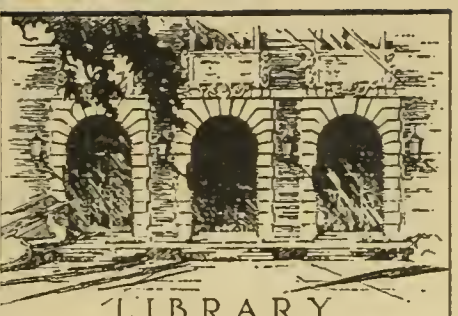
THE TRUMPET MAJOR

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD"



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THE TRUMPET-MAJOR

VOL. II.

THE TRUMPET-MAJOR

A TALE

BY

THOMAS HARDY

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

THE TRUMPET-MAJOR.

CHAPTER XVI.

THEY MAKE READY FOR THE ILLUSTRIOUS STRANGER.

PREPARATIONS for Matilda's welcome, and for the event which was to follow, at once occupied the attention of the mill. The miller and his man had but dim notions of housewifery on any large scale; so the great wedding cleaning was kindly supervised by Mrs. Garland, Bob being mostly away during the day with his brother, the trumpet-major, on various errands, one of which was to buy paint and varnish for the gig that Matilda

was to be fetched in, which he had determined to decorate with his own hands.

By the widow's direction the old familiar incrustation of shining dirt, imprinted along the back of the settle by the heads of countless jolly sitters, was scrubbed and scraped away ; the brown circle round the nail whereon the miller hung his hat, stained by the brim in wet weather, was whitened over ; the tawny smudges of bygone shoulders in the passage were removed without regard to a certain genial and historical value which they had acquired. The face of the clock, coated with verdigris as thick as a diachylon plaster, was rubbed till the figures emerged into day ; while, inside the case of the same chronometer, the cobwebs that formed triangular hammocks, which the pendulum could hardly wade through, were cleared away at one swoop.

Mrs. Garland also assisted at the invasion of worm-eaten cupboards, where layers of ancient smells lingered on in the stagnant air, and recalled to the reflective nose the many good things that had been kept there. The upper floors were scrubbed with such abundance of water that the old-established death-watches, wood-lice, and flour-worms were all drowned, the suds trickling down into the room below in so lively and novel a manner as to convey the romantic notion that the miller lived in a cave with dripping stalactites.

They moved what had never been moved before—the oak coffer, containing the miller's wardrobe—a tremendous weight, what with its locks, hinges, nails, dirt, framework, and the hard stratification of old jackets, waistcoats, and knee-breeches at the bottom, never disturbed since the miller's wife died, and

half pulverised by the moths, whose flattened skeletons lay amid the mass in thousands.

'It fairly makes my back open and shut!' said Loveday, as, in obedience to Mrs. Garland's direction, he lifted one corner, the grinder and David assisting at the others. 'All together: speak when ye be going to heave. Now!' And they heaved.

The pot covers and skimmers were brought to such a state that, on examining them, the beholder was not conscious of utensils but of his own face in a condition of hideous elasticity. The broken clock-line was mended, the kettles rocked, the creeper nailed up, and a new handle put to the warming-pan. The large household lantern was cleaned out, after three years of uninterrupted accumulation, the operation yielding a conglomerate of candle-snuffs, candle-ends, remains of matches, lamp-black, and

eleven ounces and a half of good grease—invaluable as dubbing for skitty boots and ointment for cart-wheels.

Everybody said that the mill residence had not been so thoroughly scoured for twenty years. The miller and David looked on with a sort of awe tempered by gratitude, tacitly admitting by their gaze that this was beyond what they had ever thought of. Mrs. Garland supervised all with disinterested benevolence. It would never have done, she said, for his future daughter-in-law to see the house in its original state. She would have taken a dislike to him, and perhaps to Bob likewise.

'Why don't ye come and live here with me, and then you would be able to see to it at all times?' said the miller as she bustled about again. To which she answered that she was considering the matter, and

might in good time. He had previously informed her that his plan was to put Bob and his wife in the part of the house that she, Mrs. Garland, occupied, as soon as she chose to enter his, which relieved her of any fear of being incommoded by Matilda.

The cooking for the wedding festivities was on a proportionate scale of thoroughness. They killed the four supernumerary chickens that had just begun to crow, and the little curly-tailed barrow pig, in preference to the sow; not having been put up fattening for more than five weeks it was excellent small meat, and therefore more delicate and likely to suit a town-bred lady's taste than the large one, which, having reached the weight of fourteen score, might have been a little gross to a cultured palate. There were also provided a cold chine, stuffed veal, and two pigeon pies. Also seventy rings of

black-pot, a dozen of white-pot, and twenty-five knots of tender and well-washed chitterlings, cooked plain, in case she should like a change.

As additional reserves there were sweetbreads, and five milts, sewed up at one side in the form of a chrysalis, and stuffed with marjoram, thyme, sage, parsley, mint, groats, rice, milk, chopped egg, and other ingredients. They were afterwards roasted before a slow fire like martyrs, and eaten hot.

The business of chopping so many herbs for the various stuffings was found to be aching work for women; and David, the miller, the grinder, and the grinder's boy being fully occupied in their proper branches, and Bob being very busy painting the gig and touching up the harness, Loveday called in a friendly dragoon of John's regiment who was passing by, and he, being a muscular

man, willingly chopped all the afternoon for a quart of strong, judiciously administered, and all other victuals found, taking off his jacket and gloves, rolling up his shirt-sleeves and unfastening his collar in an honourable and energetic way.

All windfalls and maggot-cored codlins were excluded from the apple pies ; and as there was no known dish large enough for the purpose, the puddings were stirred up in the milking-pail, and boiled in the three-legged bell-metal crock, of great weight and antiquity, which every travelling tinker for the previous thirty years had tapped with his stick, coveted, made a bid for, and often attempted to steal.

In the liquor line Loveday laid in an ample barrel of Dorchester 'strong beer.' This renowned drink—now almost as much a thing of the past as Falstaff's favourite

beverage—was not only well calculated to win the hearts of soldiers blown dry and dusty by residence in tents on a hill-top, but of any wayfarer whatever in that land. It was of the most beautiful colour that the eye of an artist in beer could desire; full in body, yet brisk as a volcano; piquant, yet without a twang; luminous as an autumn sunset; free from streakiness of taste; but, finally, rather heady. The masses worshipped it, the minor gentry loved it more than wine, and by the most illustrious county families it was not despised. Anybody brought up for being drunk and disorderly in the streets of its natal borough, had only to prove that he was a stranger to the place and its liquor to be honourably dismissed by the magistrates, as one overtaken in a fault that no man could guard against who entered the town unawares.

In addition, Mr. Loveday also tapped a hogshead of fine cider that he had had mellowing in the house for several months, having bought it of an honest down-country man, who did not colour, for any special occasion like the present. It had been pressed from fruit judiciously chosen by an old hand—Horner and Cleeves apples for the body, a few Crimson-Kitties for colour, and just a dash of Old Fivecorners for sparkle—a selection originally made to please the palate of a well-known temperate earl who was a regular cider-drinker, and lived to be eighty-eight.

On the morning of the Sunday appointed for her coming Captain Bob Loveday set out to meet his bride. He had been all the week engaged in painting the gig, assisted by his brother at odd times, and it now appeared of a gorgeous yellow, with blue streaks, and

tassels at the corners, and red wheels outlined with a darker shade. He put in the pony at half-past eleven, Anne looking at him from the door as he packed himself into the vehicle and drove off. There may be young women who look out at young men driving to meet their brides as Anne looked at Captain Bob, and yet are quite indifferent to the circumstances; but they are not often met with.

So much dust had been raised on the highway by traffic resulting from the presence of the Court at Weymouth that brambles hanging from the fence, and giving a friendly scratch to the wanderer's face, were dingy as church cobwebs; and the grass on the margin had assumed a paper-shaving hue. Bob's father had wished him to take David, lest, from want of recent experience at the whip, he should meet with any mishap; but,

picturing to himself the awkwardness of three in such circumstances, Bob would not hear of this; and nothing more serious happened to his driving than that the wheel-marks formed two beautiful serpentine lines along the road during the first mile or two, before he had got his hand in, and that the horse shied at a mile-stone, a piece of paper, a sleeping tramp, and a wheelbarrow, just to make use of the opportunity of being in bad hands.

He entered Dorchester between twelve and one, and, putting up at the Old Grey-hound, walked on to the Bow. Here, rather dusty on the ledges of his clothes, he stood and waited while the people in their best summer dresses poured out of the three churches round him. When they had all gone, and a smell of cinders and gravy had spread down the ancient high-street, and the

pie-dishes from adjacent bakehouses had all travelled past, he saw the mail coach rise above the arch of Grey's Bridge, a quarter of a mile distant, surmounted by swaying knobs, which proved to be the heads of the outside travellers.

'That's the way for a man's bride to come to him!' said Robert to himself with a feeling of poetry; and as the horn sounded and the horses clattered up the street he walked down to the inn. The knot of hostlers and inn-servants had gathered, the horses were dragged from the vehicle, and the passengers for Dorchester began to descend. Captain Bob eyed them over, looked inside, looked outside again; to his disappointment Matilda was not there, nor her boxes, nor anything that was hers. Neither coachman nor guard had seen or heard of such a person at Salisbury; and Bob walked slowly away.

Depressed by forebodings to an extent which took away nearly a third of his appetite, he sat down in the parlour of the Old Greyhound to a slice from the family joint of the landlord. This gentleman, who dined in his shirt-sleeves, partly because it was August, and partly from a sense that they would not be so fit for public view farther on in the week, suggested that Bob should wait till three or four that afternoon, when the road-waggon would arrive, as the lost lady might have preferred that mode of conveyance; and when Bob appeared rather hurt at the suggestion, the landlord's wife assured him, as a woman who knew good life, that many genteel persons travelled in that way during the present high price of provisions. Loveday, who knew little of travelling by land, readily accepted her assurance and resolved to wait.

Wandering up and down the pavement, or leaning against some hot wall between the waggon-office and the corner of the street above, he passed the time away. It was a still, sunny, drowsy afternoon, and scarcely a soul was visible in the length and breadth of the street. The office was not far from All Saints' Church, and the church-windows being open, he could hear the afternoon service from where he lingered as distinctly as if he had been one of the congregation. Thus he was mentally conducted through the Psalms, through the first and second lessons, through the burst of fiddles and clarionets which announced the evening-hymn, and well into the sermon, before any signs of the waggon could be seen upon the London road.

The afternoon sermons at this church being of a dry and metaphysical nature at that date, it was by a special providence that

the waggon-office was placed near the ancient fabric, so that whenever the Sunday waggon was late, which it always was in hot weather, in cold weather, in wet weather, and in weather of almost every other sort, the rattle, dismounting, and swearing outside completely drowned the parson's voice within, and sustained the flagging interest of the congregation at precisely the right moment. No sooner did the charity children begin to writhe on their benches and adult snores grow audible than the waggon arrived.

Captain Loveday felt a kind of sinking in his poetry at the possibility of her for whom they had made such preparations being in the slow, unwieldy vehicle which crunched its way towards him; but he would not give in to the weakness. Neither would he walk down the street to meet the waggon, lest she should not be there. At last the broad

wheels drew up against the kerb, the waggoner with his white smock-frock, and whip as long as a fishing-line, descended from the pony on which he rode alongside, and the six broad-chested horses backed from their collars and shook themselves. In another moment something showed forth, and he knew that Matilda was there.

Bob felt three cheers rise within him as she stepped down; but it being Sunday he did not utter them. In dress, Miss Johnson passed his expectations—a green and white gown, with long, tight sleeves, a green silk handkerchief round her neck and crossed in front, a green parasol, and green gloves. It was strange enough to see this verdant caterpillar turn out of a road-waggon, and gracefully shake herself free from the bits of straw and fluff which would usually gather on the

raiment of the grandest travellers by that vehicle.

'But, my dear Matilda,' said Bob, when he had kissed her three times with much publicity—the practical step he had determined on seeming to demand that these things should no longer be done in a corner —'my dear Matilda, why didn't you come by the coach, having the money for't and all?'

'That's my scrimping!' said Matilda in a delightful gush. 'I know you won't be offended when you know I did it to save against a rainy day!'

Bob, of course, was not offended, though the glory of meeting her had been less; and even if vexation were possible, it would have been out of place to say so. Still, he would have experienced no little surprise had he learnt the real reason of his Matilda's change

of plan. That angel had, in short, so wildly spent Bob's and her own money in the adornment of her person before setting out, that she found herself without a sufficient margin for her fare by coach, and had scrimped from sheer necesity.

'Well, I have got the trap out at the Greyhound,' said Bob. 'I don't know whether it will hold your luggage and us too; but it looked more respectable than the waggon on a Sunday, and if there's not room for the boxes I can walk alongside.'

'I think there will be room,' said Miss Johnson mildly. And it was soon very evident that she spoke the truth; for when her property was deposited on the pavement, it consisted of a trunk about eighteen inches long, and nothing more.

'Oh—that's all!' said Captain Loveday, surprised.

'That's all,' said the young woman assuringly. 'I didn't want to give trouble, you know, and what I have besides I have left at my aunt's.'

'Yes, of course,' he answered readily. 'And as it's no bigger, I can carry it in my hand to the inn, and so it will be no trouble at all.'

He caught up the little box, and they went side by side to the Greyhound; and in ten minutes they were trotting up the Weymouth Road.

Bob did not hurry the horse, there being many things to say and hear, for which the present situation was admirably suited. The sun shone occasionally into Matilda's face as they drove on, its rays picking out all her features to a great nicety. Her eyes would have been called brown, but they were really eel-colour, like many other nice brown eyes;

they were well-shaped and rather bright, though they had more of a broad shine than a sparkle. She had a firm, sufficient nose, which seemed to say of itself that it was good as noses go. She had rather a picturesque way of wrapping her upper in her lower lip, so that the red of the latter showed strongly. Whenever she gazed against the sun towards the distant hills, she brought into her forehead, without knowing it, three short vertical lines—not there at other times—giving her for the moment rather a hard look. And in turning her head round to a far angle, to stare at something or other that he pointed out, the drawn flesh of her neck became a mass of lines. But Bob did not look at these things, which, of course, were of no significance; for had she not told him, when they compared ages, that she was a little over two-and-twenty?

As Nature was hardly invented at this early point of the century, Bob's Matilda could not say much about the glamour of the hills, or the shimmering of the foliage, or the wealth of glory in the distant sea, as she would doubtless have done had she lived farther on; but she did her best to be interesting, asking Bob about matters of social interest in the neighbourhood, to which she seemed quite a stranger.

'Is Weymouth a large city?' she inquired when they mounted the hill where the Overcombe folk had waited for the King.

'Bless you, my dear—no! 'Twould be nothing if it wasn't for the Royal Family, and the lords and ladies, and the regiments of soldiers, and the frigates, and the King's messengers, and the actors and actresses, and the games that go on.'

At the words 'actors and actresses,' the

innocent young thing pricked up her ears.

'Does Elliston pay as good salaries this summer as in——?'

'Oh, you know about it then? I thought——'

'Oh no, no! I have heard of Weymouth —read in the papers, you know, dear Robert, about the doings there, and the actors and actresses, you know.'

'Yes, yes, I see. Well, I have been away from England a long time, and don't know much about the theatre at Weymouth; but I'll take you there some day. Would it be a treat to you?'

'Oh, an amazing treat!' said Miss Johnson, with an ecstasy in which a close observer might have discovered a tinge of ghastliness.

'You've never been into one perhaps, dear?'

'N—never,' said Matilda, flatly. 'Whatever do I see yonder—a row of white things on the down?'

'Yes; that's a part of the encampment above Overcombe. Lots of soldiers are encamped about here; those are the white tops of their tents.'

He pointed to a wing of the camp that had become visible. Matilda was much interested.

'It will make it very lively for us,' he added; 'especially as John is there.'

She thought so too, and thus they chatted on.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONTAINING TWO FAINTING FITS AND A BEWILDERMENT.

MEANWHILE Miller Loveday was expecting the pair with interest; and about five o'clock, after repeated outlooks, he saw two specks the size of caraway seeds on the far line of ridge where the sunlit white of the road met the blue of the sky. Then the remainder parts of Bob and his lady became visible, and then the whole vehicle, end on, and he heard the dry rattle of the wheels on the dusty road. Miller Loveday's plan, as far as he had formed any, was that Robert and his wife should live with him in the mill-

house until Mrs. Garland made up her mind to join him there; in which event her present house would be made over to the young couple. Upon all grounds, he wished to welcome becomingly the woman of his son's choice, and came forward promptly as they drew up at the door.

'What a lovely place you've got here!' said Miss Johnson, when the miller had received her from the captain. 'A real stream of water, a real mill-wheel, and real fowls, and everything!'

'Yes, 'tis real enough,' said Loveday, looking at the river with balanced sentiments; 'and so you will say when you've lived here a bit as mis'ess, and had the trouble of claning the furniture.'

At this Miss Johnson looked modest, and continued to do so till Anne, not knowing they were there, came round the corner of

the house, with her prayer-book in her hand, having just arrived from church. Bob turned and smiled to her, at which Miss Johnson looked glum. How long she would have remained in that phase is unknown, for just then her ears were assailed by a loud bass note from the other side, causing her to jump round.

'Oh la! what dreadful thing is it?' she exclaimed, and beheld a cow of Loveday's, of the name of Crumpler, standing close to her shoulder. It being about milking-time, she had come to look up David and hasten on the operation.

'Oh, what a horrid bull!—it did frighten me so. I hope I shan't faint,' said Matilda.

The miller immediately used the formula which has been uttered by the proprietors of live stock ever since Noah's time. 'She

won't hurt ye. Hoosh, Crumpler! She's as timid as a mouse, ma'am.'

But as Crumpler persisted in making another terrific inquiry for David, Matilda could not help closing her eyes and saying, 'Oh, I shall be gored to death!' her head falling back upon Bob's shoulder, which—seeing the urgent circumstances, and knowing her delicate nature—he had providentially placed in a position to catch her. Anne Garland, who had been standing at the corner of the house, not knowing whether to go back or come on, at this felt her womanly sympathies aroused. She ran and dipped her handkerchief into the splashing mill-tail, and with it damped Matilda's face. But as her eyes still remained closed, Bob, to increase the effect, took the handkerchief from Anne and wrung it out on the bridge of Matilda's nose,

whence it ran over the rest of her face in a stream.

'Oh, Captain Loveday!' said Anne; 'the water is running over her green silk handkerchief, and into her pretty reticule!'

'There—if I didn't think so!' exclaimed Matilda, opening her eyes, starting up, and promptly pulling out her own handkerchief, with which she wiped away the drops, assisted by Anne, who, in spite of her background of antagonistic emotions, could not help being interested.

'That's right!' said the miller, his spirits reviving with the revival of Matilda. 'The lady is not used to country life; are you, ma'am?'

'I am not,' replied the sufferer. 'All is so strange about here!'

Suddenly there spread into the firmament, from the direction of the down :—

'Ra, ta, ta! Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta! Ra, ta, ta!'

'Oh dear, dear! more hideous country sounds, I suppose?' she inquired, with another start.

'Oh no,' said the miller cheerfully. ''Tis only my son John's trumpeter chaps at the camp of dragoons just above us, a-blowing Mess, or Feed, or Picket, or some other of their vagaries. John will be much pleased to tell you the meaning on't when he comes down. He's trumpet-major, as you may know, ma'am.'

'Oh yes; you mean Captain Loveday's brother. Dear Bob has mentioned him.'

'If you come round to Widow Garland's side of the house, you can see the camp,' said the miller.

'Don't force her; she's tired with her long journey,' said Mrs. Garland humanely, the widow having come out in the general

wish to see Captain Bob's choice. Indeed, they all behaved towards her as if she were a tender exotic, which their crude country manners might seriously injure.

She went into the house, accompanied by Mrs. Garland and her daughter; though before leaving Bob she managed to whisper in his ear, 'Don't tell them I came by waggon, will you, dear?'—a request which was quite needless, for Bob had long ago determined to keep that a dead secret; not because it was an uncommon mode of travel, but simply that it was hardly the usual conveyance for a gorgeous lady to her bridal.

As the men had a feeling that they would be superfluous indoors just at present, the miller assisted David in taking the horse round to the stables, Bob following, and leaving Matilda to the women. Indoors,

Miss Johnson admired everything: the new parrots and marmosets, the black beams of the ceiling, the double corner-cupboard with the glass doors, through which gleamed the remainders of sundry china sets acquired by Bob's mother in her housekeeping—two-handled sugar-basins, no-handled tea-cups, a tea-pot like a pagoda, and a cream-jug in the form of a spotted cow. This sociability in their visitor was returned by Mrs. Garland and Anne; and Miss Johnson's pleasing habit of partly dying whenever she heard any unusual bark or bellow added to her piquancy in their eyes. But conversation, as such, was naturally at first of a nervous, tentative kind, in which, as in the works of the poet Keats, the sense was considerably led by the sound.

'You get the sea breezes here, no doubt?'

'Oh yes, dear; when the wind is that way.'

'Do you like windy weather?'

'Yes; though not now, for it blows down the young apples.'

'Apples are plentiful, it seems. You country-folk call St. Swithin's their christening day, if it rains?'

'Yes, dear. Ah me! I have not been to a christening for these many years; the baby's name was George, I remember—after the King.'

'I hear that King George is still staying at Weymouth. I *hope* he'll stay till I have seen him!'

'He'll wait till the corn turns yellow; he always does.'

'How *very* fashionable yellow is getting for gloves just now!'

'Yes. Some persons wear them to the elbow, I hear.'

'Do they? I was not aware of that. I struck my elbow last week so hard against the door of my aunt's mansion that I feel the ache now.'

Before they were quite overwhelmed by the interest of this discourse, the miller and Bob came in. In truth, Mrs. Garland found the office in which he had placed her—that of introducing a strange woman to a house which was not the widow's own—a rather awkward one, and yet almost a necessity. There was no woman belonging to the house except that wondrous compendium of usefulness, the intermittent maid-servant, whom Loveday had, for appearances, borrowed from Mrs. Garland, and Mrs. Garland was in the habit of borrowing from the girl's mother. And as for the demi-woman David, he had

been informed as peremptorily as Pharaoh's baker that the office of housemaid and bed-maker was taken from him, and would be given to this girl till the wedding was over, and Bob's wife took the management into her own hands.

They all sat down to high tea, Anne and her mother included, and the captain sitting next to Miss Johnson. Anne had put a brave face upon the matter—outwardly, at least—and seemed in a fair way of subduing any lingering sentiment which Bob's return had revived. During the evening, and while they still sat over the meal, John came down on a hurried visit, as he had promised, ostensibly on purpose to be introduced to his intended sister-in-law, but much more to get a word and a smile from his beloved Anne. Before they saw him, they heard the trumpet-major's smart step coming round the corner of the

house, and in a moment his form darkened the door. As it was Sunday, he appeared in his full-dress laced coat, white waistcoat, and breeches, and towering plume, the latter of which he instantly lowered, as much from necessity as good manners, the beam in the mill-house ceiling having a tendency to smash and ruin all such head-gear without warning.

'John, we've been hoping you would come down,' said the miller, 'and so we have kept the tay about on purpose. Draw up, and speak to Mrs. Matilda Johnson. . . . Ma'am, this is Robert's brother.'

'Your humble servant, ma'am,' said the trumpet-major gallantly.

As it was getting dusk in the low, small-paned room, he instinctively moved towards Miss Johnson as he spoke, who sat with her back to the window. He had no sooner

noticed her features than his helmet nearly fell from his hand; his face became suddenly fixed, and his natural complexion took itself off, leaving a greenish yellow in its stead. The young person, on her part, had no sooner looked closely at him than she said weakly, 'Robert's brother!' and changed colour yet more rapidly than the soldier had done. The faintness, previously half counterfeit, seized on her now in real earnest.

'I don't feel well,' she said, suddenly rising by an effort. 'This warm day has quite upset me!'

There was a regular collapse of the tea party, like that of the Hamlet play scene. Bob seized his sweetheart and carried her upstairs, the miller exclaiming, 'Ah, she's terribly worn by the journey! I thought she was when I saw her nearly go off at the blare

of the cow. No woman would have been frightened at that if she'd been up to her natural strength.'

'That, and being so very shy of men, too, must have made John's handsome regimentals quite overpowering to her, poor thing!' added Mrs. Garland, following the catastrophic young lady upstairs, whose indisposition was this time beyond question. And yet, by some perversity of the heart, she was as eager now to make light of her faintness as she had been to make much of it two or three hours ago.

The miller and John stood like straight sticks in the room the others had quitted, John's face being hastily turned towards a caricature of Bonaparte on the wall that he had not seen more than a hundred and fifty times before.

'Come, sit down and have a dish of tea,

anyhow,' said his father at last. 'She'll soon be right again, no doubt.'

'Thanks; I don't want any tea,' said John quickly. And, indeed, he did not, for he was in one gigantic ache from head to foot.

The light had been too dim for anybody to notice his amazement; and not knowing where to vent it, the trumpet-major said he was going out for a minute. He hastened to the bakehouse; but David being there, he went to the pantry; but the maid being there, he went to the cart-shed; but a couple of tramps being there, he went behind a row of French beans in the garden, where he let off an ejaculation the most pious that he had uttered that Sabbath day: 'Heaven! what's to be done?'

And then he walked wildly about the paths of the dusky garden, where the trick-

ling of the brooks seemed loud by comparison with the stillness around; treading recklessly on the cracking snails that had come forth to feed, and entangling his spurs in the long grass till the rowels were choked with its blades. Presently he heard another person approaching, and his brother's shape appeared between the stubbard tree and the hedge.

'Oh, is it you, John?' said the mate.

'Yes. I am—taking a little air.'

'She is getting round nicely again; and as I am not wanted indoors just now, I am going into the village to call upon a friend or two I have not been able to speak to as yet.'

John took his brother Bob's hand. Bob rather wondered why.

'All right, old boy,' he said. 'Going into the village? You'll be back again, I suppose, before it gets very late?'

'Oh yes,' said Captain Bob cheerfully, and passed out of the garden.

John allowed his eyes to follow his brother till his shape could not be seen, and then he turned and again walked up and down.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NIGHT AFTER THE ARRIVAL.

JOHN continued his sad and heavy pace till walking seemed too old and worn-out a way of showing sorrow so new, and he leant himself against the fork of an apple-tree like a log. There the trumpet-major remained for a considerable time, his face turned towards the house, whose ancient, many-chimneyed outline rose against the darkening sky, and just shut out from his view the camp above. But faint noises coming thence from horses restless at the pickets, and from visitors taking their leave, recalled its existence, and reminded him that, in consequence of Matilda's arrival, he had obtained leave for the

night—a fact which, owing to the startling emotions that followed his entry, he had not yet mentioned to his friends.

While abstractedly considering how he could best use that privilege under the new circumstances which had arisen, he heard Farmer Derriman drive up to the front door and hold a conversation with his father. The old man had at last apparently brought the tin box of private papers that he wished the miller to take charge of during Derriman's absence; and it being a calm night, John could hear, though he little heeded, Uncle Benjy's reiterated supplications to Loveday to keep it safe from fire and thieves. Then Uncle Benjy left, and John's father went upstairs to deposit the box in a place of security, the whole proceeding reaching John's preoccupied comprehension merely as voices during sleep.

The next thing was the appearance of a light in the bedroom which had been assigned to Matilda Johnson. This effectually aroused the trumpet-major, and with a stealthiness unusual in him he went indoors. No light was in the lower rooms, his father, Mrs. Garland, and Anne having gone out on the bridge to look at the new moon. John went upstairs on tip-toe, and along the uneven passage till he came to her door. It was standing ajar, a band of candlelight shining across the passage and up the opposite wall. As soon as he entered the radiance he saw her. She was standing before the looking-glass, apparently lost in thought, her fingers being clasped behind her head in abstraction, and the light falling full upon her face.

'I must speak to you,' said the trumpet-major.

She started, turned, and grew paler than

before; and then, as if moved by a sudden impulse, she swung the door wide open, and, coming out, said quite collectedly and with apparent pleasantness. 'Oh, yes; you are my Bob's brother! I didn't, for a moment, recognise you.'

'But you do now?'

'As Bob's brother.'

'You have not seen me before?'

'I have not,' she answered, with a face as impassible as Talleyrand's.

'Good God!'

'I have not!' she repeated.

'Nor any of the —th Dragoons? Captain Jolly, for instance?'

'No.'

'You mistake; I'll remind you of particulars,' he said, drily. And he did remind her at some length.

'Never!' she said desperately.

But she had miscalculated her staying powers, and her adversary's character. Five minutes after that she was in tears, and the conversation had resolved itself into words, which, on the soldier's part, were of the nature of commands, tempered by pity, and were a mere series of entreaties on hers.

The whole scene did not last ten minutes. When it was over, the trumpet-major walked from the doorway where they had been standing, and brushed moisture from his eyes. Reaching a dark lumber-room, he stood still there to calm himself, and then descended by a Flemish-ladder to the bakehouse, instead of by the front stairs. He found that the others, including Bob, had gathered in the parlour during his absence and lighted the candles.

Miss Johnson, having sent down some time before John re-entered the house to say

that she would prefer to keep her room that evening, was not expected to join them, and on this account Bob showed less than his customary liveliness. The miller wishing to keep up his son's spirits, expressed his regret that, it being Sunday night, they could have no songs to make the evening cheerful; when Mrs. Garland proposed that they should sing psalms which, by choosing lively tunes and not thinking of the words, would be almost as good as ballads.

This they did, the trumpet-major appearing to join in with the rest; but as a matter of fact no sound came from his moving lips. His mind was in such a state that he derived no pleasure even from Anne Garland's presence, though he held a corner of the same book with her, and was treated in a winsome way which it was not her usual practice to indulge in. She saw that his mind was

clouded, and, far from guessing the reason why, was doing her best to clear it.

At length the Garlands found that it was the hour for them to leave, and John Loveday at the same time wished his father and Bob good-night, and went as far as Mrs. Garland's door with her.

He had said not a word to show that he was free to remain out of camp, for the reason that there was painful work to be done, which it would be best to do in secret and alone. He lingered near the house till its reflected window-lights ceased to glimmer upon the mill-pond, and all within the dwelling was dark and still. Then he entered the garden and waited there till the back door opened, and a woman's figure timorously came forward. John Loveday at once went up to her, and they began to talk in low yet dissentient tones.

They had conversed about ten minutes, and were parting as if they had come to some painful arrangement, Miss Johnson sobbing bitterly, when a head stealthily arose above the dense hedgerow, and in a moment a shout burst from its owner.

'Thieves! thieves!—my tin box!—thieves! thieves!'

Matilda vanished into the house, and John Loveday hastened to the hedge. 'For heaven's sake, hold your tongue, Mr. Derriman!' he exclaimed.

'My tin box!' said Uncle Benjy. 'Oh, only the trumpet-major!'

'Your box is safe enough, I assure you. It was only'—here the trumpet-major gave vent to an artificial laugh—'only a sly bit of courting, you know.'

'Haha, I see!' said the relieved old squireen. 'Courting Miss Anne? Then

you've ousted my nephew, trumpet-major! Well, so much the better. As for myself, the truth on't is that I haven't been able to go to bed easy, for thinking that possibly your father might not take care of what I put under his charge; and at last I thought I would just step over and see if all was safe here before I turned in. And when I saw your two shapes my poor nerves magnified ye to housebreakers and Boneys and I don't know what all.'

'You have alarmed the house,' said the trumpet-major, hearing the clicking of flint and steel in his father's bedroom, followed in a moment by the rise of a light in the window of the same apartment. 'You have got me into difficulty,' he added, gloomily, as his father opened the casement.

'I am sorry for that,' said Uncle Benjy. 'But step back; I'll put it all right again.'

'What, for heaven's sake, is the matter?' said the miller, his tasseled nightcap appearing in the opening.

'Nothing, nothing!' said the farmer. 'I was uneasy about my few bonds and documents, and I walked this way, miller, before going to bed, as I start from home to-morrow morning. When I came down by your garden-hedge, I thought I saw thieves, but it turned out to be—to be——'

Here a lump of earth from the trumpet-major's hand struck Uncle Benjy in the back as a reminder.

'To be—the bough of a cherry-tree a waving in the wind. Good-night!'

'No thieves are like to try my house,' said Miller Loveday. 'Now don't you come alarming us like this again, farmer, or you shall keep your box yourself, begging your pardon for saying so. Good night t' ye!'

'Miller, will ye just look, since I am here —just look and see if the box is all right? there's a good man. I am old, you know, and my poor remains are not what my original self was. Look and see if it is where you put it, there's a good, kind man.'

'Very well,' said the miller, good-humouredly.

'Neighbour Loveday! on second thoughts I will take my box home again, after all, if you don't mind. You won't deem it ill of me? I have no suspicions, of course; but now I think on't there's rivalry between my nephew and your son; and if Festus should take it into his head to set your house on fire in his enmity, 'twould be bad for my deeds and documents. No offence, miller, but I'll take the box, if you don't mind.'

'Faith! I don't mind,' said Loveday. 'But your nephew had better think twice

before he lets his enmity take that colour.' Receding from the window, he took the candle to a back part of the room and soon reappeared with the tin box.

'I won't trouble ye to dress,' said Derriman considerately: 'let en down by anything you have at hand.'

The box was lowered by a cord, and the old man clasped it in his arms. 'Thank ye!' he said with heartfelt gratitude. 'Good night!'

The miller replied and closed the window, and the light went out.

'There, now I hope you are satisfied, sir?' said the trumpet-major.

'Quite, quite!' said Derriman; and, leaning on his walking-stick, he pursued his lonely way.

That night Anne lay awake in her bed, musing on the traits of the new friend who had come to her neighbour's house. She

would not be critical, it was ungenerous and wrong; but she could not help thinking of what interested her. And were there, she silently asked, in Miss Johnson's mind and person such rare qualities as placed that lady altogether beyond comparison with herself? Oh yes, there must be; for had not Captain Bob singled out Matilda from among all other women, herself included? Of course, with his world-wide experience, he knew best.

When the moon had set, and only the summer stars threw their light into the great damp garden, she fancied that she heard voices in that direction. Perhaps they were the voices of Bob and Matilda taking a lover's walk before retiring. If so, how sleepy they would be next day, and how absurd it was of Matilda to pretend she was tired! Ruminating in this way, and saying to herself that she hoped they would be happy, Anne fell asleep.

CHAPTER XIX.

MISS JOHNSON'S BEHAVIOUR CAUSES NO LITTLE SURPRISE.

PARTLY from the excitement of having his Matilda under the paternal roof, Bob rose next morning as early as his father and the grinder, and, when the big wheel began to patter and the little ones to mumble in response, went to sun himself outside the mill-front, among the fowls of brown and speckled kinds which haunted that spot, and the ducks that came up from the mill-tail.

Standing on the worn-out mill-stone inlaid in the gravel, he talked with his father on various improvements of the premises, and

on the proposed arrangements for his permanent residence there, with an enjoyment that was half based upon this prospect of the future, and half on the penetrating warmth of the sun to his back and shoulders. Then the different troops of horses began their morning scramble down to the mill-pond, and, after making it very muddy round the edge, ascended the slope again. The bustle of the camp grew more and more audible, and presently David came to say that breakfast was ready.

'Is Miss Johnson downstairs?' said the miller; and Bob listened for the answer, looking at a blue sentinel aloft on the down.

'Not yet, maister,' said the excellent David.

'We'll wait till she's down,' said Loveday. 'When she is, let us know.'

David went indoors again, and Loveday and Bob continued their morning survey by ascending into the mysterious quivering recesses of the mill, and holding a discussion over a second pair of burr-stones, which had to be re-dressed before they could be used again. This and similar things occupied nearly twenty minutes, and, looking from the window, the elder of the two was reminded of the time of day by seeing Mrs. Garland's table-cloth fluttering from her back door over the heads of a flock of pigeons that had alighted for the crumbs.

'I suppose David can't find us,' he said, with a sense of hunger that was not altogether strange to Bob. He put out his head and shouted.

'The lady is not down yet,' said his man in reply.

'No hurry, no hurry,' said the miller, with

cheerful emptiness. 'Bob, to pass the time we'll look into the garden.'

'She'll get up sooner than this, you know, when she's signed articles and got a berth here,' Bob observed apologetically.

'Yes, yes,' said Loveday; and they descended into the garden.

Here they turned over sundry flat stones and killed the slugs sheltered beneath them from the coming heat of the day, talking of slugs in all their branches—of the brown and the black, of the tough and the tender, of the reason why there were so many in the garden that year, of the coming time when the grass-walks harbouring them were to be taken up and gravel laid, and of the relative exterminatory merits of a pair of scissors and the heel of the shoe. At last the miller said, 'Well, really, Bob, I'm hungry; we must begin without her.'

They were about to go in, when David appeared with haste in his motions, his eyes wider vertically than crosswise, and his cheeks nearly all gone!'

'Maister, I've been to call her; and as 'a didn't speak I rapped, and as 'a didn't answer I kicked, and not being latched the door opened, and—she's gone!'

Bob went off like a swallow towards the house, and the miller followed like the rather heavy man that he was. That Miss Matilda was not in her room, or a scrap of anything belonging to her, was soon apparent. They searched every place in which she could possibly hide or squeeze herself, every place in which she could not, but found nothing at all.

Captain Bob was quite wild with astonishment and grief. When he was quite sure that she was nowhere in his father's house,

he ran into Mrs. Garland's, and telling them the story so hastily that they hardly understood the particulars, he went on towards Comfort's house, intending to raise the alarm there, and also at Mitchell's, Beach's, Cripplestraw's, the parson's, the clerk's, the camp of dragoons, of hussars, and so on through the whole county. But he paused, and thought it would be hardly expedient to publish his discomfiture in such a way. If Matilda had left the house for any freakish reason he would not care to look for her, and if her deed had a tragic intent she would keep aloof from camp and village.

In his trouble he thought of Anne. She was a nice girl, and could be trusted. To her he went, and found her in a state of excitement and anxiety which equalled his own.

''Tis so lonely to cruise for her all

by myself!' said Bob disconsolately, his forehead all in wrinkles; 'and I've thought you would come with me and cheer the way?'

'Where shall we search?' said Anne.

'Oh, in the holes of rivers, you know, and down wells, and in quarries, and over cliffs, and like that. Your eyes might catch the loom of any bit of a shawl or bonnet that I should overlook, and it would do me a real service. Please do come!'

So Anne took pity upon him, and put on her hat and went, the miller and David having gone off in another direction. They examined the ditches of fields, Bob going round by one fence and Anne by the other, till they met at the opposite side. Then they peeped under culverts, into outhouses, and down old wells and quarries, till the theory of a tragical end had nearly spent its

force in Bob's mind, and he began to think that Matilda had simply run away. However, they still walked on, though by this time the sun was hot and Anne would gladly have sat down.

'Now, didn't you think highly of her, Miss Garland?' he inquired, as the search began to languish.

'Oh yes,' said Anne; 'very highly.'

'She was really beautiful; no nonsense about her looks, was there?'

'None. Her beauty was thoroughly ripe —not too young. We should all have got to love her. What can have possessed her to go away?'

'I don't know, and, upon my life, I shall soon be drove to say I don't care!' replied the mate despairingly. 'Let me pilot ye down over those stones,' he added, as Anne began to descend a rugged quarry. He

stepped forward, leapt down, and turned to her.

She gave him her hand and sprang down. Before he relinquished his hold, Captain Bob raised her fingers to his lips and kissed them.

'Oh, Captain Loveday!' cried Anne, snatching away her hand in genuine dismay, while a tear rose unexpectedly to each eye. 'I never heard of such a thing! I won't go an inch farther with you, sir; it is too barefaced!' And she turned and ran off.

'Upon my life I didn't mean it!' said the repentant captain, hastening after. 'I do love her best—indeed I do—and I don't love you at all. I am not so fickle as that! I merely just for the moment admired you as a sweet little craft, and that's how I came to do it. You know, Miss Garland,' he continued earnestly, and still running after, ''tis

like this : when you come ashore after having been shut up in a ship for eighteen months, women-folks seem so new and nice that you can't help liking them, one and all, in a body ; and so your heart is apt to get scattered and yaws a bit; but of course I think of poor Matilda most, and shall always stick to her.' He heaved a sigh of tremendous magnitude, to show beyond the possibility of doubt that his heart was still in the place that honour required.

'I am glad to hear that—of course I am very glad!' said she, with quick petulance, keeping her face turned from him. 'And I hope we shall find her, and that the wedding will not be put off, and that you'll both be happy. But I won't look for her any more! No; I don't care to look for her—and my head aches. I am going home!'

'And so am I,' said Robert promptly.

'No, no; go on looking for her, of course—all the afternoon, and all night. I am sure you will, if you love her.'

'Oh, yes; I mean to. Still, I ought to convoy you home first?'

'No, you ought not; and I shall not accept your company. Good morning, sir!' And she went off over one of the stone stiles with which the spot abounded, leaving the friendly sailor standing in the field.

He sighed again, and, observing the camp not far off, thought he would go to his brother John and ask him his opinion on the sorrowful case. On reaching the tents he found that John was not at liberty just at that time, being engaged in practising the trumpeters; and leaving word that he wished the trumpet-major to come down to the mill as soon as possible, Bob went back again.

''Tis no good looking for her,' he said

gloomily. 'She liked *me* well enough, but when she came here and saw the house, and the place, and the old horse, and the plain furniture, she was disappointed to find us all so homely, and felt she didn't care to marry into such a family.'

His father and David had returned with no news. 'Yes, 'tis as I've been thinking, father,' Bob said. 'We weren't good enough for her, and she went away in scorn!'

'Well, that can't be helped,' said the miller. 'What we be, we be, and have been for generations. To my mind she seemed glad enough to get hold of us.'

'Yes, yes—for the moment—because of the flowers, and birds, and what's pretty in the place,' said Bob tragically. 'But you don't know, father—how should you know, who have hardly been out of Overcombe in

your life?—you don't know what delicate feelings are in a real refined woman's mind. Any little vulgar action unreaves their nerves like a marline spike. Now I wonder if you did anything to disgust her?'

'Faith! not that I know of,' said Loveday, reflecting. 'I didn't say a single thing that I should naturally have said, on purpose to give no offence.'

'You was always very homely, you know, father.'

'Yes; so I was,' said the miller meekly.

'I wonder what it could have been,' Bob continued, wandering about restlessly. 'You didn't go drinking out of the big mug with your mouth full, or wipe your lips with your sleeve?'

'That I'll swear I didn't!' said the miller firmly. 'Thinks I, there's no knowing what I may do to shock her, so I'll take my solid

victuals in the bakehouse, and only a crumb and a drop in her company for manners.'

'You could do no more than that, certainly,' said Bob gently.

'If my manners be good enough for well-brought-up people like the Garlands, they be good enough for her,' continued the miller, with a sense of injustice.

'That's true. Then it must have been David. David, come here! How did you behave before that lady? Now, mind you speak the truth!'

'Yes, Mr. Captain Robert,' said David earnestly. I assure ye she was served like a royal queen. The best silver spoons were put down, and yer poor grandfer's silver tanket, as you seed, and the feather cushion for her to sit on——'

'Now I've got it!' said Bob decisively, bringing down his hand upon the window-

sill. 'Her bed was hard!—and there's nothing shocks a true lady like that. The bed in that room always was as hard as the Rock of Gibraltar!'

'No, Captain Bob! The beds were changed—wasn't they, maister? We put the goose bed in her room, and the flock one, that used to be there, in yours.'

'Yes, we did,' corroborated the miller. 'David and I changed 'em with our own hands, because they were too heavy for the women to move.'

'Sure I didn't know I had the flock bed,' murmured Bob. 'I slept on, little thinking what I was going to wake to. Well, well, she's gone; and search as I will I shall never find another like her! She was too good for me. She must have carried her box with her own hands, poor girl. As far as that goes, I could overtake her even now, I dare

say; but I won't entreat her against her will —not I.'

Miller Loveday and David, feeling themselves to be rather a desecration in the presence of Bob's tender emotions, managed to edge off by degrees, the former burying himself in the most floury recesses of the mill, his invariable resource when perturbed, the rumbling having a soothing effect upon the nerves of those properly trained to its music.

Bob was so impatient that, after going up to her room to assure himself once more that she had not undressed, but had only lain down on the outside of the bed, he went out of the house to meet John, and waited on the sunny slope of the down till his brother appeared. John looked so brave and shapely and warlike that, even in Bob's present distress, he could not but feel an honest and affectionate pride at owning such a relative.

Yet he fancied that John did not come along with the same swinging step he had shown yesterday; and when the trumpet-major got nearer he looked anxiously at the mate and waited for him to speak first.

'You know our great trouble, John?' said Robert, gazing stoically into his brother's eyes.

'Come and sit down, and tell me all about it,' answered the trumpet-major, showing no surprise.

They went towards a slight ravine, where it was easier to sit down than on the flat ground, and here John reclined among the grasshoppers, pointing to his brother to do the same.

'But do you know what it is?' said Robert. 'Has anybody told ye?'

'I do know,' said John. 'She's gone; and I am thankful!'

'What!' said Bob, rising to his knees in amazement.

'I'm at the bottom of it,' said the trumpet-major slowly.

'You, John?'

'Yes; and if you will listen I'll tell you all. Do you remember what happened when I came into the room last night? Why, she turned colour and nearly fainted away. That was because she knew me.'

Bob stared at his brother with a face of pain and distrust.

'For once, Bob, I must say something that will hurt thee a good deal,' continued John. 'She was not a woman who could possibly be your wife—and so she's gone.'

'You sent her off?'

'Well, I did.'

'John!—Tell me right through—tell me!'

'Perhaps I had better,' said the trumpet-

major, his blue eyes resting on the far-distant sea, that seemed to rise like a wall as high as the hill they sat upon.

And then he told a tale of Miss Johnson which wrung his heart as much in the telling as it did Bob's to hear, and which showed that John had been temporarily cruel to be ultimately kind. Even Bob, excited as he was, could discern from John's manner of speaking what a terrible undertaking that night's business had been for him. To justify the course he had adopted the dictates of duty must have been imperative; but the trumpet-major, with a becoming reticence which his brother at the time was naturally unable to appreciate, scarcely dwelt distinctly enough upon the compelling cause of his conduct. It would, indeed, have been hard for any man, much less so modest a one as John, to do himself justice in that

remarkable relation, when the listener was the lady's lover; and it is no wonder that Robert rose to his feet and put a greater distance between himself and John.

'And what time was it?' he asked in a hard, suppressed voice.

'It was just before one o'clock.'

'How could you help her to go away?'

'I had a pass. I carried her box to the coach-office. She was to follow at dawn.'

'But she had no money.'

'Yes, she had; I took particular care of that.' John did not add, as he might have done, that he had given her, in his pity, all the money he possessed, and at present had only eighteenpence in the world. 'Well, it is over, Bob; so sit ye down, and talk with me of old times,' he added.

'Ah, Jack, it is well enough for you to speak like that,' said the disquieted sailor;

'but I can't help feeling that it is a cruel thing you have done. After all, she would have been snug enough for me. Would I had never found out this about her! John, why did you interfere? You had no right to overhaul my affairs like this. Why didn't you tell me fairly all you knew, and let me do as I chose? You have turned her out of the house, and it's a shame! If she had only come to me! Why didn't she?'

'Because she knew it was best to do otherwise.'

'Well, I shall go after her,' said Bob firmly.

'You can do as you like,' said John; 'but I would advise you strongly to leave matters where they are.'

'I won't leave matters where they are,' said Bob impetuously. 'You have made me miserable, and all for nothing. I tell you

she was good enough for me; and as long as I knew nothing about what you say of her history, what difference would it have made to me? Never was there a young woman who was better company; and she loved a merry song as I do myself. Yes, I'll follow her.'

'Oh, Bob,' said John; 'I hardly expected this!'

'That's because you didn't know your man. Can I ask you to do me one kindness? I don't suppose I can. Can I ask you not to say a word against her to any of them at home?'

'Certainly. The very reason why I got her to go off silently, as she has done, was because nothing should be said against her here, and no scandal should be heard of.'

'That may be; but I'm off after her. Marry that girl I will!'

'You'll be sorry.'

'That we shall see,' replied Robert with determination; and he went away rapidly towards the mill. The trumpet-major had no heart to follow—no good could possibly come of further opposition; and there on the down he remained like a graven image till Bob had vanished from his sight into the mill.

Bob entered his father's only to leave word that he was going on a renewed search for Matilda, and to pack up a few necessaries for his journey. Ten minutes later he came out again with a bundle in his hand, and John saw him go diagonally across the lower fields towards the high road.

'And this is all the good I have done!' said John, musingly readjusting his stock where it cut his neck, and descending towards the mill.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW THEY LESSENED THE EFFECT OF THE CALAMITY.

MEANWHILE Anne Garland had gone home, and, being weary with her scramble in search of Matilda, sat silent in a corner of the room. Her mother was passing the time in giving utterance to every conceivable surmise on the cause of Miss Johnson's disappearance that the human mind could frame, to which Anne returned monosyllabic answers, the result, not of indifference, but of intense pre-occupation. Presently Loveday, the father, came to the door; her mother vanished with him, and they remained closeted together a long time.

Anne went into the garden and seated herself beneath the branching tree whose boughs had sheltered her during so many hours of her residence here. Her attention was fixed more upon the miller's wing of the irregular building before her than upon that occupied by her mother, for she could not help expecting every moment to see some one run out with a wild face and announce some awful clearing up of the mystery.

Every sound set her on the alert, and hearing the tread of a horse in the lane she looked round eagerly. Gazing at her over the hedge was Festus Derriman, mounted on such an incredibly tall animal that he could see her to her very feet over the thick and broad thorn fence. She no sooner recognised him than she withdrew her glance; but as his eyes were fixed steadily upon her this was a futile manœuvre.

'I saw you look round!' he exclaimed crossly. 'What have I done to make you behave like that? Come, Miss Garland, be fair. 'Tis no use to turn your back upon me.' As she did not turn he went on—'Well, now, this is enough to provoke a saint. Now I tell you what, Miss Garland; here I'll stay till you do turn round, if 'tis all the afternoon. You know my temper—what I say I mean.' He seated himself firmly in the saddle, plucked some leaves from the hedge, and began humming a song, to show how absolutely indifferent he was to the flight of time.

'What have you come for, that you are so anxious to see me?' inquired Anne, when at last he had wearied her patience, rising and facing him with the added independence which came from a sense of the hedge between them.

'There, I knew you would turn round!' he said, his hot angry face invaded by a smile in which his teeth showed like white hemmed in by red at chess.

'What do you want, Mr. Derriman?' said she.

'"What do you want, Mr. Derriman?"—now listen to that! Is that my encouragement?'

Anne bowed superciliously, and moved away.

'I have just heard news that explains all that,' said the giant, eyeing her movements with somnolent irascibility. 'My uncle has been letting things out. He was here late last night, and he saw you.'

'Indeed he didn't,' said Anne.

'Oh, now! He saw Trumpet-major Loveday courting somebody like you in that garden walk: and when he came you ran indoors.'

'It is not true, and I wish to hear no more.'

'Upon my life, he said so! How can you do it, Miss Garland, when I, who have enough money to buy up all the Lovedays, would gladly come to terms with ye? What a simpleton you must be, to pass me over for him! There, now you are angry because I said simpleton!—I didn't mean simpleton, I meant misguided—misguided rosebud! That's it—run off,' he continued in a raised voice, as Anne made towards the garden door. 'But I'll have you yet. Much reason you have to be too proud to stay with me. But it won't last long; I shall marry you, madam, if I choose, as you'll see.'

When he was quite gone, and Anne had calmed down from the not altogether unrelished fear and excitement that he always caused her, she returned to her seat under

the tree, and began to wonder what Festus Derriman's story meant, which, from the earnestness of his tone, did not seem like a pure invention. It suddenly flashed upon her mind that she herself had heard voices in the garden, and that the persons seen by Farmer Derriman, of whose visit and reclamation of his box the miller had told her, might have been Matilda and John Loveday. She further recalled the strange agitation of Miss Johnson on the preceding evening, and that it occurred just at the entry of the dragoon, till by degrees suspicion amounted to conviction that he knew more than any one else supposed of that lady's disappearance.

It was just at this time that the trumpet-major descended to the mill after his talk with his brother on the down. As fate would have it, instead of entering the house he turned aside to the garden, and walked

down that pleasant enclosure, to learn if he were likely to find in the other half of it the woman he loved so well.

Yes, there she was, sitting on the seat of logs that he had repaired for her, under the apple-tree ; but she was not facing in his direction. He walked with a noisier tread, he coughed, he shook a bough, he did everything, in short, but the one thing that Festus did in the same circumstances—call out to her. He would not have ventured on that for the world. Any of his signs would have been sufficient to attract her a day or two earlier ; now she would not turn. At last, in his fond anxiety, he did what he had never done before without an invitation, and crossed over into Mrs. Garland's half of the garden, till he stood before her.

When she could not escape him she arose, and saying, 'Good afternoon, trumpet

major,' in a glacial manner unusual with her, walked away to another part of the garden.

Loveday, quite at a loss, had not the strength of mind to persevere further. He had a vague apprehension that some imperfect knowledge of the previous night's unhappy business had reached her; and, unable to remedy the evil without telling more than he dared, he went into the mill, where his father still was, looking doleful enough, what with his concern at events and the extra quantity of flour upon his face through sticking so closely to business that day.

'Well, John; Bob has told you all, of course? A queer, strange, perplexing thing, isn't it? I can't make it out at all. There must be something wrong in the woman, or it couldn't have happened. I haven't been so upset for years.'

'Nor have I. I wouldn't it should have happened for all I own in the world,' said the dragoon. 'Have you spoke to Anne Garland to-day—or has anybody been talking to her?'

'Festus Derriman rode by half an hour ago, and talked to her over the hedge.'

John guessed the rest, and, after standing on the threshold in silence awhile, walked away towards the camp.

All this time his brother Robert had been hastening along in pursuit of the woman who had withdrawn from the scene to avoid the exposure and complete overthrow which would have resulted had she remained. As the distance lengthened between himself and the mill, Bob was conscious of some cooling down of the excitement that had prompted him to set out; but he did not pause in his walk till he had reached the head of the river

which fed the mill-stream. Here, for some indefinite reason, he allowed his eyes to be attracted by the bubbling spring whose waters never failed or lessened, and he stopped as if to look longer at the scene; it was really because his mind was so absorbed by John's story.

The sun was warm, the spot was a pleasant one, and he deposited his bundle and sat down. By degrees, as he reflected, first on John's view and then on his own, his convictions became unsettled; till at length he was so balanced between the impulse to go on and the impulse to go back, that a puff of wind either way would have been well-nigh sufficient to decide for him. When he allowed John's story to repeat itself in his ears, the reasonableness and good sense of his advice seemed beyond question. When, on the other hand, he thought of his poor Matilda's eyes,

and her, to him, pleasant ways, their charming arrangements to marry, and her probable willingness still, he could hardly bring himself to do otherwise than follow on the road at the top of his speed.

This strife of thought was so well maintained that, sitting and standing, he remained on the borders of the spring till the shadows had stretched out eastward, and the chance of overtaking Matilda had grown considerably less. Still he did not positively go towards home. At last he took a guinea from his pocket, and resolved to put the question to the hazard. 'Heads I go; tails I don't.' The piece of gold spun in the air and came down heads.

'No, I won't go, after all,' he said. 'I won't be steered by accidents any more.'

He picked up his bundle and switch, and retraced his steps towards Overcombe Mill,

knocking down the brambles and nettles as he went with gloomy and indifferent blows. When he got within sight of the house he beheld David in the road.

'All right—all right again, Captain!' shouted that retainer. 'A wedding after all! Hurrah!'

'Ah—she's back again?' cried Bob, seizing David, ecstatically, and dancing round with him.

'No—but it's all the same! it is of no consequence at all, and no harm will be done! Maister and Mrs. Garland have made up a match, and mean to marry at once, that the wedding victuals may not be wasted! They felt 'twould be a thousand pities to let such good things get blue-vinnied for want of a ceremony to use 'em upon, and at last they have thought of this.'

'Victuals—I don't care for the victuals!

bitterly cried Bob, in a tone of far higher thought. 'How you disappoint me!' and he went slowly towards the house.

His father appeared in the opening of the mill-door, looking more cheerful than when they had parted. 'What, Robert, you've been after her?' he said. 'Faith, then, I wouldn't have followed her if I had been as sure as you were that she went away in scorn of us. Since you told me that, I have not looked for her at all.'

'I was wrong, father,' Bob replied gravely, throwing down his bundle and stick. 'Matilda, I find, has not gone away in scorn of us; she has gone away for other reasons. I followed her some way; but I have come back again. She may go.'

'Why is she gone?' said the astonished miller.

Bob had intended, for Matilda's sake, to give no reason to a living soul for her departure. But he could not treat his father thus reservedly ; and he told.

'She has made great fools of us,' said the miller deliberately ; 'and she might have made us greater ones. Bob, I thought th' hadst more sense.'

'Well, don't say anything against her, father,' implored Bob. ''Twas a sorry haul, and there's an end on't. Let her down quietly, and keep the secret. You promise that ?'

'I do.' Loveday the elder remained thinking awhile, and then went on—'Well, what I was going to say is this : I've hit upon a plan to get out of the awkward corner she has put us in. What you'll think of it I can't say.'

'David has just given me the heads.'

'And do it hurt your feelings, my son, at such a time?'

'No—I'll bring myself to bear it, anyhow! Why should I object to other people's happiness because I have lost my own?' said Bob, with saintly self-sacrifice in his air.

'Well said!' answered the miller heartily. 'But you may be sure that there will be no unseemly rejoicing, to disturb ye in your present frame of mind. All the morning I felt more ashamed than I cared to own at the thought of how the neighbours, great and small, would laugh at what they would call your folly, when they knew what had happened; so I resolved to take this step to stave it off, if so be 'twas possible. And when I saw Mrs. Garland I knew I had done right. She pitied me so much for having had the house cleaned in vain, and laid in provisions to waste, that it put her

into the humour to agree. We mean to do it right off at once, afore the pies and cakes get mouldy and the blackpot stale. 'Twas a good thought of mine and hers, and I am glad 'tis settled,' he concluded cheerfully.

'Poor Matilda!' murmured Bob.

'There—I was afraid 'twould hurt thy feelings,' said the miller, with self-reproach: 'making preparations for thy wedding, and using them for my own!'

'No,' said Bob heroically; 'it shall not. It will be a great comfort in my sorrow to feel that the splendid grub, and the ale, and your stunning new suit of clothes, and the great table-cloths you've bought, will be just as useful now as if I had married myself. Poor Matilda! But you won't expect me to join in—you hardly can. I can sheer off that day very easily, you know.'

'Nonsense, Bob!' said the miller reproachfully.

'I couldn't stand it—I should break down.'

'Deuce take me if I would have asked her, then, if I had known 'twas going to drive thee out of the house! Now, come, Bob, I'll find a way of arranging it and sobering it down, so that it shall be as melancholy as you can require—in short, just like a funeral, if thou'lt promise to stay?'

'Very well,' said the young man. 'On that condition I'll stay.'

CHAPTER XXI.

'UPON THE HILL HE TURNED.'

HAVING entered into this solemn compact with his son, the elder Loveday's next action was to go to Mrs. Garland, and ask her how the toning down of the wedding had best be done. 'It is plain enough that to make merry just now would be slighting Bob's feelings, as if we didn't care who was not married, so long as we were,' he said. 'But then, what's to be done about the victuals?'

'Give a dinner to the poor folk,' she suggested. 'We can get everything used up that way.'

'That's true,' said the miller. 'There's enough of 'em in these times to carry off any extras whatsoever.'

'And it will save Bob's feelings wonderfully. And they won't know that the dinner was got for another sort of wedding and another sort of guests; so you'll have their good-will for nothing.'

The miller smiled at the subtlety of the view. 'That can hardly be called fair,' he said. 'Still, I did mean some of it for them, for the friends we meant to ask would not have cleared all.'

Upon the whole the idea pleased him well, particularly when he noticed the forlorn look of his sailor son as he walked about the place, and pictured the inevitably jarring effect of fiddles and tambourines upon Bob's shattered nerves at such a crisis, even if the notes of the former were dulled by the appli-

cation of a mute, and Bob shut up in a distant bedroom—a plan which had at first occurred to him. He therefore told Bob that the surcharged larder was to be emptied by the charitable process above alluded to, and hoped he would not mind making himself useful in such a good and gloomy work. Bob readily fell in with the scheme, and it was at once put in hand and the tables spread.

The alacrity with which the substituted wedding was carried out, seemed to show that the worthy pair of neighbours would have joined themselves into one long ago, had there previously occurred any domestic incident dictating such a step as an apposite expedient, apart from their personal wish to marry.

The appointed morning came, and the service quietly took place at the cheerful

hour of ten, in the face of a triangular congregation, of which the base was the front pew, and the apex the west door. Mrs. Garland dressed herself in the muslin shawl like Queen Charlotte's, that Bob had brought home, and her best plum-coloured gown, beneath which peeped out her shoes with red rosettes. Anne was present, but she considerately toned herself down, so as not to too seriously damage her mother's appearance. At moments during the ceremony she had a distressing sense that she ought not to be born, and was glad to get home again.

The interest excited in the village, though real, was hardly enough to bring a serious blush to the face of coyness. Neighbours' minds had become so saturated by the abundance of showy military and regal incident lately vouchsafed to them, that a wed-

ding of middle-aged civilians was of small account, excepting in so far that it solved the question whether or not Mrs. Garland would consider herself too genteel to mate with a grinder of corn.

In the evening, Loveday's heart was made glad by seeing the baked and boiled in rapid process of consumption by the kitchenful of people assembled for that purpose. Three-quarters of an hour were sufficient to banish for ever his fears as to spoilt food. The provisions being the cause of the assembly, and not its consequence, it had been determined to get all that would not keep consumed on that day, even if highways and hedges had to be searched for operators. And, in addition to the poor and needy, every cottager's daughter known to the miller was invited, and told to bring her lover from camp—an expedient which, for letting day-

light into the inside of full platters, was among the most happy ever known.

While Mr. and Mrs. Loveday, Anne, and Bob were standing in the parlour, discussing the progress of the entertainment in the next room, John, who had not been down all day, entered the house and looked in upon them through the open door.

'How's this, John? Why didn't you come before?'

'Had to see the captain, and—other duties,' said the trumpet-major, in a tone which showed no great zeal for explanations.

'Well, come in, however,' continued the miller, as his son remained with his hand on the door-post, surveying them reflectively.

'I cannot stay long,' said John, advancing. 'The Route is come, and we are going away.'

'Going away! Where to?'

'To Exeter.'

'When?'

'Friday morning.'

'All of you?'

'Yes; some to-morrow and some next day. The King goes next week.'

'I am sorry for this,' said the miller, not expressing half his sorrow by the simple utterance. 'I wish you could have been here to-day, since this is the case,' he added, looking at the horizon through the window.

Mrs. Loveday also expressed her regret, which seemed to remind the trumpet-major of the event of the day, and he went to her and tried to say something befitting the occasion. Anne had not said that she was either sorry or glad, but John Loveday fancied that she had looked rather relieved than otherwise when she heard his news. His conversation with Bob on the down

made Bob's manner, too, remarkably cool, notwithstanding that he had after all followed his brother's advice, which it was as yet too soon after the event for him to rightly value. John did not know why the sailor had come back, never supposing that it was because he had thought better of going, and said to him privately, 'You didn't overtake her?'

'I didn't try to,' said Bob.

'And you are not going to?'

'No; I shall let her drift.'

'I am glad indeed, Bob; you have been wise, said John heartily.

Bob, however, still loved Matilda too well to be other than dissatisfied with John and the event that he had precipitated, which the elder brother only too promptly perceived; and it made his stay that evening of short duration. Before leaving he said with

some hesitation to his father, including Anne and her mother by his glance, 'Do you think to come up and see us off?'

The miller answered for them all, and said that of course they would come. 'But you'll step down again between now and then?' he inquired.

'I'll try to.' He added after a pause, 'In case I should not, remember that Revalley will sound at half past five; we shall leave about eight. Next summer, perhaps, we shall come and camp here again.'

'I hope so,' said his father and Mrs. Loveday.

There was something in John's manner which indicated to Anne that he scarcely intended to come down again; but the others did not notice it, and she said nothing. He departed a few minutes later, in the dusk of the August evening, leaving Anne still in

doubt as to the meaning of his private meeting with Miss Johnson.

John Loveday had been going to tell them that, on the last night, by an especial privilege, it would be in his power to come and stay with them until eleven o'clock, but at the moment of leaving he abandoned the intention. Anne's attitude had chilled him, and made him anxious to be off. He utilised the spare hours of that last night in another way.

This was by coming down from the outskirts of the camp in the evening, and seating himself near the brink of the mill-pond as soon as it was quite dark; where he watched the lights in the different windows till one appeared in Anne's bedroom, and she herself came forward to shut the casement, with the candle in her hand. The light shone out upon the broad and deep mill-head, illumi-

nating to a distinct individuality every moth and gnat that entered the quivering chain of radiance stretching across the water towards him, and every bubble or atom of froth that floated into its width. She stood for some time looking out, little thinking what the darkness concealed on the other side of that wide stream; till at length she closed the casement, drew the curtains, and retreated into the room. Presently the light went out, upon which John Loveday returned to camp and lay down in his tent.

The next morning was dull and windy, and the trumpets of the —th sounded Reveille for the last time on Overcombe Down. Knowing that the dragoons were going away, Anne had slept heedfully, and was at once awakened by the smart notes. She looked out of the window, to find that the miller was already astir, his white form being visible at

the end of his garden, where he stood motionless, watching the preparations. Anne also looked on as well as she could through the dim grey gloom, and soon she saw the blue smoke from the cooks' fires creeping fitfully along the ground, instead of rising in vertical columns, as it had done during the fine weather season. Then the men began to carry their bedding to the waggons, and others to throw all refuse into the trenches, till the down was lively as an ant-hill. Anne did not want to see John Loveday again, but hearing the household astir, she began to dress at leisure, looking out at the camp the while.

When the soldiers had breakfasted, she saw them selling and giving away their superfluous crockery to the natives who had clustered round; and then they pulled down and cleared away the temporary kitchens

which they had constructed when they came. A tapping of tent-pegs and wriggling of picket-posts followed, and soon the cones of white canvas, now almost become a component part of the landscape, fell to the ground. At this moment the miller came indoors, and asked at the foot of the stairs if anybody was going up the hill with him.

Anne felt that, in spite of the cloud hanging over John in her mind, it would ill become the present moment not to see him off, and she went downstairs to her mother, who was already there, though Bob was nowhere to be seen. Each took an arm of the miller, and thus climbed to the top of the hill. By this time the men and horses were at the place of assembly, and, shortly after the mill-party reached level ground, the troops slowly began to move forward. When the trumpet-major, half buried in his uniform, arms, and

horse-furniture, drew near to the spot where the Lovedays were waiting to see him pass, his father turned anxiously to Anne and said, 'You will shake hands with John?'

Anne faintly replied 'Yes,' and allowed the miller to take her forward on his arm to the trackway, so as to be close to the flank of the approaching column. It came up, many people on each side grasping the hands of the troopers in bidding them farewell; and as soon as John Loveday saw the members of his father's household, he stretched down his hand across his right pistol for the same performance. The miller gave his, then Mrs. Loveday gave hers, and then the hand of the trumpet-major was extended towards Anne. But as the horse did not absolutely stop, it was a somewhat awkward performance for a young woman to undertake, and, more on that account than on any other, Anne drew

back, and the gallant trooper passed by without receiving her adieu. Anne's heart reproached her for a moment; and then she thought that, after all, he was not going off to immediate battle, and that she would in all probability see him again at no distant date, when she hoped that the mystery of his conduct would be explained. Her thoughts were interrupted by a voice at her elbow: 'Thank heaven, he's gone! Now there's a chance for me.'

She turned, and Festus Derriman was standing by her.

'There's no chance for you,' she said indignantly.

'Why not?'

'Because there's another left!'

The words had slipped out quite unintentionally, and she blushed quickly. She would have given anything to be able to

recall them; but he had heard, and said, 'Who?'

Anne went forward to the miller to avoid replying, and Festus caught her no more.

'Has anybody been hanging about Overcombe Mill except Loveday's son the soldier?' he asked of a comrade.

'His son the sailor,' was the reply.

'Oh—his son the sailor,' said Festus slowly. 'Damn his son the sailor!'

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TWO HOUSEHOLDS UNITED.

At this particular moment the object of Festus Derriman's fulmination was assuredly not dangerous as a rival. Bob, after abstractedly watching the soldiers from the front of the house till they were out of sight, had gone within doors and seated himself in the mill-parlour, where his father found him, his elbows resting on the table and his forehead on his hands, his eyes being fixed upon a document that lay open before him.

'What art perusing, Bob, with such a long face?'

Bob sighed, and then Mrs. Loveday and Anne entered. ''Tis only a state-paper that

I fondly thought I should have a use for,' he said gloomily. And, looking down as before, he cleared his voice, as if moved inwardly to go on, and began to read in feeling tones from what proved to be his nullified marriage licence :—

'"Timothy Titus Philemon, by permission Bishop of Bristol: To our well-beloved Robert Loveday, of the parish of Overcombe, Bachelor; and Matilda Johnson, of the same parish, Spinster. Greeting."'

Here Anne sighed, but contrived to keep down her sigh to a mere nothing.

'Beautiful language, isn't it?' said Bob. 'I was never greeted like that afore!'

'Yes; I have often thought it very excellent language myself,' said Mrs. Loveday.

'Come to that, the old gentleman will greet thee like it again any day for a couple of guineas,' said the miller.

'That's not the point, father! You never could see the real meaning of these things. . . . . Well, then he goes on: 'Whereas ye are, as it is alleged, determined to enter into the holy estate of matrimony——' But why should I read on? It all means nothing now—nothing, and the splendid words are all wasted upon air. It seems as if I had been hailed by some venerable hoary prophet, and had turned away, put the helm hard up, and wouldn't hear.'

Nobody replied, feeling probably that sympathy could not meet the case, and Bob went on reading the rest of it to himself, occasionally heaving a breath like the wind in a ship's shrouds.

'I wouldn't set my mind so much upon her, if I was thee,' said his father at last.

'Why not?'

'Well, folk might call thee a fool, and say thy brains were turning to water.'

Bob was apparently much struck by this thought, and, instead of continuing the discourse further, he carefully folded up the licence, went out, and walked up and down the garden. It was startlingly apt what his father had said; and, worse than that, what people would call him might be true, and the liquefaction of his brains turn out to be no fable. By degrees he became much concerned, and the more he examined himself by this new light the more clearly did he perceive that he was in a very bad way.

On reflection he remembered that since Miss Johnson's departure his appetite had decreased amazingly. He had eaten in meat no more than fourteen or fifteen ounces a day, but one-third of a quartern pudding on an

average, in vegetables only a small heap of potatoes and half a York cabbage, and no gravy whatever; which, considering the usual appetite of a seaman for fresh food at the end of a long voyage, was no small index of the depression of his mind. Then he had awaked once every night, and on one occasion twice. While dressing each morning since the gloomy day he had not whistled more than seven bars of a hornpipe without stopping and falling into thought of a most painful kind; and he had told none but absolutely true stories of foreign parts to the neighbouring villagers when they saluted and clustered about him, as usual, for anything he chose to pour forth—except that story of the whale whose eye was about as large as the round pond in Derriman's ewe-lease—which was like tempting fate to set a seal for ever upon his

tongue as a traveller. All this enervation, mental and physical, had been produced by Matilda's departure.

He also considered what he had lost of the rational amusements of manhood during these unfortunate days. He might have gone to Weymouth every afternoon, stood before Gloucester Lodge till the King and Queen came out, held his hat in his hand, and enjoyed their Majesties' smiles at his homage all for nothing—watched the picket-mounting, heard the different bands strike up, observed the staff; and, above all, have seen the pretty Weymouth girls go trip-trip-trip along the Esplanade, deliberately fixing their innocent eyes on the distant sea, the grey cliffs, and the sky, and accidentally on the soldiers and himself.

'I'll raze out her image,' he said. 'She shall make a fool of me no more.' And his

resolve resulted in conduct which had elements of real greatness.

He went back to his father, whom he found in the mill-loft. 'Tis true, father, what you say,' he observed : 'my brains will turn to bilge-water if I think of her much longer. By the oath of a—navigator, I wish I could sigh less and laugh more! She's gone—why can't I let her go, and be happy? But how begin?'

'Take it careless, my son,' said the miller, 'and lay yourself out to enjoy snacks and cordials.'

'Ah—that's a thought!' said Bob.

'Baccy is good for't. So is sperrits. Though I don't advise thee to drink neat.'

'Baccy—I'd almost forgot it!' said Captain Loveday.

He went to his room, hastily untied the package of tobacco that he had brought home,

and began to make use of it in his own way, calling to David for a bottle of the old household mead that had lain in the cellar these eleven years. He was discovered by his father three-quarters of an hour later as a half-invisible object behind a cloud of smoke.

The miller drew a breath of relief. 'Why, Bob,' he said, 'I thought the house was a-fire!'

'I'm smoking rather fast to drown my reflections, father. 'Tis no use to chaw.'

To tempt his attenuated appetite the unhappy mate made David cook an omelet and bake a seed cake, the latter so richly compounded that it opened to the knife like a freckled buttercup. With the same object he stuck night-lines into the banks of the mill-pond, and drew up next morning a family of fat eels, some of which were skinned and prepared for his breakfast. They were

his favourite fish, but such had been his condition that, until the moment of making this effort, he had quite forgotten their existence at his father's back-door.

In a few days Bob Loveday had considerably improved in tone and vigour. One other obvious remedy for his dejection was to indulge in the society of Miss Garland, love being so much more effectually got rid of by displacement than by attempted annihilation. But Loveday was of so simple a nature that the belief that he had offended her beyond forgiveness, and his ever-present sense of her as a woman who by education and antecedents was fitted to adorn a higher sphere than his own, effectually kept him from going near her for a long time, notwithstanding that they were inmates of one house. The reserve was, however, in some degree broken by the appearance one morning, some

time later in the season, of the point of a saw through the partition which divided Anne's room from the Loveday half of the house. Though she dined and supped with her mother and the Loveday family, Miss Garland had still continued to occupy her old apartments, because she found it more convenient there to pursue her hobbies of wool-work and of copying her father's old pictures. The division wall had not as yet been broken down.

As the saw worked its way downwards under her astonished gaze Anne jumped up from her drawing; and presently the temporary canvasing and papering which had sealed up the old door of communication was cut completely through. The door burst open, and Bob stood revealed on the other side, with the saw in his hand.

'I beg your ladyship's pardon,' he said,

taking off the hat he had been working in, as his handsome face expanded into a smile. 'I didn't know this door opened into your private room.'

'Indeed, Captain Loveday!'

'I am pulling down the division on principle, as we are now one family. But I really thought the door opened into your passage.'

'It don't matter; I can get another room.'

'Not at all. Father wouldn't let me turn you out. I'll close it up again.'

But Anne was so interested in the novelty of a new doorway that she walked through it, and found herself in a dark low passage which she had never seen before.

'It leads to the mill,' said Bob. 'Would you like to go in and see it at work? But perhaps you have already.'

'Only into the ground floor.'

'Come all over it. I am practising as grinder, you know, to help my father.'

She followed him along the dark passage, in the side of which he opened a little trap, when she saw a great slimy cavern, where the long arms of the mill-wheel flung themselves slowly and distractedly round, and splashing water-drops caught the little light that strayed into the gloomy place, turning it into stars and flashes. A cold mist-laden puff of air came into their faces, and the roar from within made it necessary for Anne to shout as she said, 'It is dismal! let us go on.'

Bob shut the trap, the roar ceased, and they went on to the inner part of the mill, where the air was warm and nutty, and pervaded by a fog of flour. Then they ascended the stairs, and saw the stones lumbering round and round, and the yellow corn run-

ning down through the hopper. They climbed yet farther to the top stage, where the wheat lay in bins, and where long rays like feelers stretched in from the sun through the little window, got nearly lost among cobwebs and timber, and completed its course by marking the opposite wall with a glowing patch of gold.

In his earnestness as an exhibitor Bob opened the bolter, which was spinning rapidly round, the result being that a dense cloud of flour rolled out in their faces, reminding Anne that her complexion was probably much paler by this time than when she had entered the mill. She thanked her companion for his trouble, and said she would now go down. He followed her with the same deference as hitherto, and with a sudden and increasing sense that of all cures for his former unhappy passion this would have

been the nicest, the easiest, and the most effectual, if he had only been fortunate enough to keep her upon easy terms. But Miss Garland showed no disposition to go farther than accept his services as a guide; she descended to the open air, shook the flour from her like a bird, and went on into the garden amid the September sunshine, whose rays lay level across the blue haze which the earth gave forth. The gnats were dancing up and down in airy companies, the nasturtium flowers shone out in groups from the dark hedge over which they climbed, and the mellow smell of the decline of summer was exhaled by everything. Bob followed her as far as the gate, looked after her, thought of her as the same girl who had half encouraged him years ago, when she seemed so superior to him; though now they were almost equal she apparently thought him beneath her. It

was with a new sense of pleasure that his mind flew to the fact that she was now an inmate of his father's house.

His obsequious bearing was continued during the next week. In the busy hours of the day they seldom met, but they regularly encountered each other at meals, and these cheerful occasions began to have an interest for him quite irrespective of dishes and cups. When Anne entered and took her seat she was always loudly hailed by Miller Loveday as he whetted his knife; but from Bob she condescended to accept no such familiar greeting, and they often sat down together as if each had a blind eye in the direction of the other. Bob sometimes told serious and correct stories about sea-captains, pilots, boatswains, mates, able seamen, and other curious fauna of the marine world; but these were directly addressed to his father and Mrs.

Loveday, Anne being included at the clinching-point by a glance only. He sometimes opened bottles of sweet cider for her, and then she thanked him; but even this did not lead to her encouraging his chat.

One day when Anne was paring an apple she was left at table with the young man. 'I have made something for you,' he said.

She looked all over the table; nothing was there save the ordinary remnants.

'Oh! I don't mean that it is here; it is out by the bridge at the mill-head.'

He arose, and Anne followed with curiosity in her eyes, and with her firm little mouth pouted up to a puzzled shape. On reaching the mossy mill-head she found that he had fixed in the keen damp draught which always prevailed over the wheel an Æolian harp of large size. At present the strings were partly covered with a cloth. He lifted it, and the

wires began to emit a weird harmony which mingled curiously with the plashing of the wheel.

'I made it on purpose for you, Miss Garland,' he said.

She thanked him very warmly, for she had never seen anything like such an instrument before, and it interested her. 'It was very thoughtful of you to make it,' she added. 'How came you to think of such a thing?'

'Oh! I don't know exactly,' he replied, as if he did not care to be questioned on the point. 'I have never made one in my life till now.'

Every night after this, during the mournful gales of autumn, the strange mixed music of water, wind, and strings met her ear, swelling and sinking with an almost supernatural cadence. The character of the instrument

was far enough removed from anything she had hitherto seen of Bob's hobbies; so that she marvelled pleasantly at the new depths of poetry this contrivance revealed as existent in that young seaman's nature, and allowed her emotions to flow out yet a little farther in the old direction, notwithstanding her late severe resolve to bar them back.

One breezy night, when the mill was kept going into the small hours, and the wind was exactly in the direction of the water-current, the music so mingled with her dreams as to wake her: it seemed to rhythmically set itself to the words, 'Remember me! think of me!' She was much impressed; the sounds were almost too touching; and she spoke to Bob the next morning on the subject.

'How strange it is that you should have thought of fixing that harp where the water gushes!' she gently observed. 'It affects me

almost painfully at night. You are poetical, Captain Bob. But it is too—too sad!'

'I will take it away,' said Captain Bob promptly. 'It certainly is too sad; I thought so myself. I myself was kept awake by it one night.'

'How came you to think of making such a peculiar thing?'

'Well,' said Bob, 'it is hardly worth saying why. It is not a good place for such a queer noisy machine; and I'll take it away.'

'On second thoughts,' said Anne, 'I should like it to remain a little longer, because it sets me thinking.'

'Of me?' he asked, with earnest frankness.

Anne's colour rose fast.

'Well, yes,' she said, trying to infuse much plain matter-of-fact into her voice. 'Of

course I am led to think of the person who invented it.'

Bob seemed unaccountably embarrassed, and the subject was not pursued. About half an hour later he came to her again, with something of an uneasy look.

'There was a little matter I didn't tell you just now, Miss Garland,' he said. 'About that harp thing, I mean. I did make it, certainly, but it was my brother John who asked me to do it, just before he went away. John is very musical, as you know, and he said it would interest you ; but as he didn't ask me to tell, I did not. Perhaps I ought to have, and not have taken the credit to myself.'

'Oh, it is nothing!' said Anne quickly. 'It is a very incomplete instrument after all, and it will be just as well for you to take it away as you first proposed.'

He said that he would, but he forgot to

do it that day; and the following night there was a high wind, and the harp cried and moaned so movingly that Anne, whose window was quite near, could hardly bear the sound with its new associations. John Loveday was present to her mind all night as an ill-used man; and yet she could not own that she had ill-used him.

The harp was removed next day. Bob, feeling that his credit for originality was damaged in her eyes, by way of recovering it set himself to paint the summer-house which Anne frequented, and when he came out he assured her that it was quite his own idea.

'It wanted doing, certainly,' she said, in a neutral tone.

'It is just about troublesome.'

'Yes; you can't quite reach up. That's because you are not very tall; is it not, Captain Loveday?'

'You never used to say things like that.'

'Oh, I don't mean that you are much less than tall! Shall I hold the paint for you, to save your stepping down?'

'Thank you, if you would.'

She took the paint-pot, and stood looking at the brush as it moved up and down in his hand.

'I hope I shall not sprinkle your fingers,' he observed as he dipped.

'Oh, that would not matter! You do it very well.'

'I am glad to hear that you think so.'

'But perhaps not quite so much art is demanded to paint a summer-house as to paint a picture?'

Thinking that, as a painter's daughter, and a person of education superior to his own, she spoke with a flavour of sarcasm, he felt humbled and said—

'You did not use to talk like that to me.'

'I was perhaps too young then to take any pleasure in giving pain,' she observed daringly.

'Does it give you pleasure?'

Anne nodded.

'I like to give pain to people who have given pain to me,' she said smartly, without removing her eyes from the green liquid in her hand.

'I ask your pardon for that.'

'I didn't say I meant you—though I did mean you.'

Bob looked and looked at her side face till he was bewitched into putting down the brush.

'It was that stupid forgetting of ye for a time!' he exclaimed. 'Well, I hadn't seen you for so very long—consider how many years! Oh, dear Anne!' he said, advancing

to take her hand, 'how well we knew one another when we were children! You was a queen to me then; and so you are now, and always.'

Possibly Anne was thrilled pleasantly enough at having brought the truant village-lad to her feet again; but he was not to find the situation so easy as he imagined, and her hand was not to be taken yet.

'Very pretty!' she said, laughing. 'And only six weeks since Miss Johnson left.'

'Zounds, don't say anything about that!' implored Bob. 'I swear that I never—never deliberately loved her—for a long time together, that is; it was a sudden sort of thing, you know. But towards you—I have more or less honoured and respectfully loved you, off and on, all my life. There, that's true.'

Anne retorted quickly—

'I am willing, off and on, to believe you, Captain Robert. But I don't see any good in your making these solemn declarations.'

'Give me leave to explain, dear Miss Garland. It is to get you to be pleased to renew an old promise—made years ago—that you'll think o' me.'

'Not a word of any promise will I repeat.'

'Well, well, I won't urge ye to-day. Only let me beg of you to get over the quite wrong notion you have of me; and it shall be my whole endeavour to fetch your gracious favour.'

Anne turned away from him and entered the house, whither in the course of a quarter of an hour he followed her, knocking at her door and asking to be let in. She said she was busy; whereupon he went away, to come

back again in a short time and receive the same answer.

'I have finished painting the summer-house for you,' he said through the door.

'I cannot come to see it. I shall be engaged till supper time.'

She heard him breathe a heavy sigh and withdraw, murmuring something about his bad luck in being cut away from the starn like this. But it was not over yet. When supper time came and they sat down together, she took upon herself to reprove him for what he had said to her in the garden.

Bob made his forehead express despair.

'Now, I beg you this one thing,' he said. 'Just let me know your whole mind. Then I shall have a chance to confess my faults and mend them, or clear my conduct to your satisfaction.'

She answered with quickness, but not

loud enough to be heard by the old people at the other end of the table—'Then, Captain Loveday, I will tell you one thing, one fault, that perhaps would have been more proper to my character than to yours. You are too easily impressed by new faces, and that gives me a *bad opinion* of you—yes, *bad opinion*.'

'Oh, that's it!' said Bob slowly, looking at her with the intense respect of a pupil for a master, her words being spoken in a manner so precisely between jest and earnest that he was in some doubt how they were to be received. 'Impressed by new faces. It is wrong, certainly, of me.'

The popping of a cork, and the pouring out of strong beer by the miller with a view to giving it a head, were apparently distractions sufficient to excuse her in not attending further to him; and during the remainder of

the sitting her gentle chiding seemed to be sinking seriously into his mind. Perhaps her own heart ached to see how silent he was; but she had always meant to punish him. Day after day for two or three weeks she preserved the same demeanour, with a self-control which did justice to her character. And, on his part, considering what he had to put up with, how she eluded him, snapped him off, refused to come out when he called her, refused to see him when he wanted to enter the little parlour which she had now appropriated to her private use, his patience testified strongly to his good-humour.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MILITARY PREPARATIONS ON AN EXTENDED SCALE.

CHRISTMAS had passed. Dreary winter with dark evenings had given place to more dreary winter with light evenings. Rapid thaws had ended in rain, rain in wind, wind in dust. Showery days had come—the season of pink dawns and white sunsets ; and people hoped that the March weather was over.

The chief incident that concerned the household at the mill was that the miller, following the example of all his neighbours, had become a volunteer, and duly appeared

twice a week in a red, long-tailed military coat, pipe-clayed breeches, black cloth gaiters, a heel-balled helmet-hat, with a tuft of green wool, and epaulets of the same colour and material. Bob still remained neutral. Not being able to decide whether to enrol himself as a sea-fencible, a local militia-man, or a volunteer, he simply went on dancing attendance upon Anne. Mrs. Loveday had become awake to the fact that the pair of young people stood in a curious attitude towards each other; but as they were never seen with their heads together, and scarcely ever sat even in the same room, she could not be sure what their movements meant.

Strangely enough (or perhaps naturally enough), since entering the Loveday family herself, she had gradually grown to think less favourably of Anne doing the same thing, and reverted to her original idea of encourag-

ing Festus; this more particularly because he had of late shown such perseverance in haunting the precincts of the mill, presumably with the intention of lighting upon the young girl. But the weather had kept her mostly indoors.

One afternoon it was raining in torrents. Such leaves as there were on trees at this time of year—those of the laurel and other evergreens—staggered beneath the hard blows of the drops which fell upon them, and afterwards could be seen trickling down the stems beneath and silently entering the ground. The surface of the mill-pond leapt up in a thousand spirts under the same downfall, and clucked like a hen in the rat-holes along the banks as it undulated under the wind. The only dry spot visible from the front windows of the mill-house was the inside of a small shed, on the opposite side of the courtyard.

While Mrs. Loveday was noticing the threads of rain descending across its interior shade, Festus Derriman walked up and entered it for shelter, which, owing to the lumber within, it but scantily afforded to a man who would have been a match for one of Frederick William's Patagonians,

It was an excellent opportunity for helping on her scheme. Anne was in the back room, and by asking him in till the rain was over she would bring him face to face with her daughter, whom, as the days went on, she increasingly wished to marry other than a Loveday, now that the romance of her own alliance with the miller had in some respects worn off. She was better provided for than before; she was not unhappy; but the plain fact was that she had married beneath her. She beckoned to Festus through the window-pane; he instantly complied with her signal,

having in fact placed himself there on purpose to be noticed; for he knew that Miss Garland would not be out-of-doors on such a day.

'Good afternoon, Mrs Loveday,' said Festus on entering. 'There now—if I didn't think that's how it would be!' His voice had suddenly warmed to anger, for he had seen a door close in the back part of the room, a lithe figure having previously slipped through.

Mrs. Loveday turned, observed that Anne was gone, and said, 'What is it?' as if she did not know.

'Oh, nothing, nothing!' said Festus crossly. 'You know well enough what it is, ma'am; only you make pretence otherwise. But I'll bring her to book yet. You shall drop your haughty airs, my charmer! She little thinks I have kept an account of 'em all.'

'But you must treat her politely, sir,' said

Mrs. Loveday, secretly pleased at these signs of uncontrollable affection.

'Don't tell me of politeness or generosity, ma'am! She is more than a match for me. She regularly gets over me. I have passed by this house five-and-fifty times since last Martinmas, and this is all my reward for't!'

'But you will stay till the rain is over, sir?'

'No. I don't mind rain. I'm off again. She's got somebody else in her eye!' And the yeoman went out, slamming the door.

Meanwhile the slippery object of his hopes had gone along the dark passage, passed the trap which opened on the wheel, and through the door into the mill, where she was met by Bob, who looked up from the flour-shoot inquiringly and said, 'You want me, Miss Garland?'

'Oh, no,' said she. 'I only want to be allowed to stand here a few minutes.'

He looked at her to know if she meant it, and, finding that she did, returned to his post. When the mill had rumbled on a little longer he came back.

'Bob,' she said, when she saw him move, 'remember that you are at work, and have no time to stand close to me.'

He bowed and went to his original post again, Anne watching from the window till Festus should leave. The mill rumbled on as before, and at last Bob came to her for the third time. 'Now, Bob——' she began.

'On my honour, 'tis only to ask a question. Will you walk with me to church next Sunday afternoon?'

'Perhaps I will,' she said. But at this moment the yeoman left the house, and

Anne, to escape further parley, returned to the dwelling by the way she had come.

Sunday afternoon arrived, and the family was standing at the door waiting for the church bells to begin. From that side of the house they could see southward across a paddock to the rising ground farther ahead, where there grew a large elm-tree, beneath whose boughs footpaths crossed in different directions, like meridians at the pole. The tree was old, and in summer the grass beneath it was quite trodden away by the feet of the many trysters and idlers who haunted the spot. The tree formed a conspicuous object in the surrounding landscape.

While they looked, a foot soldier in red uniform and white breeches came along one of the paths, and, stopping beneath the elm, drew from his pocket a paper, which he proceeded to nail up by the four corners to the

trunk. He drew back, looked at it, and went on his way. Bob got his glass from indoors and levelled it at the placard, but after looking for a long time he could make out nothing but a lion and a unicorn at the top. Anne, who was ready for church, moved away from the door, though it was yet early, and showed her intention of going by way of the elm. The paper had been so impressively nailed up that she was curious to read it even at this theological time. Bob took the opportunity of following, and reminded her of her promise.

'Then walk behind me—not at all close,' she said.

'Yes,' he replied, immediately dropping behind.

The ludicrous humility of his manner led her to add playfully over her shoulder, 'It serves you right, you know.'

'I deserve anything. But I must take the liberty to say that I hope my behaviour about Matil——, in forgetting you awhile, will not make ye wish to keep me *always* behind?'

She replied confidentially, 'Why I am so earnest not to be seen with you is that I may appear to people to be independent of you. Knowing what I do of your weaknesses I can do no otherwise. You must be schooled into——'

'Oh, Anne,' sighed Bob, 'you hit me hard—too hard! If ever I do win you I am sure I shall have fairly earned you.'

'You are not what you once seemed to be,' she returned softly. 'I don't quite like to let myself love you.' The last words were not very audible, and as Bob was behind he caught nothing of them, nor did he see how sentimental she had become all of a sudden.

They walked the rest of the way in silence, and coming to the tree read as follows :—

ADDRESS TO ALL RANKS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF ENGLISHMEN.

FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,—The French are now assembling the largest force that ever was prepared to invade this Kingdom, with the professed purpose of effecting our complete Ruin and Destruction. They do not disguise their intentions, as they have often done to other Countries ; but openly boast that they will come over in such Numbers as cannot be resisted.

Wherever the French have lately appeared they have spared neither Rich nor Poor, Old nor Young; but like a Destructive Pestilence have laid waste and destroyed every Thing that before was fair and flourishing.

On this occasion no man's service is compelled, but you are invited voluntarily to come forward in defence of everything that is dear to you, by

entering your Names on the Lists which are sent to the Tything-man of every Parish, and engaging to act either as *Associated Volunteers bearing Arms, as Pioneers and Labourers,* or as *Drivers of Waggons.*

As Associated Volunteers you will be called out only once a week, unless the actual Landing of the Enemy should render your further Services necessary.

As Pioneers or Labourers you will be employed in Breaking up Roads to hinder the Enemy's advance.

Those who have Pickaxes, Spades, Shovels, Bill-hooks, or other Working Implements, are desired to mention them to the Constable or Tything-man of their Parish, in order that they may be entered on the Lists opposite their Homes, to be used if necessary. . . .

It is thought desirable to give you this Explanation, that you may not be ignorant of the Duties to which you may be called. But if the Love of true Liberty and honest Fame has not ceased to animate the Hearts of Englishmen, Pay, though necessary, will be the least Part of your Reward. You will find your best Recompense in having done your Duty to your King and Country

by driving back or destroying your old and implacable Enemy, envious of your Freedom and Happiness, and therefore seeking to destroy them; in having protected your Wives and Children from Death, or worse than Death, which will follow the Success of such Inveterate Foes.

ROUSE, therefore, and unite as one man in the best of Causes! United we may defy the World to conquer us; but Victory will never belong to those who are slothful and unprepared.

'I must go and join at once!' said Bob.

Anne turned to him, all the playfulness gone from her face. 'I wish we lived in the north of England, Bob, so as to be farther away from where he'll land,' she murmured uneasily.

'Where we are would be Paradise to me, if you would only make it so.'

'It is not right to talk so lightly at such a serious time,' she thoughtfully returned, going on towards the church.

On drawing near, they saw through the boughs of a clump of intervening trees, still leafless, but bursting into buds of amber hue, a glittering which seemed to be reflected from points of steel. In a few moments they heard above the tender chiming of the church bells the loud voice of a man giving words of command, at which all the metallic points suddenly shifted like the bristles of a porcupine, and glistened anew.

'''Tis the drilling,' said Loveday. 'They drill now between the services, you know, because they can't get the men together so readily in the week. It makes me feel that I ought to be doing more than I am.'

When they had passed round the belt of trees, the company of recruits became visible, consisting of the able-bodied inhabitants of the hamlets thereabout, more or less known to Bob and Anne. They were assembled on

the green plot outside the churchyard-gate, dressed in their common clothes, and the sergeant who had been putting them through their drill was the man who nailed up the proclamation. He was now engaged in untying a canvas money-bag, from which he drew forth a handful of shillings, giving one to each man in payment for his attendance.

'Men, I dismissed ye too soon—parade, parade again, I say,' he cried. 'My watch is fast, I find. There's another twenty minutes afore the worship of God commences. Now all of you that ha'n't got fawlocks, fall in at the lower end. Eyes right and dress!'

As every man was anxious to see how the rest stood, those at the end of the line pressed forward for that purpose, till the line assumed the form of a horseshoe.

'Look at ye now! Why, you are all a crooking in. Dress, dress!'

They dressed forthwith; but impelled by the same motive they soon resumed their former figure, and so they were despairingly permitted to remain.

'Now, I hope you'll have a little patience,' said the sergeant, as he stood in the centre of the arc, 'and pay particular attention to the word of command, just exactly as I give it out to ye; and if I should go wrong, I shall be much obliged to any gentleman who'll put me right again, for I have only been in the army three weeks myself, and we are all liable to mistakes.'

'So we be, so we be,' said the line heartily.

''Tention, the whole, then. Poise fawlocks! Very well done!'

'Please, what must we do that haven't

got no firelocks?' said the lower end of the line in a helpless voice.

'Now, was ever such a question! Why, you must do nothing at all, but think *how* you'd poise 'em *if* you had 'em. You middle men, that are armed with hurdle-sticks and cabbage-stumps just to make believe, must of course use 'em as if they were the real thing. Now then, cock fawlocks! Present! Fire! (Not shoot in earnest, you know.) Very good—very good indeed; except that some of you were a *little* too soon, and the rest a *little* too late.'

'Please, sergeant, can I fall out, as I am master-player in the choir, and my bass-viol strings won't stand at this time o' year, unless they be screwed up a little before the passon comes in?'

'How can you think of such trifles as churchgoing at such a time as this, when

your own native country is on the point of invasion?' said the sergeant sternly. 'And, as you know, the drill ends three minutes afore church begins, and that's the law, and it wants a quarter of an hour yet. Now, at the word *Prime*, shake the powder (supposing you've got it) into the priming-pan, three last fingers behind the rammer; then shut your pans, drawing your right arm nimbly towards your body. I ought to have told ye before this, that at *Hand your katridge*, seize it and bring it with a quick motion to your mouth, bite the top well off, and don't swaller so much of the powder as to make ye hawk and spet instead of attending to your drill. What's that man a-saying of in the rear rank?'

'Please, sir, 'tis Anthony Cripplestraw, wanting to know how he's to bite off his

katridge, when he haven't a tooth left in 's head?'

'Man! Why, what's your genius for war? Hold it up to your right-hand man's mouth, to be sure, and let him nip it off for ye. Well, what have you to say, Private Tremlett? Don't ye understand English?

'Ask yer pardon, sergeant; but what must we infantry of the awkward squad do if Boney comes afore we get our firelocks?'

'Take a pike, like the rest of the incapables. You'll find a store of them ready in the corner of the church tower. Now then—Shoulder—r—r—r——'

'There, they be tinging in the passon!' exclaimed David, Miller Loveday's man, who also formed one of the company, as the bells changed from chiming all three together to a quick beating of one. The whole line

drew a breath of relief, threw down their arms, and began running off.

'Well, then, I must dismiss ye,' said the sergeant. 'Come back—come back! Next drill is Tuesday afternoon at four. And, mind, if your masters won't let ye leave work soon enough, tell me, and I'll write a line to Gover'ment!' ''Tention! To the right—left wheel, I mean—no, no—right wheel. Mar—r—r—rch!'

Some wheeled to the right and some to the left, and some obliging men, including Cripplestraw, tried to wheel both ways.

'Stop, stop; try again. Gentlemen, unfortunately when I'm in a hurry I can never remember my right hand from my left, and never could as a boy. You must excuse me, please. Practice makes perfect, as the saying is; and, much as I've learnt since I 'listed, we always find something new. Now

then, right wheel! march! halt! Stand at ease! dismiss! I think that's the order o't, but I'll look in the Gover'ment book afore Tuesday.'

Many of the company who had been drilled preferred to go off and spend their shillings instead of entering the church; but Anne and Captain Bob passed in. Even the interior of the sacred edifice was affected by the agitation of the times. The religion of the country had, in fact, changed from love of God to hatred of Napoleon Bonaparte; and, as if to remind the devout of this alteration, the pikes for the pikemen (all those accepted men who were not otherwise armed) were kept in the church of each parish. There, against the wall, they always stood—a whole sheaf of them, formed of new ash stems, with a spike driven in at one end, the stick being preserved from splitting by a

ferule. And there they remained, year after year, in the corner of the aisle, till they were removed and placed under the gallery stairs, and thence ultimately to the belfry, where they grew black, rusty, and worm-eaten, and were gradually stolen and carried off by sextons, parish-clerks, whitewashers, window-menders, and other church-servants for use at home as rake-stems, benefit-club staves, and pick-handles, in which degraded situations they may still occasionally be found.

But in their new and shining state they had a terror for Anne, whose eyes were involuntarily drawn towards them as she sat at Bob's side during the service, filling her with bloody visions of their possible use not far from the very spot on which they were now assembled. The sermon, too, was on the subject of patriotism; so that when they came out she began to harp uneasily upon

the probability of their all being driven from their homes.

Bob assured her that with the sixty thousand regulars, the militia reserve of a hundred and twenty thousand, and the three hundred thousand volunteers, there was not much to fear.

'But I sometimes have a fear that poor John will be killed,' he continued after a pause. 'He is sure to be among the first that will have to face the invaders, and the trumpeters get picked off.'

'There is the same chance for him as for the others,' said Anne.

'Yes . . . yes . . . the same chance, such as it is. . . . You have never liked John since that affair of Matilda Johnson, have you?'

'Why?' she quickly asked.

'Well,' said Bob timidly, 'as it is a ticklish time for him, would it not be worth

while to make up any differences before the crash comes?'

'I have nothing to make up,' said Anne, with some distress. She still fully believed the trumpet-major to have smuggled away Miss Johnson because of his own interest in that lady, which must have made his professions to herself a mere pastime; but that very conduct had in it the curious advantage to herself of setting Bob free.

'Since John has been gone,' continued her companion, 'I have found out more of his meaning, and of what he really had to do with that woman's flight. Did you know he had anything to do with it?'

'Yes.'

'That he got her to go away?'

She looked at Bob with surprise. He was not exasperated with John, and yet he knew so much as this.

'Yes,' she said; 'what did it mean?'

He did not explain to her then; but the possibility of John's death, which had been newly brought home to him by the military events of the day, determined him to get poor John's character cleared. Reproaching himself for letting her remain so long with a mistaken idea of him, Bob went to his father as soon as they got home, and begged him to get Mrs. Loveday to tell Anne the true reason of John's objection to Miss Johnson as a sister-in-law.

'She thinks it is because they were old lovers new met, and that he wants to marry her,' he exclaimed to his father in conclusion.

'Then *that's* the meaning of the split between Miss Nancy and Jack,' said the miller.

'What, were they any more than common friends?' asked Bob uneasily

'Not on her side, perhaps.'

'Well, we must do it,' replied Bob, painfully conscious that common justice to John might bring them into hazardous rivalry, yet determined to be fair. 'Tell it all to Mrs. Loveday, and get her to tell Anne.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

A LETTER, A VISITOR, AND A TIN BOX.

THE result of the explanation upon Anne was bitter self-reproach. She was so sorry at having wronged the kindly soldier, that next morning she went by herself to the down, and stood exactly where his tent had covered the sod on which he had lain so many nights, thinking what sadness he must have suffered because of her at the time of packing up and going away. After that she wiped from her eyes the tears of pity which had come there, descended to the house, and wrote an impulsive letter to him, in which

occurred the following passages, indiscreet enough under the circumstances :—

'I find all justice, all rectitude, on your side, John ; and all impertinence, all inconsiderateness, on mine. I am so much convinced of your honour in the whole transaction, that I shall for the future mistrust myself in everything. And if it be possible, whenever I differ from you on any point, I shall take an hour's time for consideration before I say that I differ. If I have lost your friendship, I have only myself to thank for it ; but I sincerely hope that you can forgive.'

After writing this she went to the garden, where Bob was shearing the spring grass from the paths. 'What is John's direction ?' she said, holding the sealed letter in her hand.

'Exeter Barracks,' Bob faltered, his countenance sinking.

She thanked him and went indoors. When he came in, later in the day, he passed the door of her empty sitting-room and saw the letter on the mantelpiece. He disliked the sight of it. Hearing voices in the other room, he entered and found Anne and her mother there, talking to Cripplestraw, who had just come in with a message from Squire Derriman, requesting Miss Garland, as she valued the peace of mind of an old and troubled man, to go at once and see him.

'I cannot go,' she said, not liking the risk that such a visit involved.

An hour later Cripplestraw shambled again into the passage, on the same errand.

'Maister's very poorly, and he hopes that you'll come, Missess Anne. He wants to see ye very particular about the French.'

Anne would have gone in a moment, but for the fear that some one besides the farmer

might encounter her, and she answered as before.

Another hour passed, and the wheels of a vehicle were heard. Cripplestraw had come for the third time, with a horse and gig; he was dressed in his best clothes, and brought with him on this occasion a basket containing raisins, almonds, oranges, and sweet cakes. Offering them to her as a gift from the old farmer, he repeated his request for her to accompany him, the gig and best mare having been sent as an additional inducement.

'I believe the old gentleman is in love with you, Anne,' said her mother.

'Why couldn't he drive down himself to see me?' Anne inquired of Cripplestraw.

'He wants you at the house, please.'

'Is Mr. Festus with him?'

'No; he's away at Weymouth.'

'I'll go,' said she.

'And I may come and meet you?' said Bob.

'There's my letter—what shall I do about that?' she said, instead of answering him. 'Take my letter to the post-office, and you may come,' she added.

He said Yes and went out, Cripplestraw retreating to the door till she should be ready.

'What letter is it?' said her mother.

'Only one to John,' said Anne. 'I have asked him to forgive my suspicions. I could do no less.'

'Do you want to marry *him?*' asked Mrs. Loveday bluntly.

'Mother!'

'Well; he will take that letter as an encouragement. Can't you see that he will, you foolish girl?'

Anne did see instantly. 'Of course!' she said. 'Tell Robert that he need not go.'

She went to her room to secure the letter. It was gone from the mantelpiece, and on inquiry it was found that the miller, seeing it there, had sent David with it to Weymouth hours ago. Anne said nothing, and set out for Overcombe Hall with Cripplestraw.

'William,' said Mrs. Loveday to the miller when Anne was gone and Bob had resumed his work in the garden, 'did you get that letter sent off on purpose?'

'Well, I did. I wanted to make sure of it. John likes her, and now 'twill be made up; and why shouldn't he marry her? I'll start him in business, if so be she'll have him.'

'But she is likely to marry Festus Derriman.'

'I don't want her to marry anybody but John,' said the miller doggedly.

'Not if she is in love with Bob, and has been for years, and he with her?' asked his wife triumphantly.

'In love with Bob, and he with her? repeated Loveday.

'Certainly,' said she, going off and leaving him to his reflections.

When Anne reached the hall she found old Mr. Derriman in his customary chair. His complexion was more ashen, but his movement in rising at her entrance, putting a chair and shutting the door behind her, were much the same as usual.

'Thank God you've come, my dear girl,' he said earnestly. 'Ah, you don't trip across to read to me now! Why did ye cost me so much to fetch you? Fie! A horse and gig, and a man's time in going

three times. And what I sent ye cost a good deal in Weymouth market, now everything is so dear there, and 'twould have cost more if I hadn't bought the raisins and oranges some months ago, when they were cheaper. I tell you this because we are old friends, and I have nobody else to tell my troubles to. But I don't begrudge anything to ye, since you've come.'

'I am not much pleased to come, even now,' said she. 'What can make you so seriously anxious to see me?'

'Well, you be a good girl and true; and I've been thinking that of all people of the next generation that I can trust, you are the best. 'Tis my bonds and my title-deeds, such as they be, and the leases, you know, and a few guineas in packets, and more than these, my will, that I have to speak about. Now do ye come this way.'

'Oh, such things as those!' she returned, with surprise. 'I don't understand those things at all.'

'There's nothing to understand. 'Tis just this. The French will be here within two months; that's certain. I have it on the best authority that the army at Boulogne is ready, the boats equipped, the plans laid, and the First Consul only waits for a tide. Heaven knows what will become o' the men o' these parts! But most likely the women will be spared. Now I'll show ye.'

He led her across the hall to a stone staircase of semi-circular plan, which conducted to the cellars.

'Down here?' she said.

'Yes; I must trouble ye to come down here. I have thought and thought who is the woman that can best keep a secret for six

months, and I say, "Anne Garland." You won't be married before then?'

'Oh, no!' murmured the young woman.

'I wouldn't expect ye to keep a close tongue after such a thing as that. But it will not be necessary.'

When they reached the bottom of the steps he struck a light from a tinder-box, and unlocked the middle one of three doors which appeared in the whitewashed wall opposite. The rays of the candle fell upon the vault and sides of a long low cellar, littered with decayed woodwork from other parts of the hall, among the rest stair-balusters, carved finials, tracery panels, and wainscoting. But what most attracted her eye was a small flag-stone turned up in the middle of the floor, a heap of earth beside it, and a measuring-tape. Derriman went to the corner of the cellar, and pulled out a clamped

box from under the straw. 'You be rather heavy, my dear, eh?' he said, affectionately addressing the box as he lifted it. 'But you are going to be put in a safe place, you know, or that rascal will get hold of ye, and carry ye off and ruin me.' He then with some difficulty lowered the box into the hole, raked in the earth upon it, and lowered the flagstone, which he was a long time in fixing to his satisfaction. Miss Garland, who was romantically interested, helped him to brush away the fragments of loose earth; and when he had scattered over the floor a little of the straw that lay about, they again ascended to upper air.

'Is this all, sir?' said Anne.

'Just a moment longer, honey. Will you come into the great parlour?'

She followed him thither.

'If anything happens to me while the

fighting is going on—it may be on these very fields—you will know what to do,' he resumed. 'But first please sit down again, there's a dear, whilst I write what's in my head. See, there's the best paper, and a new quill that I've afforded myself for't.'

'What a strange business! I don't think I much like it, Mr. Derriman,' she said, seating herself.

He had by this time begun to write, and murmured as he wrote—

'"Twenty-three and half from N.W. Sixteen and three-quarters from N.E."—There, that's all. Now I seal it up and give it to you to keep safe till I ask ye for it, or you hear of my being trampled down by the enemy.'

'What does it mean?' she asked, as she received the paper.

'Clk! Ha! ha! Why, that's the distance

of the box from the two corners of the cellar. I measured it before you came. And, my honey, to make all sure, if the French soldiery are after ye, tell your mother the meaning on't, or any other friend, in case they should put ye to death, and the secret be lost. But that I am sure I hope they won't do, though your pretty face will be a sad bait to the soldiers. I often have wished you was my daughter, honey; and yet in these times the less cares a man has the better, so I am glad you bain't. Shall my man drive you home?'

'No, no,' she said, much depressed by the words he had uttered. 'I can find my way. You need not trouble to come down.'

'Then take care of the paper. And if you outlive me, you'll find I have not forgot you.'

CHAPTER XXV.

FESTUS SHOWS HIS LOVE.

FESTUS DERRIMAN had remained in Weymouth all that day, his horse being sick at stables; but, wishing to coax or bully from his uncle a remount for the coming summer, he set off on foot for Overcombe early in the evening. When he drew near to the village, or rather to the hall, which was a mile from the village, he overtook a slim, quick-eyed woman, sauntering along at a leisurely pace. She was fashionably dressed in a green spencer, with 'Mameluke' sleeves, and wore a velvet Spanish hat and feather.

'Good afternoon t'ye, ma'am,' said Festus,

throwing a sword-and-pistol air into his greeting. 'You are out for a walk?'

'I *am* out for a walk, captain,' said the lady, who had criticised him from the crevice of her eye, without seeming to do much more than continue her demure look forward, and gave the title as a sop to his apparent character.

'From Weymouth?—I'd swear it, ma'am; 'pon my honour I would!'

'Yes, I am from Weymouth, sir,' said she.

'Ah, you are a visitor! I know every one of the regular inhabitants; we soldiers are in and out there continually. Festus Derriman, Yeomanry Cavalry, you know. The fact is, the town is under our charge; the folks will be quite dependent upon us for their deliverance in the coming struggle. We hold our lives in our hands, and theirs, I

may say, in our pockets. What made you come here, ma'am, at such a critical time?'

'I don't see that it is such a critical time.'

'But it is, though; and so you'd say if you was as much mixed up with the military affairs of the nation as some of us.'

'The lady smiled. 'The King is coming this year, anyhow,' said she.

'Never!' said Festus firmly. 'Ah, you are one of the attendants at court perhaps, come on ahead to get the King's chambers ready, in case Boney should not land?'

'No,' she said; 'I am connected with the theatre, though not just at the present moment. I have been out of luck for the last year or two; but I have fetched up again. I join the company when they arrive for the season.'

Festus surveyed her with interest. 'Faith!

and is it so? Well, ma'am, what part do you play?'

'I am mostly the leading lady—the heroine,' she said, drawing herself up with dignity.

'I'll come and have a look at ye if all's well, and the landing is put off—hang me if I don't!—Hullo, hullo, what do I see?'

His eyes were stretched towards a distant field, which Anne Garland was at that moment hastily crossing, on her way from the hall to the village.

'I must be off. Good-day to ye, dear creature!' he exclaimed, hurrying forward.

The lady said, 'Oh, you droll monster!' as she smiled and watched him stride ahead.

Festus bounded on over the hedge, across the intervening patch of green, and into the field which Anne was still crossing. In a moment or two she looked back, and seeing

the well-known Herculean figure of the yeoman behind her felt rather alarmed, though she determined to show no difference in her outward carriage. But to maintain her natural gait was beyond her powers. She spasmodically quickened her pace; fruitlessly, however, for he gained upon her, and when within a few strides of her exclaimed, 'Well, my darling!' Anne started off at a run.

Festus was already out of breath, and soon found that he was not likely to overtake her. On she went, without turning her head, till an unusual noise behind compelled her to look round. His face was in the act of falling back; he swerved on one side, and dropped like a log upon a convenient hedgerow-bank which bordered the path. There he lay quite still.

Anne was somewhat alarmed; and after

standing at gaze for two or three minutes, drew nearer to him, a step and a half at a time, wondering and doubting, as a meek ewe draws near to some strolling vagabond who flings himself on the grass near the flock.

'He is in a swoon!' she murmured.

Her heart beat quickly, and she looked around. Nobody was in sight; she advanced a step nearer still and observed him again. Apparently his face was turning to a livid hue, and his breathing had become obstructed.

''Tis not a swoon; 'tis apoplexy!' she said, in deep distress. 'I ought to untie his neck.' But she was afraid to do this, and only drew a little closer still.

Miss Garland was now within three feet of him, whereupon the senseless man, who could hold his breath no longer, sprang to his

feet and darted at her, saying, 'Ha! ha! a scheme for a kiss!'

She felt his arm slipping round her neck; but, twirling about with amazing dexterity, she wriggled from his embrace and ran away along the field. The force with which she had extricated herself was sufficient to throw Festus upon the grass, and by the time that he got upon his legs again she was many yards off. Uttering a word which was not exactly a blessing, he immediately gave chase; and thus they ran till Anne entered a meadow divided down the middle by a brook about six feet wide. A narrow plank was thrown loosely across at the point where the path traversed this stream, and when Anne reached it she at once scampered over. At the other side she turned her head to gather the probabilities of the situation, which were that Festus Derriman would overtake

her even now. By a sudden forethought she stooped, seized the end of the plank, and endeavoured to drag it away from the opposite bank. But the weight was too great for her to do more than slightly move it, and with a desperate sigh she ran on again, having lost many valuable seconds.

But her attempt, though ineffectual in dragging it down, had been enough to unsettle the little bridge; and when Derriman reached the middle, which he did half a minute later, the plank turned over on its edge, tilting him bodily into the river. The water was not remarkably deep, but as the yeoman fell flat on his stomach he was completely immersed; and it was some time before he could drag himself out. When he arose, dripping on the bank, and looked round, Anne had vanished from the mead. Then Festus's eyes glowed like carbuncles and he

gave voice to fearful imprecations, shaking his fist in the soft summer air towards Anne, in a way that was terrible for any maiden to behold. Wading back through the stream, he walked along its bank with a heavy tread, the water running from his coat-tails, wrists, and the tips of his ears, in silvery dribbles, that sparkled pleasantly in the sun. Thus he hastened away, and went round by a by-path to the hall.

Meanwhile the author of his troubles was rapidly drawing nearer to the mill, and soon, to her inexpressible delight, she saw Bob coming to meet her. She had heard the flounce, and, feeling more secure from her pursuer, had dropped her pace to a quick walk. No sooner did she reach Bob than, overcome by the excitement of the moment, she flung herself into his arms. Bob instantly enclosed her in an embrace so very thorough

that there was no possible danger of her falling, whatever degree of exhaustion might have given rise to her somewhat unexpected action; and in this attitude they silently remained, till it was borne in upon Anne that the present was the first time in her life that she had ever been in such a position. Her face then burnt like a sunset, and she did not know how to look up at him. Feeling at length quite safe, she suddenly resolved not to give way to her first impulse to tell him the whole of what had happened, lest there should be a dreadful quarrel and fight between Bob and the yeoman, and great difficulties caused in the Loveday family on her account, the miller having important wheat transactions with the Derrimans.

'You seem frightened, dearest Anne,' said Bob tenderly.

'Yes,' she replied. 'I saw a man I did

not like the look of, and he was inclined to follow me. But, worse than that, I am troubled about the French. O Bob! I am afraid you will be killed, and my mother, and John, and your father, and all of us hunted down!'

'Now I have told you, dear little heart, that it cannot be. We shall drive 'em into the sea after a battle or two, even if they land, which I don't believe they will. We've got ninety sail of the line, and though it is rather unfortunate that we should have declared war against Spain at this ticklish time, there's enough for all.' And Bob went into elaborate statistics of the navy, army, militia, and volunteers, to prolong the time of holding her. When he had done speaking he drew rather a heavy sigh.

'What's the matter, Bob?'

'I haven't been yet to offer myself as a

sea-fencible, and I ought to have done it long ago!'

'You are only one. Surely they can do without you?'

Bob shook his head. She arose from her restful position, her eye catching his with a shamefaced expression of having given way at last. Loveday drew from his pocket a paper, and said, as they slowly walked on, 'Here's something to make us brave and patriotic. I bought it in Weymouth. Is it not a stirring picture?'

It was a hieroglyphic profile of Napoleon. The hat represented a maimed French eagle; the face was ingeniously made up of human carcases, knotted and writhing together in such directions as to form a physiognomy; a band, or stock, shaped to resemble the English Channel, encircled his throat, and seemed to choke him; his

epaulette was a hand tearing a cobweb that represented the treaty of peace with England; and his ear was a woman crouching over a dying child.

'It is dreadful!' said Anne. 'I don't like to see it.'

She had recovered from her emotion, and walked along beside him with a grave, subdued face. Bob did not like to assume the privileges of an accepted lover and draw her hand through his arm; for, conscious that she naturally belonged to a politer grade than his own, he feared least her exhibition of tenderness were an impulse which cooler moments might regret. A perfect Paul-and-Virginia life had not absolutely set in for him as yet, and it was not to be hastened by force. When they had passed over the bridge into the mill-front they saw the miller standing at the door with a face of concern.

'Since you have been gone,' he said, 'a Government man has been here, and to all the houses, taking down the numbers of the women and children, and their ages, and the number of horses and waggons that can be mustered, in case they have to retreat inland, out of the way of the invading army.'

The little family gathered themselves together, all feeling the crisis more seriously than they liked to express. Mrs. Loveday thought how ridiculous a thing social ambition was in such a conjuncture as this, and vowed that she would leave Anne to love where she would. Anne, too, forgot the little peculiarities of speech and manner in Bob and his father, which sometimes jarred for a moment upon her more refined sense, and was thankful for their love and protection in this looming trouble.

On going upstairs she remembered the

paper which Farmer Derriman had given her, and searched in her bosom for it. She could not find it there. 'I must have left it on the table,' she said to herself. It did not matter; she remembered every word. She took a pen and wrote a duplicate, which she put safely away.

But Anne was wrong. She had, after all, placed the paper where she supposed, and there it ought to have been. But in escaping from Festus, when he feigned apoplexy, it had fallen out upon the grass. Five minutes after that event, when pursuer and pursued were two or three fields ahead, the gaily dressed woman whom the yeoman had overtaken peeped cautiously through the stile into the corner of the field which had been the scene of the scramble; and seeing the paper she climbed over, secured it, loosened the wafer without tearing the sheet,

and read the memorandum within. Unable to make anything of its meaning, the saunterer put it in her pocket, and, dismissing the matter from her mind, went on by the by-path which led to the back of the mill. Here, behind the hedge, she stood and surveyed the old building for some time, after which she meditatively turned and retraced her steps towards Weymouth.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE ALARM.

The night which followed was historic and memorable. Mrs. Loveday was awakened by the boom of a distant gun: she told the miller, and they listened awhile. The sound was not repeated, but such was the state of their feelings that Mr. Loveday went to Bob's room and asked if he had heard it. Bob was wide awake, looking out of the window; he had heard the ominous sound, and was inclined to investigate the matter. While the father and son were dressing they fancied that a glare seemed to be rising in the sky in the direction of the beacon hill.

Not wishing to alarm Anne and her mother, the miller assured them that Bob and himself were merely going out of doors to inquire into the cause of the report, after which they plunged into the gloom together. A few steps' progress opened up more of the sky, which, as they had thought, was indeed irradiated by a lurid light; but whether it came from the beacon or from a more distant point they were unable to clearly tell. They pushed on rapidly towards higher ground.

Their excitement was merely of a piece with that of all men at this critical juncture. Everywhere expectation was at fever heat. For the last year or two only five-and-twenty miles of shallow water had divided quiet English homesteads from an enemy's army of a hundred and fifty thousand men. We had taken the matter lightly enough, eating

and drinking as in the days of Noe, and singing satires without end. We punned on Bonaparte and his gunboats, chalked his effigy on stage-coaches, and published the same in prints. Still, between these bursts of hilarity, it was sometimes recollected that England was the only European country which had not succumbed to the mighty little man who was less than human in feeling, and more than human in will ; that our spirit for resistance was greater than our strength ; and that the Channel was often calm. Boats built of wood which was greenly growing in its native forest three days before it was bent as wales to their sides, were ridiculous enough ; but they might be, after all, sufficient for a single trip between two visible shores.

The English watched Bonaparte in these preparations, and Bonaparte watched the

English. At the distance of Boulogne details were lost, but we were impressed on fine days by the novel sight of a huge army moving and twinkling like a school of mackerel under the rays of the sun. The regular way of passing an afternoon in the coast towns was to stroll up to the signal posts and chat with the lieutenant on duty there about the latest inimical object seen at sea. About once a week there appeared in the newspapers either a paragraph concerning some adventurous English gentleman who had sailed out in a pleasure-boat till he lay near enough to Boulogne to see Bonaparte standing on the heights among his marshals; or else some lines about a mysterious stranger with a foreign accent, who, after collecting a vast deal of information on our resources, had hired a boat at a southern port, and vanished with it

towards France before his intention could be divined.

In forecasting his grand venture, Bonaparte postulated the help of Providence to a remarkable degree. Just at the hour when his troops were on board the flat-bottomed boats and ready to sail, there was to be a great fog, that should spread a vast obscurity over the length and breadth of the Channel, and keep the English blind to events on the other side. The fog was to last twenty-four hours, after which it might clear away. A dead calm was to prevail simultaneously with the fog, with the twofold object of affording the boats easy transit and dooming our ships to lie motionless. Thirdly, there was to be a spring tide, which should combine its manœuvres with those of the fog and calm.

Among the many thousands of minor Englishmen whose lives were affected by

these tremendous designs may be numbered our old acquaintance Corporal Tullidge, who sported the crushed arm, and poor old Simon Burden, the dazed veteran who had fought at Minden. Instead of sitting comfortably in the settle of the Duke of York, at Overcombe, they were obliged to keep watch on the hill. They made themselves as comfortable as was possible under the circumstances, dwelling in a hut of clods and turf, with a brick chimney for cooking. Here they observed the nightly progress of the moon and stars, grew familiar with the heaving of moles, the dancing of rabbits on the hillocks, the distant hoot of owls, the bark of foxes from woods farther inland; but saw not a sign of the enemy. As, night after night, they walked round the two ricks which it was their duty to fire at a signal—one being of furze for a quick flame, the other of turf, for

a long, slow radiance—they thought and talked of old times, and drank patriotically from a large wood flagon that was filled every day.

Bob and his father soon became aware that the light was from the beacon. By the time that they reached the top it was one mass of towering flame, from which the sparks fell on the green herbage like a fiery dew; the forms of the two old men being seen passing and repassing in the midst of it. The Lovedays, who came up on the smoky side, regarded the scene for a moment, and then emerged into the light.

'Who goes there?' said Corporal Tullidge, shouldering a pike with his sound arm. 'Oh, 'tis neighbour Loveday!'

'Did you get your signal to fire it from the east?' said the miller, hastily.

'No; from Abbotsbury Beach.'

'But you are not to go by a coast signal!'

'Chok' it all, wasn't the Lord Lieutenant's direction, whenever you see Reignbarrows Beacon burn to the nor'east'ard, or Eggerdon to the nor'west'ard, or the actual presence of the enemy on the shore?'

'But is he here?'

'No doubt o't! The beach light is only just gone down, and Simon heard the guns even better than I.'

'Hark, hark! I hear 'em!' said Bob.

They listened with parted lips, the night wind blowing through Simon Burden's few teeth as through the ruins of Stonehenge. From far down on the lower levels came the noise of wheels and the tramp of horses upon the turnpike road.

'Well, there must be something in it,' said Miller Loveday gravely. 'Bob, we'll

go home and make the women-folk safe, and then I'll don my soldier's clothes and be off. God knows where our company will assemble.'

They hastened down the hill, and on getting into the road waited and listened again. Travellers began to come up and pass them in vehicles of all descriptions. It was difficult to attract their attention in the dim light, but by standing on the top of a wall which fenced the road Bob was at last seen.

'What's the matter?' he cried to a butcher who was flying past in his cart, his wife sitting behind him without a bonnet.

'The French have landed,' said the man, without drawing rein.

'Where?' shouted Bob.

'In West Bay; and all Weymouth is in uproar,' replied the voice, now faint in the distance.

Bob and his father hastened on till they reached their own house. As they had expected, Anne and her mother, in common with most of the people, were both dressed, and stood at the door bonneted and shawled, listening to the traffic on the neighbouring highway, Mrs. Loveday having secured what money and small valuables they possessed in a huge pocket which extended all round her waist, and added considerably to her weight and diameter.

'"Tis true enough,' said the miller: 'he's come. You and Anne and the maid must be off to Cousin Jim's at Bere, and when you get there you must do as they do. I must assemble with the company.'

'And I?' said Bob.

'Thou'st better run to the church, and take a pike before they be all gone.'

The horse was put into the gig, aand Mrs.

Loveday, Anne, and the servant-maid were hastily packed into the vehicle, the latter taking the reins ; David's duties as a fighting-man forbidding all thought of his domestic offices now. Then the silver tankard, tea-pot, pair of candlesticks like Ionic columns, and other articles too large to be pocketed were thrown into a basket and put up behind. Then came the leave-taking, which was as sad as it was hurried. Bob kissed Anne, and there was no affectation in her receiving that mark of affection as she said through her tears, 'God bless you.' At last they moved off in the dim light of dawn, neither of the three women knowing which road they were to take, but trusting to chance to find it.

As soon as they were out of sight Bob went off for a pike, and his father, first new-flinting his fire-lock, proceeded to don his uniform, pipe-claying his breeches with such

cursory haste as to bespatter his black-gaiters with the same ornamental compound. Finding when he was ready that no bugle had as yet sounded, he went with David to the cart-house, dragged out the waggon, and put therein some of the most useful and easily-handled goods, in case there might be an opportunity for conveying them away. By the time this was done and the waggon pushed back and locked in, Bob had returned with his weapon, somewhat mortified at being doomed to this low form of defence. The miller gave his son a parting grasp of the hand, and arranged to meet him at Bere at the first opportunity if the news were true; if happily false, here at their own house.

'Bother it all!' he exclaimed, looking at his stock of flints.

'What?' said Bob.

'I have got no ammunition: not a round!'

'Then what's the use of going?' asked his son.

The miller paused. 'Oh, I'll go,' he said. 'Perhaps somebody will lend me a little if I get into a hot corner?'

'Lend ye a little! Father, you was always so simple!' said Bob, reproachfully.

The bugle had been blown ere this, and Loveday the father disappeared towards the place of assembly, his empty cartridge-box behind him. Bob seized a brace of loaded pistols which he had brought home from the ship, and, armed with these and the pike, he locked the door and sallied out again towards the turnpike road.

By this time the yeomanry of the district were also on the move, and among them Festus Derriman, who was sleeping at his uncle's, and had been awakened by Cripplestraw. About the time when Bob and his

father were descending from the beacon the stalwart yeoman was standing in the stable-yard adjusting his straps, while Cripplestraw saddled the horse. Festus clanked up and down, looked gloomily at the beacon, heard the retreating carts and carriages, and called Cripplestraw to him, who came from the stable leading the horse at the same moment that Uncle Benjy peeped unobserved from an oriel window above their heads, the light of the beacon fire touching up his features to the complexion of an old brass clock-face.

'I think that before I start, Cripplestraw,' said Festus, whose lurid visage was undergoing a bleaching process curious to look upon, 'you shall go on to Weymouth, and make a bold inquiry whether the cowardly enemy is on shore as yet, or only looming in the bay.'

'I'd go in a moment, sir,' said the other,

'if I hadn't my bad leg again. I should have joined my company afore this; but they said at last drill that I was too old. So I shall wait up in the hay-loft for tidings as soon as I have packed you off, poor gentleman!'

'Do such alarms as these, Cripplestraw, ever happen without foundation? Bonaparte is a wretch, a miserable wretch, and this may be only a false alarm to disappoint such as me.'

'Oh no, sir; oh no.'

'But sometimes there are false alarms.'

'Well, sir, yes. There was a pretended sally of gun-boats last year.'

'And was there nothing else pretended—something more like this, for instance?'

Cripplestraw shook his head. 'I notice yer modesty, Mr. Festus, in making light of things. But there never was, sir. You may

depend upon it he's come. Thank God, my duty as a Local don't require me to go to the front, but only the valiant men like my master. Ah, if Boney could only see ye now, sir, he'd know too well that there is nothing to be got from such a determined skilful officer but blows and musket-balls!'

'Yes, yes—— Cripplestraw, if I ride off to Weymouth and meet 'em, all my training will be lost. No skill is required as a forlorn hope.'

'True; that's a point, sir. You would outshine 'em all, and be picked off at the very beginning as a too-dangerous brave man.'

'But if I stay here and urge on the faint-hearted ones, or get up into the turret-stair by that gateway, and pop at the invaders through the loophole, I shouldn't be so completely wasted, should I?'

'You would not, Mr. Derriman. But, as you was going to say next, the fire in yer veins won't let ye do that. You are valiant; very good: you don't want to husband yer valiance at home. The thing is plain.'

'If my birth had been more obscure,' murmured the yeoman, 'and I had only been in the militia, for instance, or among the humble pikemen, so much wouldn't have been expected of me—of my fiery nature—— Cripplestraw, is there a drop of brandy to be got at in the house? I don't feel very well.'

'Dear nephew,' said the old gentleman from above, whom neither of the others had as yet noticed, 'I haven't any spirits opened—so unfortunate! But there's a beautiful barrel of crab-apple cider in draught; and there's some cold tea from last night.'

'What, is he listening?' said Festus, staring up. 'Now I warrant how glad he is to see me forced to go—called out of bed without breakfast, and he quite safe, and sure to escape because he's an old man!—— Cripplestraw, I like being in the yeomanry cavalry; but I wish I hadn't been in the ranks; I wish I had been only the surgeon, to stay in the rear while the bodies are brought back to him—I mean, I should have thrown my heart at such a time as this more into the labour of restoring wounded men and joining their shattered limbs together—u-u-ugh!—more than I can into causing the wounds—— I am too humane, Cripplestraw, for the ranks!'

'Yes, yes,' said his companion, depressing his spirits to a kindred level. 'And yet, such is fate, that, instead of joining men's limbs together, you'll have to get your own

joined—poor young soldier!—all through having such a warlike soul.'

'Yes,' murmured Festus, and paused. 'You can't think how strange I feel here, Cripplestraw,' he continued, laying his hand upon the centre buttons of his waistcoat. 'How I do wish I was only the surgeon!'

He slowly mounted, and Uncle Benjy, in the meantime, sang to himself as he looked on, '*Twen-ty-three and half from N.W. Six-teen and three-quar-ters from N.E.*'

'What's that old mummy singing?' said Festus savagely.

'Only a hymn for preservation from our enemies, dear nephew,' meekly replied the farmer, who had heard the remark. '*Twen-ty-three and half from N.W.*'

Festus allowed his horse to move on a few paces, and then turned again, as if struck by a happy invention. 'Cripplestraw,' he

began, with an artificial laugh, 'I am obliged to confess, after all—I must see her! 'Tisn't nature that makes me draw back—'tis love. I must go and look for her.'

'A woman, sir?'

'I didn't want to confess it; but 'tis a woman. Strange that I should be drawn so entirely against my natural wish to rush at 'em!'

Cripplestraw, seeing which way the wind blew, found it advisable to blow in harmony. 'Ah, now at last I see, sir! Spite that few men live that be worthy to command ye; spite that you could rush on, marshal the troops to victory, as I may say; but then—what of it?—there's the unhappy fate of being smit with the eyes of a woman, and you are unmanned—— Maister Derriman, who is himself when he's got a woman round his neck like a millstone?'

'It is something like that.'

'I feel the case. Be you valiant?—I know, of course, the words being a matter of form—be you valiant, I ask? Yes, of course. Then don't you waste it in the open field. Hoard it up, I say, sir, for a higher class of war—the defence of yer adorable lady. Think what you owe her at this terrible time! Now, Maister Derriman, once more I ask ye to cast off that first haughty wish to rush to Weymouth, and to go where your mis'ess is defenceless and alone.'

'I will, Cripplestraw, now you put it like that!'

'Thank ye, thank ye heartily, Maister Derriman. Go now, and hide with her.'

'But can I? Now, hang flattery!—can a man hide without a stain? Of course I would not hide in any mean sense; no, not I!'

'If you be in love, 'tis plain you may, since it is not your own life, but another's, that you are concerned for, and you only save your own because it can't be helped.'

''Tis true, Cripplestraw, in a sense. But will it be understood that way? Will they see it as a brave hiding?'

'Now, sir, if you had not been in love I own to ye that hiding would look queer, but being to save the tears, groans, fits, swowndings, and perhaps death of a comely young woman, yer principle is good; you honourably retreat because you be too gallant to advance. This sounds strange, ye may say, sir; but it is plain enough to less fiery minds.'

Festus did for a moment try to uncover his teeth in a natural smile, but it died away. 'Cripplestraw, you flatter me; or do you

mean it? Well, there's truth in it. I am more gallant in going to her than in marching to the shore. But we cannot be too careful about our good names, we soldiers. I must not be seen. I'm off.'

Cripplestraw opened the hurdle which closed the arch under the portico gateway, and Festus passed under, Uncle Benjamin singing, *Twen-ty-three and a half from N.W.* with a sort of sublime ecstasy, feeling, as Festus had observed, that his money was safe, and that the French would not personally molest an old man in such a ragged, mildewed coat as that he wore, which he had taken the precaution to borrow from a scarecrow in one of his fields for the purpose.

Festus rode on full of his intention to seek out Anne, and under cover of protecting her retreat accompany her to Bere, where he

knew the Lovedays had relatives. In the lane he met Granny Seamore, who, having packed up all her possessions in a small basket, was placidly retreating to the mountains till all should be over.

'Well, Granny, have ye seen the French?' asked Festus.

'No,' she said, looking up at him through her brazen spectacles. 'If I had I shouldn't ha' seed thee!'

'Faugh!' replied the yeoman, and rode on. Just as he reached the old road, which he had intended merely to cross and avoid, his countenance fell. Some troops of regulars, who appeared to be dragoons, were rattling along the road. Festus hastened towards an opposite gate, so as to get within the field before they should see him; but, as ill-luck would have it, as soon as he got inside, a party of six or seven of his own yeomanry

troop were straggling across the same field and making for the spot where he was. The dragoons passed without seeing him; but when he turned out into the road again it was impossible to retreat towards Overcombe village because of the yeomen. So he rode straight on, and heard them coming at his heels. There was no other gate, and the highway soon became as straight as a bow-string. Unable thus to turn without meeting them, and caught like an eel in a water-pipe, Festus drew nearer and nearer to the fateful shore. But he did not relinquish hope. Just ahead there were cross-roads, and he might have a chance of slipping down one of them without being seen. On reaching this spot he found that he was not alone. A horseman had come up the right-hand lane and drawn rein. It was an officer of the German legion, and seeing Festus he held

up his hand. Festus rode up to him and saluted.

'It ist false report!' said the officer.

Festus was a man again. He felt that nothing was too much for him. The officer, after some explanation of the cause of alarm, said that he was going across to the road which led by Lodmoor, to stop the troops and volunteers converging from that direction, upon which Festus offered to give information along the Broadway road. The German crossed over, and was soon out of sight in the lane, while Festus turned back upon the way by which he had come. The party of yeomanry cavalry was rapidly drawing near, and he soon recognised among them the excited voices of Stubb of Duddle Hole, Noakes of Muckleford, and other comrades of his orgies at the Hall. It was a magnificent opportunity, and Festus drew his

sword. When they were within speaking distance he reigned round his charger's head to Weymouth and shouted, 'On, comrades, on! I am waiting for you. You have been a long time getting up with me, seeing the glorious nature of our deeds to-day.'

'Well said, Derriman, well said,' replied the foremost of the riders. 'Have you heard anything new?'

'Only that he's here with his tens of thousands, and that we are to ride to meet him sword in hand as soon as we have assembled in Weymouth.'

'Oh, Lord!' said Noakes, with a slight falling of the lower jaw.

'The man who quails now is unworthy of the name of yeoman,' said Festus, still keeping ahead of the other troopers and holding up his sword to the sun. 'Oh,

Noakes, fye, fye! You begin to look pale, man.'

'Faith, perhaps you'd look pale,' said Noakes, with an envious glance upon Festus's daring manner, 'if you had a wife and family depending upon ye.'

'I'll take three frog-eating Frenchmen single-handed!' rejoined Derriman, still flourishing his sword.

'They have as good swords as you; as you will soon find,' said another of the yeomen.

'If they were three times armed,' said Festus—'ay, thrice three times—I would attempt 'em three to one. How do you feel now, my old friend Stubb?' (turning to another of the warriors). 'Oh, friend Stubb! no bouncing healths to our lady-loves in Overcombe Hall this summer as last. Eh, Brownjohn?'

'I am afraid not,' said Brownjohn gloomily.

'No rattling dinners at Stacie's Hotel, and the King below with his staff. No wrenching off door-knockers and sending 'em to the bakehouse in a pie that nobody calls for. Weeks of cut-and-thrust work rather!'

'I suppose so.'

'Fight how we may we shan't get rid of the cursed tyrant before autumn, and many thousand brave men will lie low before it's done,' remarked a young yeoman with a calm face, who meant to do his duty without much talking.

'No grinning matches at Maiden Castle this summer,' Festus resumed; 'no thread-the-needle at Greenhill Fair, and going into shows and driving the showman crazy with cock-a-doodle-doo!'

'I suppose not.'

'Does it make you seem just a trifle uncomfortable, Noakes? Keep up your spirits, old comrade. Come, forward! we are only ambling on like so many donkey-women. We have to get into Weymouth, join the rest of the troop, and then march Abbotsbury way, as I imagine. At this rate we shan't be well into the thick of battle before twelve o'clock. Spur on, comrades. No dancing on the green, Lockham, this year in the moonlight! You was tender upon that girl; gad, what will become o' her in the struggle?'

'Come, come, Derriman,' expostulated Lockham—'this is all very well, but I don't care for 't. I am as ready to fight as any man, but——'

'Perhaps when you get into battle, Derriman, and see what it's like, your courage will cool down a little,' added Noakes on the same

side, but with secret admiration of Festus's reckless bravery.

'I shall be bayoneted first,' said Festus. 'Now let's rally, and on.'

Since Festus was determined to spur on wildly, the rest of the yeomen did not like to seem behindhand, and they rapidly approached the town. Had they been calm enough to reflect, they might have observed that for the last half hour no carts or carriages had met them on the way, as they had done farther back. It was not till the troopers reached the turnpike that they learnt what Festus had known a quarter of an hour before. At the intelligence Derriman sheathed his sword with a sigh; and the party soon fell in with comrades who had arrived there before them, whereupon the source and details of the alarm were boisterously discussed.

'What, didn't you know of the mistake till now?' asked one of these of the new-comers. 'Why, when I was dropping over the hill by the cross-roads I looked back and saw that man talking to the messenger, and he must have told him the truth.' The speaker pointed to Festus. They turned their indignant eyes full upon him. That he had sported with their deepest feelings, while knowing the rumour to be baseless, was soon apparent to all.

'Beat him black and blue with the flat of our blades!' shouted two or three, turning their horses' heads to drop back upon Derriman, in which move they were followed by most of the party.

But Festus, foreseeing danger from the unexpected revelation, had already judiciously placed a few intervening yards between himself and his fellow yeomen, and

now, clapping spurs to his horse, rattled like thunder and lightning up the road homeward. His ready flight added hotness to their pursuit, and as he rode and looked fearfully over his shoulder he could see them following with enraged faces and drawn swords, a position which they kept up for a distance of more than a mile. Then he had the satisfaction of seeing them drop off one by one, and soon he and his panting charger remained alone on the highway.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DANGER TO ANNE.

He stopped and reflected how to turn this rebuff to advantage. Baulked in his project of entering Weymouth and enjoying congratulations upon his patriotic bearing during the advance, he sulkily considered that he might be able to make some use of his enforced retirement by riding to Overcombe and glorifying himself in the eyes of Miss Garland before the truth should have reached that hamlet. Having thus decided he spurred on in a better mood.

By this time the volunteers were on the march, and as Derriman ascended the road

he met the Overcombe company, in which trudged Miller Loveday shoulder to shoulder with the other substantial householders of the place and its neighbourhood, duly equipped with pouches, cross-belts, firelocks, flint-boxes, pickers, worms, magazines, priming-horns, heel-ball, and pomatum. There was nothing to be gained by further suppression of the truth, and briefly informing them that the danger was not so immediate as had been supposed, Festus galloped on. At the end of another mile he met a large number of pikemen, including Bob Loveday, whom the yeoman resolved to sound upon the whereabouts of Anne. The circumstances were such as to lead Bob to speak more frankly than he might have done on reflection, and he told Festus the direction in which the women had been sent. Then Festus informed the group that the report of

invasion was false, upon which they all turned to go homeward with greatly relieved spirits.

Bob walked beside Derriman's horse for some distance. Loveday had instantly made up his mind to go and look for the women, and ease their anxiety by letting them know the good news as soon as possible. But he said nothing of this to Festus during their return together; nor did Festus tell Bob that he also had resolved to seek them out, and by anticipating every one else in that enterprise, make of it a glorious opportunity for bringing Miss Garland to her senses about him. He still resented the ducking that he had received at her hands, and was not disposed to let that insult pass without obtaining some sort of sweet revenge.

As soon as they had parted Festus cantered on over the hill, meeting on his way

the Puddletown volunteers, sixty rank and file, under Captain Cunningham; the Dorchester company, ninety strong (known as the 'Consideration Company' in those days), under Captain Strickland; and others—all with anxious faces and covered with dust. Just passing the word to them and leaving them at halt, he proceeded rapidly onward in the direction of Bere. Nobody appeared on the road for some time, till after a ride of several miles he met a stray corporal of volunteers, who told Festus in answer to his inquiry that he had certainly passed no gig full of women of the kind described. Believing that he had missed them by following the highway, Derriman turned back into a lane along which they might have chosen to journey for privacy's sake, notwithstanding the badness and uncertainty of its track. Arriving again within five miles of Over-

combe, he at length heard tidings of the wandering vehicle and its precious burden, which, like the Ark when sent away from the country of the Philistines, had apparently been left to the instincts of the beast that drew it. A labouring man, just at daybreak, had seen the helpless party going slowly up a distant drive, which he pointed out.

No sooner had Festus parted from this informant than he beheld Bob approaching, mounted on the miller's second and heavier horse. Bob looked rather surprised, and Festus felt his coming glory in danger.

'They went down that lane,' he said, signifying precisely the opposite direction to the true one. 'I, too, have been on the look out for missing friends.'

As Festus was riding back there was no reason to doubt his information, and Loveday rode on as misdirected. Immediately that

he was out of sight Festus reversed his course, and followed the track which Anne and her companions were last seen to pursue.

This road had been ascended by the gig in question nearly two hours before the present moment. Molly, the servant, held the reins, Mrs. Loveday sat beside her, and Anne behind. Their progress was but slow, owing partly to Molly's want of skill, and partly to the steepness of the road, which here passed over downs of some extent, and was rarely or never mended. It was an anxious morning for them all, and the beauties of the early summer day fell upon unheeding eyes. They were too anxious even for conjecture, and each sat thinking her own thoughts, occasionally glancing westward, or stopping the horse to listen to sounds from more frequented roads along which other parties were retreating. Once,

while they listened and gazed thus, they saw a glittering in the distance, and heard the tramp of many horses. It was a large body of cavalry going in the direction of Weymouth, the same regiment of dragoons, in fact, which Festus had seen farther on in its course. The women in the gig had no doubt that these men were marching at once to engage the enemy. By way of varying the monotony of the journey, Molly occasionally burst into tears of horror, believing Bonaparte to be in countenance and habits precisely what the caricatures represented him. Mrs. Loveday endeavoured to establish cheerfulness by assuring her companions of the natural civility of the French nation, with whom unprotected women were safe from injury, unless through the casual excesses of soldiery beyond control. This was poor consolation to Anne, whose mind was more

occupied with Bob than with herself, and a miserable fear that she would never again see him alive so paled her face and saddened her gaze forward, that at last her mother said, 'Who was you thinking of, my dear?' Anne's only reply was a look at her mother, with which a tear mingled.

Molly whipped the horse, by which she quickened his pace for five yards, when he again fell into the perverse slowness that showed how fully conscious he was of being the master-mind and head individual of the four. Whenever there was a pool of water by the road he turned aside to drink a mouthful, and remained there his own time in spite of Molly's tug at the reins and futile fly-flapping on his buttocks. They were now in the chalk district, where there were no hedges, and a rough attempt at mending the way had been made by throwing down huge

lumps of that glaring material in heaps, without troubling to spread it or break them abroad. The jolting here was most distressing, and seemed about to snap the springs.

'How that wheel do wamble,' said Molly at last. She had scarcely spoken when the wheel came off, and all three were precipitated over it into the road.

Fortunately the horse stood still, and they began to gather themselves up. The only one of the three who had suffered in the least from the fall was Anne, and she was only conscious of a severe shaking which had half stupefied her for the time. The wheel lay flat in the road, so that there was no possibility of driving farther in their present plight. They looked around for help. The only friendly object near was a lonely cottage, from its situation evidently the home of a shepherd.

The horse was unharnessed and tied to the back of the gig, and the three women went across to the house. On getting close they found that the shutters of all the lower windows were closed, but on trying the door it opened to the hand. Nobody was within; the house appeared to have been abandoned in some confusion, and the probability was that the shepherd had fled on hearing the alarm. Anne now said that she felt the effects of her fall too severely to be able to go any farther just then, and it was agreed that she should be left there while Mrs. Loveday and Molly went on for assistance, the elder lady deeming Molly too young and vacant-minded to be trusted to go alone. Molly suggested taking the horse, as the distance might be great, each of them sitting alternately on his back while the other led him by the head. This they did, Anne

watching them vanish down the white and lumpy road.

She then looked round the room, as well as she could do so by the light from the open door. It was plain, from the shutters being closed, that the shepherd had left his house before daylight, the candle and extinguisher on the table pointing to the same conclusion. Here she remained, her eyes occasionally sweeping the bare, sunny expanse of down, that was only relieved from absolute emptiness by the overturned gig hard by. The sheep seemed to have gone away, and scarcely a bird flew across to disturb the solitude. Anne had risen early that morning, and leaning back in the withy chair, which she had placed by the door, she soon fell into an uneasy doze, from which she was awakened by the distant tramp of a horse. Feeling much recovered from the effects of the

overturn, she eagerly rose and looked out. The horse was not Miller Loveday's, but a powerful bay, bearing a man in full yeomanry uniform.

Anne did not wait to recognise further; instantly re-entering the house, she shut the door and bolted it. In the dark she sat and listened: not a sound. At the end of ten minutes, thinking that the rider if he were not Festus had carelessly passed by, or that if he were Festus he had not seen her, she crept softly upstairs and peeped out of the window. Excepting the spot of shade, formed by the gig as before, the down was quite bare. She then opened the casement and stretched out her neck.

'Ha, young madam! There you are! I knew ye! Now you are caught!' came like a clap of thunder from a point three or four feet beneath her, and turning down her

frightened eyes she beheld Festus Derriman lurking close to the wall. His attention had first been attracted by her shutting the door of the cottage; then by the overturned gig; and after making sure, by examining the vehicle, that he was not mistaken in her identity, he had dismounted, led his horse round to the side, and crept up to entrap her.

Anne started back into the room, and remained still as a stone. Festus went on—'Come, you must trust to me. The French have landed. I have been trying to meet with you every hour since that confounded trick you played me. You threw me into the water. Faith, it was well for you I didn't catch ye then! I should have taken a revenge in a better way than I shall now. I mean to have that kiss of ye. Come, Miss Nancy; do you hear?—'Tis no use for you

to lurk inside there. You'll have to turn out as soon as Boney comes over the hill.—Are you going to open the door, I say, and speak to me in a civil way? What do you think I am, then, that you should barricade yourself against me as if I was a wild beast or Frenchman? Open the door, or put out your head, or do something; or 'pon my soul I'll break in the door!'

It occurred to Anne at this point of the tirade that the best policy would be to temporise till somebody should return, and she put out her head and face, now grown somewhat pale.

'That's better,' said Festus. 'Now I can talk to you. Come, my dear, will you open the door? Why should you be afraid of me?'

'I am not altogether afraid of you; I am safe from the French here,' said Anne, not

very truthfully, and anxiously casting her eyes over the vacant down.

'Then let me tell you that the alarm is false, and that no landing has been attempted. Now will you open the door and let me in? I am tired. I have been on horseback ever since daylight, and have come to bring you the good tidings.'

Anne looked as if she doubted the news.

'Come,' said Festus.

'No, I cannot let you in,' she murmured, after a pause.

'Dash my wig, then,' he cried, his face flaming up, 'I'll find a way to get in! Now, don't you provoke me! You don't know what I am capable of. I ask you again, will you open the door?'

'Why do you wish it?' she said, faintly.

'I have told you I want to sit down; and I want to ask you a question.'

'You can ask me from where you are.

'I cannot ask you properly. It is about a serious matter: whether you will accept my heart and hand. I am not going to throw myself at your feet; but I ask you to do your duty as a woman, namely, give your solemn word to take my name as soon as the war is over and I have time to attend to you. I scorn to ask it of a haughty hussy who will only speak to me through a window; however, I put it to you for the last time, madam.'

There was no sign on the down of anybody's return, and she said, 'I'll think of it, sir.'

'You have thought of it long enough; I want to know. Will you or won't you?'

'Very well; I think I will.' And then she felt that she might be buying personal safety too dearly by shuffling thus, since he

would spread the report that she had accepted him, and cause endless complication. 'No,' she said, 'I have changed my mind. I cannot accept you, Mr. Derriman.'

'That's how you play with me!' he exclaimed, stamping. '"Yes," one moment; "No," the next. Come, you don't know what you refuse. That old hall is my uncle's own, and he has nobody else to leave it to. As soon as he's dead I shall throw up farming and start as a squire. And now,' he added with a bitter sneer, 'what a fool you are to hang back from such a chance!'

'Thank you, I don't value it,' said Anne.

'Because you hate him who would make it yours?'

'It may not lie in your power to do that.'

'What—has the old fellow been telling you his affairs?'

'No.'

'Then why do you mistrust me? Now, after this will you open the door, and show that you treat me as a friend if you won't accept me as a lover? I only want to sit and talk to you.'

Anne thought she would trust him: it seemed almost impossible that he could harm her. She retired from the window and went downstairs. When her hand was upon the bolt of the door her mind misgave her. Instead of withdrawing it she remained in silence where she was, and he began again—

'Are you going to unfasten it?'

Anne did not speak.

'Now, damn my wig, I will get at you! You've tried me beyond endurance. One kiss would have been enough that day in the mead; now I'll have forty, whether you will or no!'

He flung himself against the door; but

as it was bolted, and had in addition a great wooden bar across it, this produced no effect. He was silent for a moment, and then the terrified girl heard him attempt the shuttered window. She ran upstairs and again scanned the down. The yellow gig still lay in the blazing sunshine, and the horse of Festus stood by the corner of the garden—nothing else was to be seen. At this moment there came to her ear the noise of a sword drawn from its scabbard; and, peeping over the window-sill, she saw her tormentor drive his sword between the joints of the shutters, in an attempt to rip them open. The sword snapped off in his hand. With an imprecation he pulled out the piece, and returned the two halves to the scabbard.

'Ha ha!' he cried, catching sight of the top of her head. ''Tis only a joke, you know; but I'll get in all the same. All for a

kiss! But never mind, we'll do it yet!' He spoke in an affectedly light tone, as if ashamed of his previous resentful temper; but she could see by the livid back of his neck that he was brimful of suppressed passion. 'Only a jest, you know,' he went on. 'How are we going to do it now? Why, in this way. I go and get a ladder, and enter at the upper window where my love is. And there's the ladder lying under that corn-rick in the first enclosed field. Back in two minutes, dear!'

He ran off, and was lost to her view.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ANNE DOES WONDERS.

ANNE fearfully surveyed her position. The upper windows of the cottage were of flimsiest lead-work, and to keep him out would be hopeless. She felt that not a moment was to be lost in getting away. Running downstairs she opened the door, and then it occurred to her terrified understanding that there would be no chance of escaping him by flight afoot across such an extensive down, since he might mount his horse and easily ride after her. The animal still remained tethered at the corner of the garden; if she could release him and frighten him away

before Festus returned, there would not be quite such odds against her. She accordingly unhooked the horse by reaching over the bank, and then, pulling off her muslin neckerchief, flapped it in his eyes to startle him. But the gallant steed did not move or flinch; she tried again, and he seemed rather pleased than otherwise. At this moment she heard a cry from the cottage, and turning, beheld her adversary approaching round the corner of the building.

'I thought I should tole out the mouse by that trick!' cried Festus, exultingly. Instead of going for a ladder he had simply hidden himself at the back to tempt her down.

Poor Anne was now desperate. The bank on which she stood was level with the horse's back, and the creature seemed quiet as a lamb. With a determination of which she was capable in emergencies, she

seized the rein, flung herself upon the sheepskin, and held on by the mane. The amazed charger lifted his head, sniffed, wrenched his ears hither and thither, and started off at a frightful speed across the down.

'Oh, my heart and limbs!' said Festus under his breath, as, thoroughly alarmed, he gazed after her. 'She on Champion! She'll break her neck, and I shall be tried for manslaughter, and disgrace will be brought upon the name of Derriman!'

Champion continued to go at a stretch-gallop, but he did nothing worse. Had he plunged or reared, Derriman's fears might have been verified, and Anne have come with deadly force to the ground. But the course was good, and in the horse's speed lay a comparative security. She was scarcely shaken in her precarious half-horizontal position, though she was awed to see the grass,

loose stones, and other objects pass her eyes like strokes whenever she opened them, which was only just for a second at intervals of half a minute; and to feel how wildly the stirrups swung, and that what struck her knee was the bucket of the carbine, and that it was a pistol-holster which hurt her arm.

They quickly cleared the down, and Anne became conscious that the course of the horse was homeward. As soon as the ground began to rise towards the outer belt of upland which lay between her and the coast, Champion, now panting and reeking with moisture, lessened his speed in sheer weariness, and proceeded at a rapid jolting trot. Anne felt that she could not hold on half so well; the gallop had been child's play compared with this. They were in a lane, ascending to a ridge, and she made up her mind for a fall. Over the ridge rose an animated spot, higher

and higher; it turned out to be the upper part of a man, and the man to be a soldier. Such was Anne's attitude that she only got an occasional glimpse of him; and, though she feared that he might be a Frenchman, she feared the horse more than the enemy, as she had feared Festus more than the horse. Anne had energy enough left to cry 'Stop him; stop him!' as the soldier drew near.

He, astonished at the sight of a military horse with a bundle of drapery thrown across his back, had already placed himself in the middle of the lane, and he now held out his arms till his figure assumed the form of a Latin cross planted in the roadway. Champion drew near, swerved, and stood still almost suddenly, a check sufficient to send Anne slipping down his flank to the ground. The timely friend stepped forward and helped her

to her feet, when she saw that he was John Loveday.

'Are you hurt?' he said, hastily, having turned quite pale at seeing her fall.

'Oh, no; not a bit,' said Anne, gathering herself up with forced briskness, to make light of the misadventure.

'But how did you get in such a place?'

'There, he's gone!' she exclaimed, instead of replying, as Champion swept round John Loveday and cantered off triumphantly in the direction of Overcombe, a performance which she followed with her eyes.

'But how did you come upon his back, and whose horse is it?'

'I will tell you.'

'Well?'

'I—cannot tell you.'

John looked steadily at her, saying nothing.

'How did you come here?' she asked. 'Is it true that the French have not landed at all?'

'Quite true; the alarm was groundless. I'll tell you all about it.' You look very tired. You had better sit down a few minutes. Let us sit on this bank.'

He helped her to the slope indicated, and continued, still as if his thoughts were more occupied with the mystery of her recent situation than with what he was saying: 'We arrived at Radipole Barracks this morning, and are to lie there all the summer. I could not write to tell father we were coming. It was not because of any rumour of the French, for we knew nothing of that till we met the people on the road, and the colonel said in a moment the news was false. Bonaparte is not even at Boulogne just now. I was anxious to know how you had borne the

fright, so I hastened to Overcombe at once, as soon as I could get out of barracks.'

Anne, who had not been at all responsive to his discourse, now swayed heavily against him, and looking quickly down he found that she had silently fainted. To support her in his arms was of course the impulse of a moment. There was no water to be had, and he could think of nothing else but to hold her tenderly till she came round again. Certainly he desired nothing more.

Again he asked himself, what did it all mean ?

He waited, looking down upon her tired eyelids, and at the row of lashes lying upon each cheek, whose natural roundness showed itself in singular perfection now that the customary pink had given place to a pale luminousness caught from the surrounding atmosphere. The dumpy ringlets about her

forehead and behind her poll, which were usually as tight as springs, had been partially uncoiled by the wildness of her ride, and hung in split locks over her forehead and neck. John, who, during the long months of his absence, had lived only to meet her again, was in a state of ecstatic reverence, and bending down he gently kissed her.

Anne was just becoming conscious.

'Oh, Mr. Derriman, never, never!' she murmured, sweeping her face with her hand.

'I thought he was at the bottom of it,' said John.

Anne opened her eyes, and started back from him. 'What is it?' she said wildly.

'You are ill, my dear Miss Garland,' replied John in trembling anxiety, and taking her hand.

'I am not ill, I am wearied out,' she said.

'Can't we walk on? How far are we from Overcombe?'

'About a mile. But tell me, somebody has been hurting you—frightening you. I know who it was; it was Derriman, and that was his horse. Now do you tell me all.'

Anne reflected. 'Then if I tell you,' she said, 'will you discuss with me what I had better do, and not for the present let my mother and your father know? I don't want to alarm them, and I must not let my affairs interrupt the business connection between the mill and the hall that has gone on for so many years.'

The trumpet-major promised, and Anne told the adventure. His brow reddened as she went on, and when she had done she said, 'Now you are angry. Don't do anything dreadful, will you? Remember that this Festus will most likely succeed his uncle

at Overcombe, in spite of present appearances, and if Bob succeeds at the mill there should be no enmity between them.'

'That's true. I won't tell Bob. Leave him to me. Where is Derriman now?. On his way home, I suppose. When I have seen you into the house I will deal with him—quite quietly, so that he shall say nothing about it.'

'Yes, appeal to him, do! Perhaps he will be better then.'

They walked on together, Loveday seeming to experience much quiet bliss.

'I came to look for you,' he said, 'because of that dear, sweet letter you wrote.'

'Yes, I did write you a letter,' she admitted, with misgiving, now beginning to see her mistake. 'It was because I was sorry I had blamed you.'

'I am almost glad you did blame me,'

said John cheerfully, 'since, if you had not, the letter would not have come. I have read it fifty times a day.'

This put Anne into an unhappy mood, and they proceeded without much further talk till the mill chimneys were visible below them. John then said that he would leave her to go in by herself.

'Ah, you are going back to get into some danger on my account?'

'I can't get into much danger with such a fellow as he, can I?' said John, smiling.

'Well, no,' she answered, with a sudden carelessness of tone. It was indispensable that he should be undeceived, and to begin the process by taking an affectedly light view of his personal risks was perhaps as good a way to do it as any. Where friendliness was construed as love, an assumed indifference

was the necessary expression for friendliness.

So she let him go; and, bidding him hasten back as soon as he could, went down the hill, while John's feet retraced the upland.

The trumpet-major spent the whole afternoon and evening in that long and difficult search for Festus Derriman. Crossing the down at the end of the second hour he met Molly and Mrs. Loveday. The gig had been repaired, they had learnt the groundlessness of the alarm, and they would have been proceeding happily enough but for their anxiety about Anne. John told them shortly that she had got a lift home, and proceeded on his way.

The worthy object of his search had in the meantime been plodding homeward on foot, sulky at the loss of his charger, encumbered with his sword, belts, high boots, and uniform,

and in his own discomfiture careless whether Anne Garland's life had been endangered or not.

At length Derriman reached a place where the road ran between high banks, one of which he mounted and paced along as a change from the hard trackway. Ahead of him he saw an old man sitting down, with eyes fixed on the dust of the road, as if resting and meditating at one and the same time. Being pretty sure that he recognised his uncle in that venerable figure, Festus came forward stealthily, till he was immediately above the old man's back. The latter was clothed in faded nankeen breeches, speckled stockings, a drab hat, and a coat which had once been light blue, but from exposure as a scarecrow had assumed the complexion and fibre of a dried pudding-cloth. The farmer was, in fact, returning to the hall, which he

had left in the morning some time later than his nephew, to seek an asylum in a hollow tree about two miles off. The tree was so situated as to command a view of the building, and Uncle Benjy had managed to clamber up inside this natural fortification high enough to watch his residence through a hole in the bark, till, gathering from the words of occasional passers-by that the alarm was at least premature, he had ventured into daylight again.

He was now engaged in abstractedly tracing a diagram in the dust with his walking-stick, and muttered words to himself aloud. Presently he arose and went on his way without turning round. Festus was curious enough to descend and look at the marks. They represented an oblong, with two semi-diagonals, and a little square in the middle. Upon the diagonals were the

figures 20 and 17, and on each side of the parallelogram stood a letter signifying the point of the compass.

'What crazy thing is running in his head now?' said Festus to himself, with supercilious pity, recollecting that the farmer had been singing those very numbers earlier in the morning. Being able to make nothing of it, he lengthened his strides, and treading on tiptoe overtook his relative, saluting him by scratching his back like a hen. The startled old farmer danced round like a top, and gasping, said, as he perceived his nephew, 'What, Festy! not thrown from your horse and killed, then, after all!'

'No, nunc. What made ye think that?'

'Champion passed me about an hour ago, when I was in hiding—poor timid soul of me, for I had nothing to lose by the French coming—and he looked awful with the

stirrups dangling and the saddle empty. 'Tis a gloomy sight, Festy, to see a horse cantering without a rider, and I thought you had been—feared you had been thrown off and killed as dead as a nit.'

'Bless your dear old heart for being so anxious! And what pretty picture were you drawing just now with your walking-stick?'

'Oh, that! That is only a way I have of amusing myself. It showed how the French might have advanced to the attack, you know. Such trifles fill the head of a weak old man like me.'

'Or the place where something is hid away—money, for instance?'

'Festy,' said the farmer reproachfully, 'you always know I use the old glove in the bedroom cupboard for any guinea or two I possess.'

'Of course I do,' said Festus ironically.

They had now reached a lonely inn about a mile and a half from the hall, and, the farmer not responding to his nephew's kind invitation to come in and treat him, Festus entered alone. He was dusty, draggled, and weary, and he remained at the tavern long. The trumpet-major, in the meantime, having searched the roads in vain, heard in the course of the evening of the yeoman's arrival at this place, and that he would probably be found there still. He accordingly approached the door, reaching it just as the dusk of evening changed to darkness.

There was no light in the passage, but John pushed on at hazard, inquired for Derriman, and was told that he would be found in the back parlour alone. When Loveday first entered the apartment he was unable to see anything, but following the guidance of a

vigorous snoring, he came to the settle, upon which Festus lay asleep, his position being faintly signified by the shine of his buttons and other parts of his uniform. John laid his hand upon the reclining figure and shook him, and by degrees Derriman stopped his snore and sat up.

'Who are you?' he said, in the accents of a man who has been drinking hard. 'Is it you, dear Anne? Let me kiss you; yes, I will.'

'Shut your mouth, you pitiful blockhead; I'll teach you genteeler manners than to persecute a young woman in that way!' and taking Festus by the ear, he gave it a good pull. Festus broke out with an oath, and struck a vague blow in the air with his fist; whereupon the trumpet-major dealt him a box on the right ear, and a similar one on the left to artistically balance the first. Festus

jumped up and used his fists wildly, but without any definite result.

'Want to fight, do ye, eh?' said John. 'Nonsense! you can't fight, you great baby, and never could. You are only fit to be smacked!' and he dealt Festus a specimen of the same on the cheek with the palm of his hand.

'No, sir, no! Oh, you are Loveday, the young man she's going to be married to, I suppose? Dash me, I didn't want to hurt her, sir.'

'Yes, my name is Loveday; and you'll know where to find me, since we can't finish this to-night. Pistols or swords, whichever you like, my boy. Take that, and that, so that you may not forget to call upon me!' and again he smacked the yeoman's ears and cheeks. 'Do you know what it is for, eh?'

'No, Mr. Loveday, sir—yes, I mean, I do.'

'What is it for, then? I shall keep smacking until you tell me. Gad! if you weren't drunk, I'd half kill you here to-night.'

'It is because I served her badly. D——d if I care! I'll do it again, and be hanged to ye. Where's my horse Champion? Tell me that,' and he hit at the trumpet-major.

John parried this attack, and taking him firmly by the collar, pushed him down into the seat, saying, 'Here I hold ye till you beg pardon for your doings to-day. Do you want any more of it, do you?' And he shook the yeoman to a sort of jelly.

'I do beg pardon—no, I don't. I say this, that you shall not take such liberties with old Squire Derriman's nephew, you dirty miller's son, you flour worm, you smut in the

corn! I'll call you out to-morrow morning, and have my revenge.'

'Of course you will; that's what I came for.' And pushing him back into the corner of the settle, Loveday went out of the house, feeling considerable satisfaction at having got himself into the beginning of as nice a quarrel about Anne Garland as the most jealous lover could desire.

But of one feature in this curious adventure he had not the least notion—that Festus Derriman, misled by the darkness, the fumes of his potations, and the constant sight of Anne and Bob together, never once supposed his assailant to be any other man than Bob, believing the trumpet-major miles away.

There was a moon during the early part of John's walk home, but when he had arrived within a mile of Overcombe the sky clouded over, and rain suddenly began to fall

with some violence. Near him was a wooden granary on tall stone staddles, and perceiving that the rain was only a thunderstorm which would soon pass away, he ascended the steps and entered the doorway, where he stood watching the half-obscured moon through the streaming rain. Presently, to his surprise, he beheld a female figure running forward with great rapidity, not towards the granary for shelter, but towards open ground. What could she be running for in that direction? The answer came in the appearance of his brother Bob from that quarter, seated on the back of his father's heavy horse. As soon as the woman met him, Bob dismounted and caught her in his arms. They stood locked together, the rain beating into their unconscious forms, and the horse looking on.

The trumpet-major fell back inside the granary, and threw himself on a heap of

empty sacks which lay in the corner: he had recognised the woman to be Anne. Here he reclined in a stupor till he was aroused by the sound of voices under him, the voices of Anne and his brother, who, having at last discovered that they were getting wet, had taken shelter under the granary floor.

'I have been home,' said she. 'Mother and Molly have both got back long ago. We were all anxious about you, and I came out to look for you. Oh, Bob, I am so glad to see you again!'

John might have heard every word of the conversation, which was continued in the same strain for a long time; but he stopped his ears, and would not. Still they remained, and still was he determined that they should not see him. With the conserved hope of more than half a year dashed away in a moment, he could yet feel that the cruelty of

a protest would be even greater than its inutility. It was absolutely by his own contrivance that the situation had been shaped. Bob, left to himself, would long ere this have been the husband of another woman.

The rain decreased, and the lovers went on. John looked after them as they strolled, aqua-tinted by the weak moon and mist. Bob had thrust one of his arms through the rein of the horse, and the other was round Anne's waist. When they were lost behind the declivity the trumpet-major came out, and walked homeward even more slowly than they. As he went on, his face put off its complexion of despair for one of serene resolve. For the first time in his dealings with friends he entered upon a course of counterfeiting, set his features to conceal his thought, and instructed his tongue to do likewise. He threw fictitiousness into his

very gait, even now, when there was nobody to see him, and struck at stems of wild parsley with his regimental switch as he had used to do when soldiering was new to him, and life in general a charming experience.

Thus cloaking his sickly thought, he descended to the mill as the others had done before him, occasionally looking down upon the wet road to notice how close Anne's little tracks were to Bob's all the way along, and how precisely a curve in his course was followed by a curve in hers. But after this he erected his head and walked so smartly up to the front door that his spurs rang through the court.

They had all reached home, but before any of them could speak he cried gaily, 'Ah, Bob, I have been thinking of you! By gad, how are you, my boy? No French cut-

throats after all, you see. Here we are, well and happy together again.'

'A good Providence has watched over us,' said Mrs. Loveday cheerfully. 'Yes, in all times and places we are in God's hand.'

'So we be, so we be!' said the miller, who still shone in all the fierceness of uniform. 'Well, now we'll ha'e a drop o' drink.'

'There's none,' said David, coming forward with a drawn face.

'What!' said the miller.

'Afore I went to church for a pike to defend my country from Boney, I pulled out the spigots of all the barrels, maister; for, thinks I—hang him!—since we can't drink it ourselves, he shan't have it, nor none of his men.'

'But you shouldn't have done it till you was sure he'd come,' said the miller aghast.

'Chok' it all, I was sure!' said David. 'I'd sooner see churches fall than good drink wasted; but how was I to know better?'

'Well, well; what with one thing and another this day will cost me a pretty penny!' said Loveday, bustling off to the cellar, which he found to be several inches deep in stagnant liquor. 'John, how can I welcome ye?' he continued, hopelessly, on his return to the room. 'Only go and see what he's done!'

'I've ladled up a drap wi' a spoon, trumpet-major,' said David. ''Tisn't bad drinking, though it do taste a little of the floor, that's true.'

John said that he did not require anything at all; and then they all sat down to supper, and were very temperately gay with a drop of mild elder-wine which Mrs. Loveday found in the bottom of a jar. The trumpet-major,

adhering to the part he meant to play, gave humorous accounts of his adventures since he had last sat there. He told them that the season was to be a very lively one—that the royal family was coming, as usual, and many other interesting things ; so that when he left them to return to Radipole few would have supposed the British army to contain a lighter-hearted man.

Anne was the only one who doubted the reality of this behaviour. When she had gone up to her bedroom she stood for some time looking at the wick of the candle as if it were a painful object, the expression of her face being shaped by the conviction that John's afternoon words when he helped her out of the way of Champion were not in accordance with his words to-night, and that the dimly-realised kiss during her faintness was no imaginary one. But in the blissful

circumstances of having Bob at hand again she took optimist views, and persuaded herself that John would soon begin to see her in the light of a sister.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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