers, and especially the proprietor, that she coveted a thing: 'Oh, you own dear precious pet darling beauty! if I might only



feed you every day of my life I should be happy! I curtsey to him every time I see him. If I were his master, the men should all off hats, and the women all curtsey, to Emperor Ajax, my dog! my own! my great, dear irresistible love!, Then she nodded at me, 'I would make them, though.' And then at Temple, 'You see if I wouldn't.'

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Ajax was a source of pride to me. However, I heard Temple murmur, in a tone totally unlike himself, 'He would be a great protection to you'; and I said to him, 'You know, Temple, I shall be going to London to-morrow or the next day, not later: I don't know when I shall be back. I wish you would dispose of the dog just as you like: get him a kind master or mistress, that's all.'

I sacrificed my dog to bring Temple to his senses. I thought it would touch him to see how much I could sacrifice just to get an excuse for begging him to start. He did not even thank me. Ajax soon wore one of Janet's collars, like two or three other of the Riversley dogs, and I had the satisfaction of hearing Temple accept my grandfather's invitation for a further fortnight. And, meanwhile, I was the one who was charged with going about looking lovelorn! I smothered my feelings and my reflections on the wisdom of people.

At last my aunt Dorothy found the means of setting me at liberty on the road to London. We had related to her how Captain Bulsted toasted Julia Rippenger, and we had both declared in joke that we were sure the captain wished to be introduced to her. My aunt reserved her ideas on the subject, but by-and-by she proposed to us to ride over to Julia, and engage her to come and stay at Riversley for some days. Kissing me, my aunt said, 'She was my Harry's friend when he was an outcast.'

The words revived my affection for Julia. Strong in the sacred sense of gratitude, I turned on Temple, reproaching him with selfish forgetfulness of her good heart and pretty face. Without defending himself, as he might have done, he entreated me to postpone our journey for a day; he and Janet had some appointment. Here was given me a noble cause and matter I need not shrink from speaking of. I lashed Temple in my aunt's presence with a rod of real eloquence that astonished her, and him, and myself too; and as he had a sense of guilt not quite explicable in his mind, he consented to bear what was in reality my burden; for Julia had distinguished me and not him with all the signs of affection, and of the two I had the more thoroughly forgotten her; I believe Temple was first in toasting her at Squire Gregory's table. There is nothing like a pent-up secret of the heart for accumulating powers of speech; I mean in youth. The mental distilling process sets in later, and then you have irony instead of eloquence. From brooding on my father, and not daring to mention his name lest I should hear evil of it, my thoughts were a proud family, proud of their origin, proud of their isolation,—and not to be able to divine them was for the world to confess itself basely beneath their level. But, when they did pour out, they were tremendous, as Temple found. This oratorical display of mine gave me an ascendancy over him. He adored eloquence, not to say grandiloquence: he was the son of a barrister. 'Let 's go and see her at once, Richie,' he said of Julia. 'I 'm ready to be off as soon as you like; I'm ready to do anything that will please you'; which was untrue, but it was useless to tell him so. I sighed at my sad gift of penetration, and tossed the fresh example of it into the treasury of vanity.

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'Temple,' said I, dissembling a little; 'I tell you candidly: you won't please me by doing anything disagreeable to you. A dog pulled by the collar is not much of a companion. I start for Julia to-morrow before daylight. If you like your bed best, stop there; and mind you amuse Janet for me during my absence.'

'I'm not going to let any one make comparisons between us,' Temple muttered.

He dropped dozens of similar remarks, and sometimes talked downright flattery, I had so deeply impressed him.

We breakfasted by candle-light, and rode away on a frosty foggy morning, keeping our groom fifty yards to the rear, a laughable sight, with both his coat-pockets bulging, a couple of Riversley turnover pasties in one, and a bottle of champagne in the other, for our lunch on the road. Now and then, when near him, we galloped for the fun of seeing him nurse the bottle-pocket. He was generally invisible. Temple did not think it strange that we should be riding out in an unknown world with only a little ring, half a stone's-throw clear around us, and blots of copse, and queer vanishing cottages, and hard grey meadows, fir-trees wonderfully magnified, and larches and birches rigged like fairy ships, all starting up to us as we passed, and melting instantly. One could have fancied the fir-trees black torches. And here the shoulder of a hill invited us to race up to the ridge: some way on we came to crossroads, careless of our luck in hitting the right one: yonder hung a village church in the air, and church-steeple piercing ever so high; and out of the heart of the mist leaped a brook, and to hear it at one moment, and then to have the sharp freezing silence in one's ear, was piercingly weird. It all tossed the mind in my head like hay on a pitchfork. I forgot the existence of everything but what I loved passionately,—and that had no shape, was like a wind.

Up on a knoll of firs in the middle of a heath, glowing rosy in the frost, we dismounted to lunch, leaning against the warm saddles, Temple and I, and Uberly, our groom, who reminded me of a certain tramp of my acquaintance in his decided preference of beer to champagne; he drank, though, and sparkled after his draught. No sooner were we on horseback again—ere the flanks of the dear friendly brutes were in any way cool— than Temple shouted enthusiastically, 'Richie, we shall do it yet! I've been funking, but now I'm sure we shall do it. Janet said, "What's the use of my coming over to dine at Riversley if Harry Richmond and you don't come home before ten or eleven o'clock?" I told her we'd do it by dinner-time: Don't you like Janet, Richie?—That is, if our horses' hic-haec-hocks didn't get strained on this hard nominative-plural-masculine of the article road. Don't you fancy yourself dining with the captain, Richie? Dative huic, says old Squire Gregory. I like to see him at dinner, because he loves the smell of his wine. Oh! it's nothing to boast of, but we did drink them under the table, it can't be denied. Janet heard of it. Hulloo! you talk of a hunting-knife. What do you say to a pair of skates? Here we are in for a frost of six weeks. It strikes me, a pair of skates . . .'

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This was the champagne in Temple. In me it did not bubble to speech, and I soon drew him on at a pace that rendered conversation impossible. Uberly shouted after us to spare the horses' legs. We heard him twice out of the deepening fog. I called to Temple that he was right, we should do it. Temple hurrahed rather breathlessly. At the end of an hour I pulled up at an inn, where I left the horses to be groomed and fed, and walked away rapidly as if I knew the town, Temple following me with perfect confidence, and, indeed, I had no intention to deceive him. We entered a new station of a railway.

'Oh!' said Temple, 'the rest of the way by rail.'

When the railway clerk asked me what place I wanted tickets for, London sprang to my mouth promptly in a murmur, and taking the tickets I replied to Temple,

'The rest of the way by rail. Uberly's sure to stop at that inn'; but my heart beat as the carriages slid away with us; an affectionate commiseration for Temple touched me when I heard him count on our being back at Riversley in time to dress for dinner.

He laughed aloud at the idea of our plumping down on Rippenger's school, getting a holiday for the boys, tipping them, and then off with Julia, exactly like two Gods of the Mythology, Apollo and Mercury.

'I often used to think they had the jolliest lives that ever were lived,' he said, and trying to catch glimpses of the country, and musing, and singing, he continued to feel like one of those blissful Gods until wonder at the passage of time supervened. Amazement, when he looked at my watch, struck him dumb. Ten minutes later we were in yellow fog, then in brown. Temple stared at both windows and at me; he jumped from his seat and fell on it, muttering, 'No; nonsense! I say!' but he had accurately recognized London's fog. I left him unanswered to bring up all his senses, which the railway had outstripped, for the contemplation of this fact, that we two were in the city of London.

CHAPTER XI

THE GREAT FOG AND THE FIRE AT MIDNIGHT

It was London city, and the Bench was the kernel of it to me. I throbbed with excitement, though I sat looking out of the windows into the subterranean atmosphere quite still and firm. When you think long undividedly of a single object it gathers light, and when you draw near it in person the strange thing to your mind is the absence of that light; but I, approaching it in this dense fog, seemed to myself to be only thinking of it a little more warmly than usual, and instead of fading it reversed the process, and became, from light, luminous. Not being able, however, to imagine the Bench a happy place, I corrected the excess of brightness and gave its walls a pine-torch glow; I set

them in the middle of a great square, and hung the standard of England drooping over them in a sort of mournful family pride. Then, because

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I next conceived it a foreign kind of place, different altogether from that home growth of ours, the Tower of London, I topped it with a multitude of domes of pumpkin or turban shape, resembling the Kremlin of Moscow, which had once leapt up in the eye of Winter, glowing like a million pine-torches, and flung shadows of stretching red horses on the black smoke-drift. But what was the Kremlin, that had seen a city perish, to this Bench where my father languished! There was no comparing them for tragic horror. And the Kremlin had snow-fields around it; this Bench was caught out of sight, hemmed in by an atmosphere thick as Charon breathed; it might as well be underground.

'Oh! it's London,' Temple went on, correcting his incorrigible doubts about it. He jumped on the platform; we had to call out not to lose one another. 'I say, Richie, this is London,' he said, linking his arm in mine: 'you know by the size of the station; and besides, there's the fog. Oh! it's London. We've overshot it, we're positively in London.'

I could spare no sympathy for his feelings, and I did not respond to his inquiring looks. Now that we were here I certainly wished myself away, though I would not have retreated, and for awhile I was glad of the discomforts besetting me; my step was hearty as I led on, meditating upon asking some one the direction to the Bench presently. We had to walk, and it was nothing but traversing on a slippery pavement atmospheric circles of black brown and brown red, and sometimes a larger circle of pale yellow; the colours of old bruised fruits, medlars, melons, and the smell of them; nothing is more desolate. Neither of us knew where we were, nor where we were going. We struggled through an interminable succession of squalid streets, from the one lamp visible to its neighbour in the darkness: you might have fancied yourself peering at the head of an old saint on a smoky canvas; it was like the painting of light rather than light. Figures rushed by; we saw no faces.

Temple spoke solemnly: 'Our dinner-hour at home is half-past six.' A street-boy overheard him and chaffed him. Temple got the worst of it, and it did him good, for he had the sweetest nature in the world. We declined to be attended by link-boys; they would have hurt our sense of independence. Possessed of a sovereign faith that, by dint of resolution, I should ultimately penetrate to the great square enclosing the Bench, I walked with the air of one who had the map of London in his eye and could thread it blindfold. Temple was thereby deceived into thinking that I must somehow have learnt the direction I meant to take, and knew my way, though at the slightest indication of my halting and glancing round his suspicions began to boil, and he was for asking some one the name of the ground we stood on: he murmured, 'Fellows get lost in London.' By this time he clearly understood that I had come to London on purpose: he could not but be aware of the object of my coming, and I was too proud, and he still too delicate, to allude to it.

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The fog choked us. Perhaps it took away the sense of hunger by filling us as if we had eaten a dinner of soot. We had no craving to eat until long past the dinner-hour in Temple's house, and then I would rather have plunged into a bath and a bed than have been requested to sit at a feast; Temple too, I fancy. We knew we were astray without speaking of it. Temple said, 'I wish we hadn't drunk that champagne.' It seemed to me years since I had tasted the delicious crushing of the sweet bubbles in my mouth. But I did not blame them; I was after my father: he, dear little fellow, had no light ahead except his devotion to me: he must have had a touch of conscious guilt regarding his recent behaviour, enough to hold him from complaining formally. He complained of a London without shops and lights, wondered how any one could like to come to it in a fog, and so forth; and again regretted our having drunk champagne in the morning; a sort of involuntary whimpering easily forgiven to him, for I knew he had a gallant heart. I determined, as an act of signal condescension, to accost the first person we met, male or female, for Temple's sake. Having come to this resolve, which was to be an open confession that I had misled him, wounding to my pride, I hoped eagerly for the hearing of a footfall. We were in a labyrinth of dark streets where no one was astir. A wretched dog trotted up to us, followed at our heels a short distance, and left us as if he smelt no luck about us; our cajoleries were unavailing to keep that miserable companion.

'Sinbad escaped from the, pit by tracking a lynx,' I happened to remark. Temple would not hear of Sinbad.

'Oh, come, we're not Mussulmen,' said he; 'I declare, Richie, if I saw a church open, I'd go in and sleep there. Were you thinking of tracking the dog, then? Beer may be had somewhere. We shall have to find an hotel. What can the time be?'

I owed it to him to tell him, so I climbed a lamppost and spelt out the hour by my watch. When I descended we were three. A man had his hands on Temple's shoulders, examining his features.

'Now speak,' the man said, roughly.

I was interposing, but Temple cried, 'All right, Richie, we are two to one.'

The man groaned. I asked him what he wanted.

'My son! I've lost my son,' the man replied, and walked away; and he would give no answer to our questions.

I caught hold of the lamp-post, overcome. I meant to tell Temple, in response to the consoling touch of his hand, that I hoped the poor, man would discover his son, but said instead, 'I wish we could see the Bench to-night.' Temple exclaimed, 'Ah!' pretending by his tone of voice that we had recently discussed our chance of it, and then he ventured

to inform me that he imagined he had heard of the place being shut up after a certain hour of the night.

My heart felt released, and gushed with love for him. 'Very well, Temple,' I said: 'then we'll wait till tomorrow, and strike out for some hotel now.'

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Off we went at a furious pace. Saddlebank's goose was reverted to by both of us with an exchange of assurances that we should meet a dish the fellow to it before we slept.

'As for life,' said I, as soon as the sharp pace had fetched my breathing to a regular measure, 'adventures are what I call life.'

Temple assented. 'They're capital, if you only see the end of them.'

We talked of Ulysses and Penelope. Temple blamed him for leaving Calypso. I thought Ulysses was right, otherwise we should have had no slaying of the Suitors but Temple shyly urged that to have a Goddess caring for you (and she was handsomer than Penelope, who must have been an oldish woman) was something to make you feel as you do on a hunting morning, when there are half-a-dozen riding-habits speckling the field— a whole glorious day your own among them! This view appeared to me very captivating, save for an obstruction in my mind, which was, that Goddesses were always conceived by me as statues. They talked and they moved, it was true, but the touch of them was marble; and they smiled and frowned, but they had no variety they were never warm.

'If I thought that!' muttered Temple, puffing at the raw fog. He admitted he had thought just the contrary, and that the cold had suggested to him the absurdity of leaving a Goddess.

'Look here, Temple,' said I, 'has it never struck you? I won't say I'm like him. It's true I've always admired Ulysses; he could fight best, talk best, and plough, and box, and how clever he was! Take him all round, who wouldn't rather have had him for a father than Achilles? And there were just as many women in love with him.'

'More,' said Temple.

'Well, then,' I continued, thanking him in my heart, for it must have cost him something to let Ulysses be set above Achilles, 'Telemachus is the one I mean. He was in search of his father. He found him at last. Upon my honour, Temple, when I think of it, I'm ashamed to have waited so long. I call that luxury I've lived in senseless. Yes! while I was uncertain whether my father had enough to eat or not.'

'I say! hush!' Temple breathed, in pain at such allusions. 'Richie, the squire has finished his bottle by about now; bottle number two. He won't miss us till the morning, but Miss Beltham will. She'll be at your bedroom door three or four times in the night, I know. It's getting darker and darker, we must be in some dreadful part of London.'

The contrast he presented to my sensations between our pleasant home and this foggy solitude gave me a pang of dismay. I diverged from my favourite straight line, which seemed to pierce into the bowels of the earth, sharp to the right. Soon or late after, I

cannot tell, we were in the midst of a thin stream of people, mostly composed of boys and young women, going at double time, hooting and screaming with the delight of loosened animals, not quite so

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agreeably; but animals never hunted on a better scent. A dozen turnings in their company brought us in front of a fire. There we saw two houses preyed on by the flames, just as if a lion had his paws on a couple of human creatures, devouring them; we heard his jaws, the cracking of bones, shrieks, and the voracious in-and-out of his breath edged with anger. A girl by my side exclaimed, 'It's not the Bench, after all! Would I have run to see a paltry two-story washerwoman's mangling-shed flare up, when six penn'orth of squibs and shavings and a cracker make twice the fun!'

I turned to her, hardly able to speak. 'Where 's the Bench, if you please?' She pointed. I looked on an immense high wall. The blunt flames of the fire opposite threw a sombre glow on it.

The girl said, 'And don't you go hopping into debt, my young cock-sparrow, or you'll know one side o' the turnkey better than t' other.' She had a friend with her who chided her for speaking so freely.

'Is it too late to go in to-night?' I asked.

She answered that it was, and that she and her friend were the persons to show me the way in there. Her friend answered more sensibly: 'Yes, you can't go in there before some time—in the morning.'

I learnt from her that the Bench was a debtors' prison.

The saucy girl of the pair asked me for money. I handed her a crown-piece.

'Now won't you give another big bit to my friend?' said she.

I had no change, and the well-mannered girl bade me never mind, the saucy one pressed for it, and for a treat. She was amusing in her talk of the quantity of different fires she had seen; she had also seen accidental-death corpses, but never a suicide in the act; and here she regretted the failure of her experiences. This conversation of a good-looking girl amazed me. Presently Temple cried, 'A third house caught, and no engines yet! Richie, there's an old woman in her night-dress; we can't stand by.'

The saucy girl joked at the poor half-naked old woman. Temple stood humping and agitating his shoulders like a cat before it springs. Both the girls tried to stop us. The one I liked best seized my watch, and said, 'Leave this to me to take care of,' and I had no time to wrestle for it. I had a glimpse of her face that let me think she was not fooling me, the watch-chain flew off my neck, Temple and I clove through the crowd of gapers. We got into the heat, which was in a minute scorching. Three men were under the window; they had sung out to the old woman above to drop a blanket—she tossed them

a water-jug. She was saved by the blanket of a neighbour. Temple and I strained at one corner of it to catch her.

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She came down, the men said, like a singed turkey. The flames illuminated her as she descended. There was a great deal of laughter in the crowd, but I was shocked. Temple shared the painful impression produced on me. I cannot express my relief when the old woman was wrapped in the blanket which had broken her descent, and stood like a blot instead of a figure. I handed a sovereign to the three men, complimenting them on the humanity of their dispositions. They cheered us, and the crowd echoed the cheer, and Temple and I made our way back to the two girls: both of us lost our pocket-handkerchiefs, and Temple a penknife as well. Then the engines arrived and soused the burning houses. We were all in a crimson mist, boys smoking, girls laughing and staring, men hallooing, hats and caps flying about, fights going on, people throwing their furniture out of the windows. The great wall of the Bench was awful in its reflection of the labouring flames—it rose out of sight like the flame-tops till the columns of water brought them down. I thought of my father, and of my watch. The two girls were not visible. ‘A glorious life a fireman’s!’ said Temple.

The firemen were on the roofs of the houses, handsome as Greek heroes, and it really did look as if they were engaged in slaying an enormous dragon, that hissed and tongued at them, and writhed its tail, paddling its broken big red wings in the pit of wreck and smoke, twisting and darkening—something fine to conquer, I felt with Temple.

A mutual disgust at the inconvenience created by the appropriation of our pocket-handkerchiefs by members of the crowd, induced us to disentangle ourselves from it without confiding to any one our perplexity for supper and a bed. We were now extremely thirsty. I had visions of my majority bottles of Burgundy, lying under John Thresher’s care at Dipwell, and would have abandoned them all for one on the spot. After ranging about the outskirts of the crowd, seeking the two girls, we walked away, not so melancholy but that a draught of porter would have cheered us. Temple punned on the loss of my watch, and excused himself for a joke neither of us had spirit to laugh at. Just as I was saying, with a last glance at the fire, ‘Anyhow, it would have gone in that crowd,’ the nice good girl ran up behind us, crying, ‘There!’ as she put the watch-chain over my head.

‘There, Temple,’ said I, ‘didn’t I tell you so?’ and Temple kindly supposed so.

The girl said, ‘I was afraid I’d missed you, little fellow, and you’d take me for a thief, and thank God, I’m no thief yet. I rushed into the crowd to meet you after you caught that old creature, and I could have kissed you both, you’re so brave.’

‘We always go in for it together,’ said Temple.

I made an offer to the girl of a piece of gold. ‘Oh, I’m poor,’ she cried, yet kept her hand off it like a bird alighting on ground, not on prey. When I compelled her to feel the money tight, she sighed, ‘If I wasn’t so poor! I don’t want your gold. Why are you out so late?’

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We informed her of our arrival from the country, and wanderings in the fog.

'And you'll say you're not tired, I know,' the girl remarked, and laughed to hear how correctly she had judged of our temper. Our thirst and hunger, however, filled her with concern, because of our not being used to it as she was, and no place was open to supply our wants. Her friend, the saucy one, accompanied by a man evidently a sailor, joined us, and the three had a consultation away from Temple and me, at the end of which the sailor, whose name was Joe, raised his leg dancingly, and smacked it. We gave him our hands to shake, and understood, without astonishment, that we were invited on, board his ship to partake of refreshment. We should not have been astonished had he said on board his balloon. Down through thick fog of a lighter colour, we made our way to a narrow lane leading to the river-side, where two men stood thumping their arms across their breasts, smoking pipes, and swearing. We entered a boat and were rowed to a ship. I was not aware how frozen and befogged my mind and senses had become until I had taken a desperate and long gulp of smoking rum-and-water, and then the whole of our adventures from morning to midnight, with the fir-trees in the country fog, and the lamps in the London fog, and the man who had lost his son, the fire, the Bench, the old woman with her fowl-like cry and limbs in the air, and the row over the misty river, swam flashing before my eyes, and I cried out to the two girls, who were drinking out of one glass with the sailor Joe, my entertainer, 'Well, I'm awake now!' and slept straight off the next instant.

CHAPTER XII

WE FIND OURSELVES BOUND ON A VOYAGE

It seemed to me that I had but taken a turn from right to left, or gone round a wheel, when I repeated the same words, and I heard Temple somewhere near me mumble something like them. He drew a long breath, so did I: we cleared our throats with a sort of whinny simultaneously. The enjoyment of lying perfectly still, refreshed, incurious, unexcited, yet having our minds animated, excursive, reaping all the incidents of our lives at leisure, and making a dream of our latest experiences, kept us tranquil and incommunicative. Occasionally we let fall a sigh fathoms deep, then by-and-by began blowing a bit of a wanton laugh at the end of it. I raised my foot and saw the boot on it, which accounted for an uneasy sensation setting in through my frame.

I said softly, 'What a pleasure it must be for horses to be groomed!'

'Just what I was thinking!' said Temple.

We started up on our elbows, and one or the other cried:

'There's a chart! These are bunks! Hark at the row overhead! We're in a ship! The ship's moving! Is it foggy this morning? It's time to get up! I've slept in my clothes! Oh, for a dip! How I smell of smoke! What a noise of a steamer! And the squire at Riversley! Fancy Uberly's tale!'

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Temple, with averted face, asked me whether I meant to return to Riversley that day. I assured him I would, on my honour, if possible; and of course he also would have to return there. 'Why, you've an appointment with Janet Ilchester,' said I, 'and we may find a pug; we'll buy the hunting-knife and the skates. And she shall know you saved an old woman's life.'

'No, don't talk about that,' Temple entreated me, biting his lip. 'Richie, we're going fast through the water. It reminds me of breakfast. I should guess the hour to be nine A.M.'

My watch was unable to assist us; the hands pointed to half-past four, and were fixed. We ran up on deck. Looking over the stern of the vessel, across a line of rippling eddying red gold, we saw the sun low upon cushions of beautiful cloud; no trace of fog anywhere; blue sky overhead, and a mild breeze blowing.

'Sunrise,' I said.

Temple answered, 'Yes,' most uncertainly.

We looked round. A steam-tug was towing our ship out toward banks of red-reflecting cloud, and a smell of sea air.

'Why, that's the East there!' cried Temple. We faced about to the sun, and behold, he was actually sinking!

'Nonsense!' we exclaimed in a breath. From seaward to this stupefying sunset we stood staring. The river stretched to broad lengths; gulls were on the grey water, knots of seaweed, and the sea-foam curled in advance of us.

'By jingo!' Temple spoke out, musing, 'here's a whole day struck out of our existence.'

'It can't be!' said I, for that any sensible being could be tricked of a piece of his life in that manner I thought a preposterous notion.

But the sight of a lessening windmill in the West, shadows eastward, the wide water, and the air now full salt, convinced me we two had slept through an entire day, and were passing rapidly out of hail of our native land.

'We must get these fellows to put us on shore at once,' said Temple: 'we won't stop to eat. There's a town; a boat will row us there in half-an-hour. Then we can wash, too. I've got an idea nothing's clean here. And confound these fellows for not having the civility to tell us they were going to start!'

We were rather angry, a little amused, not in the least alarmed at our position. A sailor, to whom we applied for an introduction to the captain, said he was busy. Another gave us a similar reply, with a monstrous grimace which was beyond our comprehension.

The sailor Joe was nowhere to be seen. None of the sailors appeared willing to listen to us, though they stopped as they were running by to lend half an ear to what we had to say. Some particular movement was going on in the ship. Temple was the first to observe that the steamtug was casting us loose, and cried he, 'She'll take us on board and back to London Bridge. Let's hail her.' He sang out, 'Whoop! ahoy!' I meanwhile had caught sight of Joe.

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'Well, young gentleman!' he accosted me, and he hoped I had slept well. My courteous request to him to bid the tug stand by to take us on board, only caused him to wear a look of awful gravity. 'You're such a deuce of a sleeper,' he said. 'You see, we had to be off early to make up for forty hours lost by that there fog. I tried to wake you both; no good; so I let you snore away. We took up our captain mid-way down the river, and now you're in his hands, and he'll do what he likes with you, and that 's a fact, and my opinion is you 'll see a foreign shore before you're in the arms of your family again.'

At these words I had the horrible sensation of being caged, and worse, transported into the bargain.

I insisted on seeing the captain. A big bright round moon was dancing over the vessel's bowsprit, and this, together with the tug thumping into the distance, and the land receding, gave me—coming on my wrath— suffocating emotions.

No difficulties were presented in my way. I was led up to a broad man in a pilot-coat, who stood square, and looked by the bend of his eyebrows as if he were always making head against a gale. He nodded to my respectful salute. 'Cabin,' he said, and turned his back to me.

I addressed him, 'Excuse me, I want to go on shore, captain. I must and will go! I am here by some accident; you have accidentally overlooked me here. I wish to treat you like a gentleman, but I won't be detained.'

Joe spoke a word to the captain, who kept his back as broad to me as a school-slate for geography and Euclid's propositions.

'Cabin, cabin,' the captain repeated.

I tried to get round him to dash a furious sentence or so in his face, since there was no producing any impression on his back; but he occupied the whole of a way blocked with wire-coil, and rope, and boxes, and it would have been ridiculous to climb this barricade when by another right-about-face he could in a minute leave me volleying at the blank space between his shoulders.

Joe touched my arm, which, in as friendly a way as I could assume, I bade him not do a second time; for I could ill contain myself as it was, and beginning to think I had been duped and tricked, I was ready for hostilities. I could hardly bear meeting Temple on my passage to the cabin. 'Captain Jasper Welsh,' he was reiterating, as if sounding it to discover whether it had an ominous ring: it was the captain's name, that he had learnt from one of the seamen.

Irritated by his repetition of it, I said, I know not why, or how the words came: 'A highwayman notorious for his depredations in the vicinity of the city of Bristol.'

This set Temple off laughing: 'And so he bought a ship and had traps laid down to catch young fellows for ransom.'

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I was obliged to request Temple not to joke, but the next moment I had launched Captain Jasper Welsh on a piratical exploit; Temple lifted the veil from his history, revealing him amid the excesses of a cannibal feast. I dragged him before a British jury; Temple hanged him in view of an excited multitude. As he boasted that there was the end of Captain Welsh, I broke the rope. But Temple spoiled my triumph by depriving him of the use of his lower limbs after the fall, for he was a heavy man. I could not contradict it, and therefore pitched all his ship's crew upon the gallows in a rescue. Temple allowed him to be carried off by his faithful ruffians, only stipulating that the captain was never after able to release his neck from the hangman's slip knot. The consequence was that he wore a shirt-collar up to his eyebrows for concealment by day, and a pillow-case over his head at night, and his wife said she was a deceived unhappy woman, and died of curiosity.

The talking of even such nonsense as this was a relief to us in our impatience and helplessness, with the lights of land heaving far distant to our fretful sight through the cabin windows.

When we had to talk reasonably we were not so successful. Captain Welsh was one of those men who show you, whether you care to see them or not, all the processes by which they arrive at an idea of you, upon which they forthwith shape their course. Thus, when he came to us in the cabin, he took the oil-lamp in his hand and examined our faces by its light; he had no reply to our remonstrances and petitions: all he said was, 'Humph! well, I suppose you're both gentlemen born'; and he insisted on prosecuting his scrutiny without any reference to the tenour of our observations.

We entreated him half imperiously to bring his ship to and put us on shore in a boat. He bunched up his mouth, remarking, 'Know their grammar: habit o' speaking to grooms, eh? humph.' We offered to pay largely. 'Loose o' their cash,' was his comment, and so on; and he was the more exasperating to us because he did not look an evil-minded man; only he appeared to be cursed with an evil opinion of us. I tried to remove it; I spoke forbearingly. Temple, imitating me, was sugar-sweet. We exonerated the captain from blame, excused him for his error, named the case a mistake on both sides. That long sleep of ours, we said, was really something laughable; we laughed at the recollection of it, a lamentable piece of merriment.

Our artfulness and patience becoming exhausted, for the captain had vouchsafed us no direct answer, I said at last, 'Captain Welsh, here we are on board your ship will you tell us what you mean to do with us?'

He now said bluntly, 'I will.'

'You'll behave like a man of honour,' said I, and to that he cried vehemently, 'I will.'

'Well, then,' said I, 'call out the boat, if you please; we're anxious to be home.'

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'So you shall!' the captain shouted, 'and per ship—my barque Priscilla; and better men than you left, or I 'm no Christian.'

Temple said briskly, 'Thank you, captain.'

'You may wait awhile with that, my lad,' he answered; and, to our astonishment, recommended us to go and clean our faces and prepare to drink some tea at his table.

'Thank you very much, captain, we'll do that when we 're on shore,' said we.

'You'll have black figure-heads and empty gizzards, then, by that time,' he remarked. We beheld him turning over the leaves of a Bible.

Now, this sight of the Bible gave me a sense of personal security, and a notion of hypocrisy in his conduct as well; and perceiving that we had conjectured falsely as to his meaning to cast us on shore per ship, his barque Priscilla, I burst out in great heat, 'What! we are prisoners? You dare to detain us?'

Temple chimed in, in a similar strain. Fairly enraged, we flung at him without anything of what I thought eloquence.

The captain ruminated up and down the columns of his Bible.

I was stung to feel that we were like two small terriers baiting a huge mild bull. At last he said, 'The story of the Prodigal Son.'

'Oh!' groaned Temple, at the mention of this worn-out old fellow, who has gone in harness to tracts ever since he ate the fatted calf.

But the captain never heeded his interruption.

'Young gentlemen, I've finished it while you 've been barking at me. If I 'd had him early in life on board my vessel, I hope I'm not presumptuous in saying—the Lord forgive me if I be so!—I'd have stopped his downward career—ay, so!—with a trip in the right direction. The Lord, young gentlemen, has not thrown you into my hands for no purpose whatsoever. Thank him on your knees to-night, and thank Joseph Double, my mate, when you rise, for he was the instrument of saving you from bad company. If this was a vessel where you 'd hear an oath or smell the smell of liquor, I 'd have let you run when there was terra firma within stone's throw. I came on board, I found you both asleep, with those marks of dissipation round your eyes, and I swore—in the Lord's name, mind you—I'd help pluck you out of the pit while you had none but one leg in. It's said! It's no use barking. I am not to be roused. The devil in me is chained by the waist, and a twenty-pound weight on his tongue. With your assistance I'll do the same for the devil in you. Since you've had plenty of sleep, I 'll trouble you to commit to memory the whole story of the Prodigal Son 'twixt now and morrow's sunrise. We 'll



have our commentary on it after labour done. Labour you will in my vessel, for your soul's health. And let me advise you not to talk; in your situation talking's temptation to lying. You'll do me the obligation to feed at my table. And when I hand you back to your parents, why, they'll thank me, if you won't. But it's not thanks I look for: it's my bounden Christian duty I look to. I reckon a couple o' stray lambs equal to one lost sheep.'

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The captain uplifted his arm, ejaculating solemnly, 'By!' and faltered. 'You were going to swear!' said Temple, with savage disdain.

'By the blessing of Omnipotence! I'll save a pair o' pups from turning wolves. And I'm a weak mortal man, that 's too true.'

'He was going to swear,' Temple muttered to me.

I considered the detection of Captain Welsh's hypocrisy unnecessary, almost a condescension toward familiarity; but the ire in my bosom was boiling so that I found it impossible to roll out the flood of eloquence with which I was big. Soon after, I was trying to bribe the man with all my money and my watch.

'Who gave you that watch?' said he.

'Downright Church catechism!' muttered Temple.

'My grandfather,' said I.

The captain's head went like a mechanical hammer, to express something indescribable.

'My grandfather,' I continued, 'will pay you handsomely for any service you do to me and my friend.'

'Now, that's not far off forgoing,' said the captain, in a tone as much as to say we were bad all over.

I saw the waters slide by his cabin-windows. My desolation, my humiliation, my chained fury, tumbled together. Out it came—

'Captain, do behave to us like a gentleman, and you shall never repent it. Our relatives will be miserable about us. They—captain!—they don't know where we are. We haven't even a change of clothes. Of course we know we're at your mercy, but do behave like an honest man. You shall be paid or not, just as you please, for putting us on shore, but we shall be eternally grateful to you. Of course you mean kindly to us; we see that—'

'I thank the Lord for it!' he interposed.

'Only you really are under a delusion. It 's extraordinary. You can't be quite in your right senses about us; you must be—I don't mean to speak disrespectfully-what we call on shore, cracked about us. . . .

'Doddered, don't they say in one of the shires?' he remarked.

Half-encouraged, and in the belief that I might be getting eloquent, I appealed to his manliness. Why should he take advantage of a couple of boys? I struck the key of his possible fatherly feelings: What misery were not our friends suffering now. ('Ay, a bucketful now saves an ocean in time to come!' he flung in his word.) I bade him, with more pathetic dignity reflect on the dreadful hiatus in our studies.

'Is that Latin or Greek?' he asked.

I would not reply to the cold-blooded question. He said the New Testament was written in Greek, he knew, and happy were those who could read it in the original.

'Well, and how can we be learning to read it on board ship?' said Temple, an observation that exasperated me because it seemed more to the point than my lengthy speech, and betrayed that he thought so; however, I took it up:—

'How can we be graduating for our sphere in life, Captain Welsh, on board your vessel? Tell us that.'

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He played thumb and knuckles on his table. Just when I was hoping that good would come of the senseless tune, Temple cried,

'Tell us what your exact intentions are, Captain Welsh. What do you mean to do with us?'

'Mean to take you the voyage out and the voyage home, Providence willing,' said the captain, and he rose.

We declined his offer of tea, though I fancy we could have gnawed at a bone.

'There's no compulsion in that matter,' he said. 'You share my cabin while you're my guests, shipmates, and apprentices in the path of living; my cabin and my substance, the same as if you were what the North-countrymen call bairns o' mine: I've none o' my own. My wife was a barren woman. I've none but my old mother at home. Have your sulks out, lads; you'll come round like the Priscilla on a tack, and discover you've made way by it.'

We quitted his cabin, bowing stiffly.

Temple declared old Rippenger was better than this canting rascal.

The sea was around us, a distant yellow twinkle telling of land.

'His wife a barren woman! what's that to us!' Temple went on, exploding at intervals. 'So was Sarah. His cabin and his substance! He talks more like a preacher than a sailor. I should like to see him in a storm! He's no sailor at all. His men hate him. It wouldn't be difficult to get up a mutiny on board this ship. Richie, I understand the whole plot: he's in want of cabin-boys. The fellow has impressed us. We shall have to serve till we touch land. Thank God, there's a British consul everywhere; I say that seriously. I love my country; may she always be powerful! My life is always at her—— Did you feel that pitch of the ship? Of all the names ever given to a vessel, I do think Priscilla is without exception the most utterly detestable. Oh! there again. No, it'll be too bad, Richie, if we 're beaten in this way.'

'If *you* are beaten,' said I, scarcely venturing to speak lest I should cry or be sick.

We both felt that the vessel was conspiring to ruin our self-respect. I set my head to think as hard as possible on Latin verses (my instinct must have drawn me to them as to a species of intellectual biscuit steeped in spirit, tough, and comforting, and fundamentally opposed to existing circumstances, otherwise I cannot account for the attraction). They helped me for a time; they kept off self-pity, and kept the machinery of the mind at work. They lifted me, as it were, to an upper floor removed from the treacherously sighing Priscilla. But I came down quickly with a crash; no dexterous management of my mental resources could save me from the hemp-like smell of the

ship, nor would leaning over the taffrail, nor lying curled under a tarpaulin. The sailors heaped pilot-coats upon us. It was a bad ship, they said, to be sick on board of, for no such thing as brandy was allowed in the old Priscilla. Still I am sure

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I tasted some before I fell into a state of semi-insensibility. As in a trance I heard Temple's moans, and the captain's voice across the gusty wind, and the forlorn crunching of the ship down great waves. The captain's figure was sometimes stooping over us, more great-coats were piled on us; sometimes the wind whistled thinner than one fancies the shrieks of creatures dead of starvation and restless, that spend their souls in a shriek as long as they can hold it on, say nursery-maids; the ship made a truce with the waters and grunted; we took two or three playful blows, we were drenched with spray, uphill we laboured, we caught the moon in a net of rigging, away we plunged; we mounted to plunge again and again. I reproached the vessel in argument for some imaginary inconsistency. Memory was like a heavy barrel on my breast, rolling with the sea.

CHAPTER XIII

WE CONDUCT SEVERAL LEARNED ARGUMENTS WITH THE CAPTAIN OF THE PRISCILLA

Captain Welsh soon conquered us. The latest meal we had eaten was on the frosty common under the fir-trees. After a tremendous fast, with sea-sickness supervening, the eggs and bacon, and pleasant benevolent-smelling tea on the captain's table were things not to be resisted by two healthy boys who had previously stripped and faced buckets of maddening ice-cold salt-water, dashed at us by a jolly sailor. An open mind for new impressions came with the warmth of our clothes. We ate, bearing within us the souls of injured innocents; nevertheless, we were thankful, and, to the captain's grace, a long one, we bowed heads decently. It was a glorious breakfast, for which land and sea had prepared us in about equal degrees: I confess, my feelings when I jumped out of the cabin were almost those of one born afresh to life and understanding. Temple and I took counsel. We agreed that sulking would be ridiculous, unmanly, ungentlemanly. The captain had us fast, as if we were under a lion's paw; he was evidently a well-meaning man, a fanatic deluded concerning our characters: the barque Priscilla was bound for a German port, and should arrive there in a few days,—why not run the voyage merrily since we were treated with kindness? Neither the squire nor Temple's father could complain of our conduct; we were simply victims of an error that was assisting us to a knowledge of the world, a youth's proper ambition. 'And we're not going to be starved,' said Temple.

I smiled, thinking I perceived the reason why I had failed in my oration over-night; so I determined that on no future occasion would I let pride stand in the way of provender. Breakfast had completely transformed us. We held it due to ourselves that we should demand explanations from Joseph Double, the mate, and then, after hearing him, furnish them with a cordial alacrity to which we might have attached unlimited credence

had he not protested against our dreaming him to have supplied hot rum-and-water on board, we wrote our names and addresses in the captain's log-book, and immediately asked permission to go to the mast-head.

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He laughed. Out of his cabin there was no smack of the preacher in him. His men said he was a stout seaman, mad on the subject of grog and girls. Why, it was on account of grog and girls that he was giving us this dish of salt-water to purify us! Grog and girls! cried we. We vowed upon our honour as gentlemen we had tasted grog for the first time in our lives on board the Priscilla. How about the girls? they asked. We informed them we knew none but girls who were ladies. Thereupon one sailor nodded, one sent up a crow, one said the misfortune of the case lay in all girls being such precious fine ladies; and one spoke in dreadfully blank language, he accused us of treating the Priscilla as a tavern for the entertainment of bad company, stating that he had helped to row me and my associates from the shore to the ship.

'Poor Mr. Double!' says he; 'there was only one way for him to jump you two young gentlemen out o' that snapdragon bowl you was in—or quashmire, call it; so he 'ticed you on board wi' the bait you was swallowing, which was making the devil serve the Lord's turn. And I'll remember that night, for I yielded to swearing, and drank too!' The other sailors roared with laughter.

I tipped them, not to appear offended by their suspicions. We thought them all hypocrites, and were as much in error as if we had thought them all honest.

Things went fairly well with the exception of the lessons in Scripture. Our work was mere playing at sailing, helping furl sails, haul ropes, study charts, carry messages, and such like. Temple made his voice shrewdly emphatic to explain to the captain that we liked the work, but that such lessons as these out of Scripture were what the eeriest youngsters were crammed with.

'Such lessons as these, maybe, don't have the meaning on land they get to have on the high seas,' replied the captain: 'and those youngsters you talk of were not called in to throw a light on passages: for I may teach you ship's business aboard my barque, but we're all children inside the Book.'

He groaned heartily to hear that our learning lay in the direction of Pagan Gods and Goddesses, and heathen historians and poets; adding, it was not new to him, and perhaps that was why the world was as it was. Nor did he wonder, he said, at our running from studies of those filthy writings loose upon London; it was as natural as dunghill steam. Temple pretended he was forced by the captain's undue severity to defend Venus; he said, I thought rather wittily, 'Sailors ought to have a respect for her, for she was born in the middle of the sea, and she steered straight for land, so she must have had a pretty good idea of navigation.'

But the captain answered none the less keenly, 'She had her idea of navigating, as the devil of mischief always has, in the direction where there's most to corrupt; and, my lad, she teaches the navigation that leads to the bottom beneath us.'

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He might be right, still our mien was evil in reciting the lessons from Scripture; and though Captain Welsh had intelligence we could not draw into it the how and the why of the indignity we experienced. We had rather he had been a savage captain, to have braced our spirits to sturdy resistance, instead of a mild, good-humoured man of kind intentions, who lent us his linen to wear, fed us at his table, and taxed our most gentlemanly feelings to find excuses for him. Our way of revenging ourselves becomingly was to laud the heroes of antiquity, as if they had possession of our souls and touched the fountain of worship. Whenever Captain Welsh exclaimed, 'Well done,' or the equivalent, 'That 's an idea,' we referred him to Plutarch for our great exemplar. It was Alcibiades gracefully consuming his black broth that won the captain's thanks for theological acuteness, or the young Telemachus suiting his temper to the dolphin's moods, since he must somehow get on shore on the dolphin's back. Captain Welsh could not perceive in Temple the personifier of Alcibiades, nor Telemachus in me; but he was aware of an obstinate obstruction behind our compliance. This he called the devil coiled like a snake in its winter sleep. He hurled texts at it openly, or slyly dropped a particularly heavy one, in the hope of surprising it with a death-blow. We beheld him poring over his Bible for texts that should be sovereign medicines for us, deadly for the devil within us. Consequently, we were on the defensive: bits of Cicero, bits of Seneca, soundly and nobly moral, did service on behalf of Paganism; we remembered them certainly almost as if an imp had brought them from afar. Nor had we any desire to be in opposition to the cause he supported. What we were opposed to was the dogmatic arrogance of a just but ignorant man, who had his one specific for everything, and saw mortal sickness in all other remedies or recreations. Temple said to him,

'If the Archbishop of Canterbury were to tell me Greek and Latin authors are bad for me, I should listen to his remarks, because he 's a scholar: he knows the languages and knows what they contain.'

Captain Welsh replied,

'If the Archbishop o' Canterbury sailed the sea, and lived in Foul Alley, Waterside, when on shore, and so felt what it is to toss on top of the waves o' perdition, he'd understand the value of a big, clean, well-manned, well-provisioned ship, instead o' your galliots wi' gaudy sails, your barges that can't rise to a sea, your yachts that run to port like mother's pets at first pipe o' the storm, your trim-built wherries.'

'So you'd have only one sort of vessel afloat!' said I. 'There's the difference of a man who's a scholar.'

'I'd have,' said the captain, 'every lad like you, my lad, trained in the big ship, and he wouldn't capsize, and be found betrayed by his light timbers as I found you. Serve your apprenticeship in the Lord's three-decker; then to command what you may.'

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'No, no, Captain Welsh,' says Temple: 'you must grind at Latin and Greek when you 're a chick, or you won't ever master the rudiments. Upon my honour, I declare it 's the truth, you must. If you'd like to try, and are of a mind for a go at Greek, we'll do our best to help you through the aorists. It looks harder than Latin, but after a start it 's easier. Only, I'm afraid your three-decker's apprenticeship 'll stand in your way.'

'Greek 's to be done for me; I can pay clever gentlemen for doing Greek for me,' said the captain. 'The knowledge and the love of virtue I must do for myself; and not to be wrecked, I must do it early.'

'Well, that's neither learning nor human nature,' said I.

'It's the knowledge o' the right rules for human nature, my lad.'

'Would you kidnap youngsters to serve in your ship, captain?'

'I'd bless the wind that blew them there, foul or not, my lad.'

'And there they'd stick when you had them, captain?'

'I'd think it was the Lord's will they should stick there awhile, my lad—yes.'

'And what of their parents?'

'Youngsters out like gossamers on a wind, their parents are where they sow themselves, my lad.'

'I call that hard on the real parents, Captain Welsh,' said Temple.

'It's harder on Providence when parents breed that kind o' light creature, my lad.'

We were all getting excited, talking our best, such as it was; the captain leaning over his side of the table, clasping his hands unintentionally preacher-like; we on our side supporting our chins on our fists, quick to be at him. Temple was brilliant; he wanted to convert the captain, and avowed it.

'For,' said he, 'you're not like one of those tract-fellows. You're a man we can respect, a good seaman, master of your ship, and hearty, and no mewing sanctimoniousness, and we can see and excuse your mistake as to us two; but now, there's my father at home—he's a good man, but he 's a man of the world, and reads his classics and his Bible. He's none the worse for it, I assure you.'

'Where was his son the night of the fog?' said the captain.

'Well, he happened to be out in it.'

'Where'd he be now but for one o' my men?'

'Who can answer that, Captain Welsh?'

'I can, my lad—stewing in an ante-room of hell-gates, I verily believe.'

Temple sighed at the captain's infatuation, and said, 'I'll tell you of a fellow at our school named Drew; he was old Rippenger's best theological scholar—always got the prize for theology. Well, he was a confirmed sneak. I've taken him into a corner and described the torments of dying to him, and his look was disgusting—he broke out in a clammy sweat. "Don't, don't!" he'd cry. "You're just the fellow to suffer intensely," I told him. And what was his idea of escaping it? Why, by learning the whole of Deuteronomy and the Acts of the Apostles by heart! His idea of Judgement Day was old Rippenger's half-yearly examination. These are facts, you know, Captain Welsh.'

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I testified to them briefly.

The captain said a curious thing: 'I'll make an appointment with you in leviathan's jaws the night of a storm, my lad.'

'With pleasure,' said Temple.

'The Lord send it!' exclaimed the captain.

His head was bent forward, and he was gazing up into his eyebrows.

Before we knew that anything was coming, he was out on a narrative of a scholar of one of the Universities. Our ears were indifferent to the young man's career from the heights of fortune to delirium tremens down the cataract of brandy, until the captain spoke of a dark night on the Pool of the Thames; and here his voice struggled, and we tried hard to catch the thread of the tale. Two men and a girl were in the boat. The men fought, the girl shrieked, the boat was upset, the three were drowned.

All this came so suddenly that nothing but the captain's heavy thump of his fist on the table kept us from laughing.

He was quite unable to relate the tale, and we had to gather it from his exclamations. One of the men was mate of a vessel lying in the Pool, having only cast anchor that evening; the girl was his sweetheart; the other man had once been a fine young University gentleman, and had become an outfitter's drunken agent. The brave sailor had nourished him often when on shore, and he, with the fluent tongue which his college had trimmed for him, had led the girl to sin during her lover's absence. Howsoever, they put off together to welcome him on his arrival, never suspecting that their secret had been whispered to Robert Welsh beforehand. Howsoever, Robert gave them hearty greeting, and down to the cabin they went, and there sat drinking up to midnight.

'Three lost souls!' said the captain.

'See how they run,' Temple sang, half audibly, and flushed hot, ashamed of himself.

'Twas I had to bear the news to his mother,' the captain pursued; 'and it was a task, my lads, for I was then little more than your age, and the glass was Robert's only fault, and he was my only brother.'

I offered my hand to the captain. He grasped it powerfully. 'That crew in a boat, and wouldn't you know the devil'd be coxswain?' he called loudly, and buried his face.

'No,' he said, looking up at us, 'I pray for no storm, but, by the Lord's mercy, for a way to your hearts through fire or water. And now on deck, my lads, while your beds are made up. Three blind things we verily are.'

Captain Welsh showed he was sharp of hearing. His allusion to the humming of the tune of the mice gave Temple a fit of remorse, and he apologized.

'Ay,' said the captain, 'it is so; own it: frivolity's the fruit of that training that's all for the flesh. But dip you into some o' my books on my shelves here, and learn to see living man half skeleton, like life and shadow, and never to living man need you pray forgiveness, my lad.'



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By sheer force of character he gained the command of our respect. Though we agreed on deck that he had bungled his story, it impressed us; we felt less able to cope with him, and less willing to encounter a storm.

'We shall have one, of course,' Temple said, affecting resignation, with a glance aloft.

I was superstitiously of the same opinion, and praised the vessel.

'Oh, Priscilla's the very name of a ship that founders with all hands and sends a bottle on shore,' said Temple.

'There isn't a bottle on board,' said I; and this piece of nonsense helped us to sleep off our gloom.

CHAPTER XIV

I MEET OLD FRIENDS

Notwithstanding the prognostications it pleased us to indulge, we had a tolerably smooth voyage. On a clear cold Sunday morning we were sailing between a foreign river's banks, and Temple and I were alternately reading a chapter out of the Bible to the assembled ship's crew, in advance of the captain's short exhortation. We had ceased to look at ourselves inwardly, and we hardly thought it strange. But our hearts beat for a view of the great merchant city, which was called a free city, and therefore, Temple suggested, must bear certain portions of resemblance to old England; so we made up our minds to like it.

'A wonderful place for beer cellars,' a sailor observed to us slyly, and hitched himself up from the breech to the scalp.

At all events, it was a place where we could buy linen.

For that purpose, Captain Welsh handed us over to the care of his trusted mate Mr. Joseph Double, and we were soon in the streets of the city, desirous of purchasing half their contents. My supply of money was not enough for what I deemed necessary purchases. Temple had split his clothes, mine were tarred; we were appearing at a disadvantage, and we intended to dine at a good hotel and subsequently go to a theatre. Yet I had no wish to part with my watch. Mr. Double said it might be arranged. It was pawned at a shop for a sum equivalent in our money to about twelve pounds, and Temple obliged me by taking charge of the ticket. Thus we were enabled to dress suitably and dine pleasantly, and, as Mr. Double remarked, no one could rob me of my gold watch now. We visited a couple of beer-cellars to taste the drink of the people, and discovered three of our men engaged in a similar undertaking. I proposed that it should be done at my expense. They praised their captain, but asked us, as gentlemen and

scholars, whether it was reasonable to object to liquor because your brother was carried out on a high tide? Mr. Double commended them to moderation. Their reply was to estimate an immoderate amount of liquor as due to them, with profound composure.

'Those rascals,' Mr. Double informed us, 'are not in the captain's confidence they're tidy seamen, though, and they submit to the captain's laws on board and have their liberty ashore.'

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We inquired what the difference was between their privileges and his.

'Why,' said he, 'if they're so much as accused of a disobedient act, off they 're scurried, and lose fair wages and a kind captain. And let any man Jack of 'em accuse me, and he bounds a india-rubber ball against a wall and gets it; all he meant to give he gets. Once you fix the confidence of your superior, you're waterproof.'

We held our peace, but we could have spoken.

Mr. Double had no moral hostility toward theatres. Supposing he did not relish the performance, he could enjoy a spell in the open air, he said, and this he speedily decided to do. Had we not been bound in honour to remain for him to fetch us, we also should have retired from a representation of which we understood only the word ja. It was tiresome to be perpetually waiting for the return of this word. We felt somewhat as dogs must feel when human speech is addressed to them. Accordingly, we professed, without concealment, to despise the whole performance. I reminded Temple of a saying of the Emperor Charles V. as to a knowledge of languages.

'Hem!' he went critically; 'it's all very well for a German to talk in that way, but you can't be five times an Englishman if you're a foreigner.'

We heard English laughter near us. Presently an English gentleman accosted us.

'Mr. Villiers, I believe?' He bowed at me.

'My name is Richmond.'

He bowed again, with excuses, talked of the Play, and telegraphed to a lady sitting in a box fronting us. I saw that she wrote on a slip of paper; she beckoned; the gentleman quitted us, and soon after placed a twisted note in my hand. It ran:

'Miss Goodwin (whose Christian name is Clara) wishes very much to know how it has fared with Mr. Harry Richmond since he left Venice.'

I pushed past a number of discontented knees, trying, on my way to her box, to recollect her vividly, but I could barely recollect her at all, until I had sat beside her five minutes. Colonel Goodwin was asleep in a corner of the box. Awakened by the sound of his native tongue, he recognized me immediately.

'On your way to your father?' he said, as he shook my hand.

I thought it amazing he should guess that in Germany.

'Do you know where he is, sir?' I asked.

'We saw him,' replied the colonel; 'when was it, Clara? A week or ten days ago.'

'Yes,' said Miss Goodwin; 'we will talk of that by-and-by.' And she overflowed with comments on my personal appearance, and plied me with questions, but would answer none of mine.

I fetched Temple into the box to introduce him. We were introduced in turn to Captain Malet, the gentleman who had accosted me below.

'You understand German, then?' said Miss Goodwin.

She stared at hearing that we knew only the word ja, for it made our presence in Germany unaccountable.

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'The most dangerous word of all,' said Colonel Goodwin, and begged us always to repeat after it the negative nein for an antidote.

'You have both seen my father?' I whispered to Miss Goodwin; 'both? We have been separated. Do tell me everything. Don't look at the stage—they speak such nonsense. How did you remember me? How happy I am to have met you! Oh! I haven't forgotten the gondolas and the striped posts, and stali and the other word; but soon after we were separated, and I haven't seen him since.'

She touched her father's arm.

'At once, if you like,' said he, jumping up erect.

'In Germany was it?' I persisted.

She nodded gravely and leaned softly on my arm while we marched out of the theatre to her hotel—I in such a state of happiness underlying bewilderment and strong expectation that I should have cried out loud had not pride in my partner restrained me. At her tea-table I narrated the whole of my adventure backwards to the time of our parting in Venice, hurrying it over as quick as I could, with the breathless termination, 'And now?'

They had an incomprehensible reluctance to perform their part of the implied compact. Miss Goodwin looked at Captain Malet. He took his leave. Then she said, 'How glad I am you have dropped that odious name of Roy! Papa and I have talked of you frequently—latterly very often. I meant to write to you, Harry Richmond. I should have done it the moment we returned to England.'

'You must know,' said the colonel, 'that I am an amateur inspector of fortresses, and my poor Clara has to trudge the Continent with me to pick up the latest inventions in artillery and other matters, for which I get no thanks at head-quarters—but it's one way of serving one's country when the steel lies rusting. We are now for home by way of Paris. I hope that you and your friend will give us your company. I will see this Captain Welsh of yours before we start. Clara, you decided on dragging me to the theatre to-night with your usual admirable instinct.'

I reminded Miss Goodwin of my father being in Germany.

'Yes, he is at one of the Courts, a long distance from here,' she said, rapidly. 'And you came by accident in a merchant-ship! You are one of those who are marked for extraordinary adventures. Confess: you would have set eyes on me, and not known me. It's a miracle that I should meet my little friend Harry—little no longer my friend all the same, are you not?'

I hoped so ardently.

She with great urgency added, 'Then come with us. Prove that you put faith in our friendship.'

In desperation I exclaimed, 'But I must, I must hear of my father.'

She turned to consult the colonel's face.

'Certainly,' he said, and eulogized a loving son. 'Clara will talk to you. I'm for bed. What was the name of the play we saw this evening? Oh! Struensee, to be sure. We missed the scaffold.'

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He wished us good-night on an appointment of the hour for breakfast, and ordered beds for us in the hotel.

Miss Goodwin commenced: 'But really I have nothing to tell you, or very little. You know, Papa has introductions everywhere; we are like Continental people, and speak a variety of languages, and I am almost a foreigner, we are so much abroad; but I do think English boys should be educated at home: I hope you'll go to an English college.'

Noticing my painful look, 'We saw him at the Court of the Prince of Eppenwelzen,' she said, as if her brows ached. 'He is very kindly treated there; he was there some weeks ago. The place lies out in the Hanover direction, far from here. He told us that you were with your grandfather, and I must see Riversley Grange, and the truth is you must take me there. I suspect you have your peace to make; perhaps I shall help you, and be a true Peribanou. We go over Amsterdam, the Hague, Brussels, and you shall see the battlefield, Paris, straight to London. Yes, you are fickle; you have not once called me Peribanou.'

Her voluble rattling succeeded in fencing off my questions before I could exactly shape them, as I staggered from blind to blind idea, now thinking of the sombre red Bench, and now of the German prince's Court.

'Won't you tell me any more to-night?' I said, when she paused.

'Indeed, I have not any more to tell,' she assured me.

It was clear to me that she had joined the mysterious league against my father. I began to have a choking in the throat. I thanked her and wished her good-night while I was still capable of smiling.

At my next interview with Colonel Goodwin he spoke promptly on the subject of my wanderings. I was of an age, he said, to know my own interests. No doubt filial affection was excellent in its way, but in fact it was highly questionable whether my father was still at the Court of this German prince; my father had stated that he meant to visit England to obtain an interview with his son, and I might miss him by a harum-scarum chase over Germany. And besides, was I not offending my grandfather and my aunt, to whom I owed so much? He appealed to my warmest feelings on their behalf. This was just the moment, he said, when there was a turning-point in my fortunes. He could assure me most earnestly that I should do no good by knocking at this prince's doors, and have nothing but bitterness if I did in the end discover my father. 'Surely you understand the advantages of being bred a gentleman?' he wound up. 'Under your grandfather's care you have a career before you, a fine fortune in prospect, everything a young man can wish for. And I must tell you candidly, you run great risk of missing all these things by hunting your father to earth. Give yourself a little time: reflect on it.'

'I have,' I cried. 'I have come out to find him, and I must.'

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The colonel renewed his arguments and persuasions until he was worn out. I thanked him continually for his kindness. Clara Goodwin besought me in a surprising manner to accompany her to England, called herself Peribanou, and with that name conjured up my father to my eyes in his breathing form. She said, as her father had done, that I was called on now to decide upon my future: she had a presentiment that evil would come to me of my unchecked, headstrong will, which she dignified by terming it a true but reckless affection: she believed she had been thrown in my path to prove herself a serviceable friend, a Peribanou of twenty-six who would not expect me to marry her when she had earned my gratitude.

They set Temple on me, and that was very funny. To hear him with his 'I say, Richie, come, perhaps it's as well to know where a thing should stop; your father knows you're at Riversley, and he'll be after you when convenient; and just fancy the squire!' was laughable. He had some anxiety to be home again, or at least at Riversley. I offered him to Miss Goodwin.

She reproached me and coaxed me; she was exceedingly sweet. 'Well,' she said, in an odd, resigned fashion, 'rest a day with us; will you refuse me that?'

I consented; she knew not with what fretfulness. We went out to gaze at the shops and edifices, and I bought two light bags for slinging over the shoulder, two nightshirts, toothbrushes, and pocket-combs, and a large map of Germany. By dint of vehement entreaties I led her to point to the territory of the Prince of Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld. 'His income is rather less than that of your grandfather, friend Harry,' she remarked. I doated on the spot until I could have dropped my finger on it blindfold.

Two or three pitched battles brought us to a friendly arrangement. The colonel exacted my promise that if I saw my father at Sarkeld in Eppenwelzen I would not stay with him longer than seven days: and that if he was not there I would journey home forthwith. When I had yielded the promise frankly on my honour, he introduced me to a banker of the city, who agreed to furnish me money to carry me on to England in case I should require it. A diligence engaged to deliver me within a few miles of Sarkeld. I wrote a letter to my aunt Dorothy, telling her facts, and one to the squire, beginning, 'We were caught on our arrival in London by the thickest fog ever remembered,' as if it had been settled on my departure from Riversley that Temple and I were bound for London. Miss Goodwin was my post-bag. She said when we had dined, about two hours before the starting of the diligence, 'Don't you think you ought to go and wish that captain of the vessel you sailed in goodbye?' I fell into her plot so far as to walk down to the quays on the river-side and reconnoitre the ship. But there I saw my prison. I kissed my hand to Captain Welsh's mainmast rather ironically, though not without regard for him. Miss Goodwin lifted her eyelids at our reappearance. As she made no confession of her treason I did not accuse her, and perhaps it was owing to a movement of her conscience that at our parting she drew me to her near enough for a kiss to come of itself.

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Four-and-twenty German words of essential service to a traveller in Germany constituted our knowledge of the language, and these were on paper transcribed by Miss Goodwin's own hand. In the gloom of the diligence, packed between Germans of a size that not even Tacitus had prepared me for, smoked over from all sides, it was a fascinating study. Temple and I exchanged the paper half-hourly while the light lasted. When that had fled, nothing was left us to combat the sensation that we were in the depths of a manure-bed, for the windows were closed, the tobacco-smoke thickened, the hides of animals wrapping our immense companions reeked; fire occasionally glowed in their pipe-bowls; they were silent, and gave out smoke and heat incessantly, like inanimate forces of nature. I had most fantastic ideas,—that I had taken root and ripened, and must expect my head to drop off at any instant: that I was deep down, wedged in the solid mass of the earth. But I need not repeat them: they were accurately translated in imagination from my physical miseries. The dim revival of light, when I had well-nigh ceased to hope for it, showed us all like malefactors imperfectly hanged, or drowned wretches in a cabin under water. I had one Colossus bulging over my shoulder! Temple was blotted out. His face, emerging from beneath a block of curly bearskin, was like that of one frozen in wonderment. Outside there was a melting snow on the higher hills; the clouds over them grew steel-blue. We were going through a valley in a fir-forest.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Attacked my conscience on the cowardly side
Days when you lay on your back and the sky rained apples
Dogmatic arrogance of a just but ignorant man
He put no question to anybody
I can pay clever gentlemen for doing Greek for me
Irony instead of eloquence
Simplicity is the keenest weapon
The most dangerous word of all—ja
There's ne'er a worse off but there's a better off
Vessel was conspiring to ruin our self-respect