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Frontispiece, with all the original plates

Very scarce

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

OF MR. MILLER'S PREVIOUS WORKS.

"The author is enamoured of woodland scenery and rural amusements; he is, indeed, so imbued with the love of sylvan solitudes, that one would almost suppose him the resuscitated resurrection of an Arcadian fawn, frisking in the labyrinths of a boundless forest. He is essentially poetical, he sees every object with the eye of a poet, and expresses his conceptions in language poetical, equally as to rhythm, metre, and figure. His prose is also good, both as to clearness of expression and correctness of style. He is a much better writer than many modern authors who, doubtless, think themselves his betters."

THE TIMES, May 19, 1836.

"The high reputation which Mr. Miller had acquired as a novelist by 'Royston Gower,' must excite in those who have read that able work a feeling which curiosity, with all its ardour, but imperfectly describes. The outline of 'Fair Rosamond's' story, as handed down by history, is powerfully calculated to affect the imagination—and it is but justice to Mr. Miller, to say that he has executed his task with the hand of a master; the mind is hurried along with an impetuous anxiety, and made, as it were, a sort of actor in the scene, through the illusive power which genius imparts to its creations. The characters of Henry, and of the celebrated Thomas à Becket, are well drawn and sustained, Rosamond herself is drawn with a very touching and delicate pen; and there are some imaginative characters introduced, among them that of a half idiot, which remind us of the wild power of Scott."

MORNING HERALD, June 3, 1839.

"Mr. Miller never indulges in the fantastic verbiage with which our modern verse writers eke out the staple of a flimsy thought, nor does his muse throw the glittering garb of sentiment over the form of vice. We like his 'Beauties of the Country' much, it is Gilbert White written by a poet; and possesses not only the quaint simplicity, but the high and honest enthusiasm of love for nature which we find in the works of that old English gentleman, Evelyn."

BELL'S MESSENGER, June 22, 1837.

"In his descriptions of the scenes, the objects, and the customs, which make up the attractions of rural life in England, there is no rancid cockneyism, no puling affectation, no mawkish sentimentality—the reader is neither sickened by superfine humanities, wearied by artificial enthusiasm, nor offended by rustic grossness,—had he sojourned with Southey or Wordsworth on the picturesque shores of the Cumberland lakes, he could hardly have breathed over the minute and multifarious details of his subject a warmer hue of life, and love, and poetry."

MORNING POST, Feb. 27, 1837.

"This is a singular production, bearing in every page the stamp of originality and genius; it is filled with deep pathos and picturesque description, and every page is crowded with thoughts and images, gathered from the rich storehouse of nature. It teems with beautiful descriptions of old woods, flowery valleys, green leaves, and murmuring waters. The author seems to have been born a poet."—GLOBE, Oct. 4, 1836.

"Mr. Miller seems to have been born a poet. His verse is the very personification of tenderness and feeling. There is so genuine a spirit, and such taste, harmony, and originality about his poetry, as to stamp him a man whose conceptions emanate from the genuine sources of poetic inspiration. He is indeed nature's poet."

COURIER, June 16, 1836.

"Mr. Miller's descriptions of country life, which he has thrown into a series of sketches, are fresh, vivid, and natural. The subjects of these sketches are such as a homely countryman might be expected to select, the old customs of the interior, snatches of rustic stories, pictures of rural life, references to ancient pastoral poetry, and the good old cheerful slumbering practices of our ancestors. We have some passages which have so much intrinsic beauty and fidelity in them, that we might almost venture to look for counterparts to them in Thomson's Seasons."

ATLAS, May 4, 1839.

"There is a picturesqueness in the arrangement and colouring of his scenes (in 'Lady Jane Grey')—an occasional glimpse, now of pathos, now of humour, quaint and popular but never vulgar, an ease in the use and combination of such few historical materials as suffice for his purpose, which put to shame the efforts of many who have been crammed in schools and lectured in colleges."

ATHENÆUM, Feb. 22, 1840.

"Mr. Miller already occupies a high rank among the writers of historical romance, he has taken the utmost pains to draw his historical characters with accuracy, from patient investigation of the best authorities. We have Lady Jane Grey, Northumberland, and others, all painted with singular fidelity. There is no exaggeration in aught that concerns the real actors on the scene. Another of his admirable qualities is that which we would expect from his former productions, his feeling in poetry, and his fine perception of external nature."

LITERARY GAZETTE, Feb. 8, 1840.

Royston Gower. "The utmost anticipations that could have been formed of his powers are more than realized in this present performance. There was nothing in the 'Day in the Woods,' brilliant and fanciful as many passages in it were, that betokened the possession of those qualities of an historical romance writer, which are in this work so strikingly exhibited. He has, in short, completely verified the most complimentary predictions of his friends, and has secured a place among the many clever romance writers of the age."

COURT JOURNAL, Feb. 3, 1838.

"The author looks on nature with the enthusiasm of a poet, and on man with the benevolence of a christian; he feels strongly and writes forcibly."

DISPATCH, Jan. 22, 1837.

"Mr. Miller's poetry contains an intrinsic excellence, which need not fear a competition with the most successful writers of the day."

NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE, July, 1837.

"Endowed with an innate love of nature and nature's beauties, he paints with a degree of enthusiasm and eloquence, and elegance of style, which have rarely been excelled. Every subject that he touches he paints with the pencil of a master."

MORNING ADVERTISER, Feb. 19, 1838.

"Having spent the greater portion of his life in the country, he has been enabled to describe its pleasures, pastimes, and enjoyments, its green fields, fragrant woods, and ever-varying scenes, with the pencil of the painter and the language of the poet."—NAVAL AND MILITARY GAZETTE, Feb. 4, 1837.

"It is gratifying to meet with a novel like 'Fair Rosamond,' from the circumstances that the author is a man who has not only well studied and considered history, but that he is also one who conceives, reflects, and appreciates, in correct taste. As a minute and tasteful painter of scenery, both in reference to the quietude of sylvan nature and the portraiture of humanity in its various positions, Mr. Miller cannot be surpassed at the present day; he has, in fact, most carefully looked to nature in all her variety, and he is happily gifted with a power of perception not often possessed."

SUNDAY TIMES, JUNE, 2, 1839.

"The author's tasteful eye for soft landscape and for forest scenery, and his love of ancient rustic sports and usages, impart grace to his narrative. He has made himself acquainted with the manners of the age which he undertakes to describe, and never outrages costume by those glaring anachronisms into which some historical romance writers are apt to fall."—TAIT'S MAGAZINE, April, 1838.

"He has infused life and blood into his subject, has caught the true spirit of the age, depicted and shewn himself not only to be familiar with the habits and feelings of knights, of ladies fair, and all the characters and machinery of the olden time, but has transplanted himself with heart and soul to their situations, bringing out in respect of scenery, action, and character, a true, lively, and picturesque representation."

MONTHLY REVIEW, MARCH, 1838.

"The pictures of a country life—we can assure our city friends, are the life themselves, and such only as a man born and brought up in a village could have given us."

ECLECTIC REVIEW, July, 1839.

"This is the book of a clever and earnest man, who thoroughly understands the subject he writes about, and a pleasant book accordingly he writes. It presents to the half-smoked, half-stifled indwellers of cities a healthy and fresh-blowing picture of life in the country."—EXAMINER, May, 12, 1839.

GIDEON GILES

THE ROPER.

BY

THOMAS MILLER,

AUTHOR OF
"ROYSTON GOWER," "RURAL SKETCHES," "BEAUTIES OF THE COUNTRY,"
"FAIR ROSAMOND," "LADY JANE GREY," ETC. ETC.

WITH THIRTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS
BY EDWARD LAMBERT.

LONDON:
JAMES HAYWARD & CO., 53, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1841.

LONDON:
Printed by Manning and Mason, Ivy Lane,
Paternoster Row.

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Together with Twelve Wood-Engravings.

PREFACE.

In this volume I have attempted to produce a true English work—to make the scenery and characters thoroughly English, while the chief events of the story are such as have fallen under my own observation, and the interest centres on the effect produced by an unjust and cruel English law: and one which, for the love I bear to my country, I am ashamed to say, is in force at this very hour. To shew how great a check such a law is to honesty and industry, I have written this book, confident that every right-minded and honest-hearted man will agree with me, in wishing for the abolition of an Act, which has the power of imprisoning a poor man who, without a license, offers for sale the goods which his own hands have manufactured.

This law requires no learned man to unravel it, for unlike most English laws, it is "clear as the sun at noon-day." A poor man can sell the goods he himself makes in the town or parish in which he lives; he can sell them (without a license) at the very doors of those high-rented and heavily-rated shops which deal in the self-same articles he offers for sale, and which this Act was made to protect. Change the scene; and let him offer the same goods for sale in the neighbouring villages, or at the doors of odd, lonely, and out-of-the-way houses, where there are none of these high-rented and high-rated shops to injure—where the inhabitants are compelled to go miles to purchase such articles as he brings to their doors, and he is liable to a penalty of forty pounds, or three months' imprisonment!

How little does this Act vary from the hated Norman forest-laws—the "vert and venison" of the feudal ages? Substitute parish boundary for forest boundary, and there is the same narrow neck of land on which the Saxon serf trod; the doom is the same—a heavy fine, or the prison.

PREFACE.

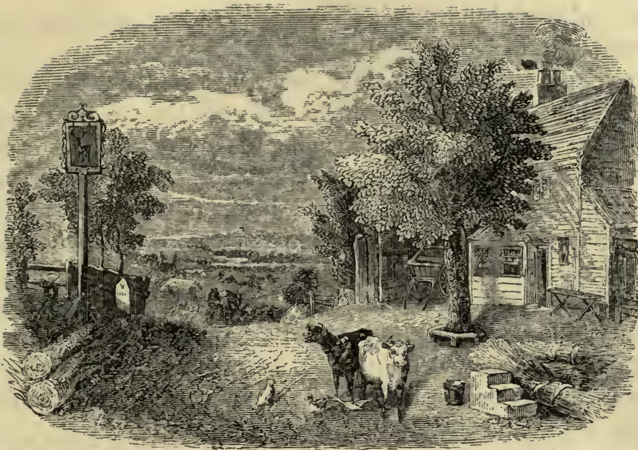
READER! supposing you and I were journeymen (no matter about our trade); and were discharged by some master whom we had long worked for? business becomes slack, and he is compelled to reduce his hands—such things occur every day; we set out to seek work; we wander, like Gideon Giles, many weary miles, but find none; we return home to our families,—they have fared as we have done while away. We come home; the workhouse stares us in the face. We resolve to sell part of our goods, or our clothes, the bed we have slept upon, or anything to muster a few shillings to begin with, in a small way of business for ourselves; we will make any sacrifice to keep out of the workhouse. We begin to work; make a few brushes, baskets, ropes, pails, no matter what; we work on until we have laid out our last shilling; but there are goods now, and we can sell them; the cupboard is empty—perhaps the children crying for bread. Well, we go out to hawk our goods, pass the parish boundary, are informed against, taken up, and imprisoned for three months. Wife, children, home, all gone "at one fell swoop!"

Such is the law of England at this very hour; and there are hundreds now living who have suffered under it. I need go no further than the case of the poor man who was imprisoned little more than a year ago for offering a work-box for sale, which he was the maker of, at Pimlico.

Respecting the rest of my story I have nothing to say; truth and fiction are here blended together, to make the work readable: as doctors disguise the taste of their pills by coating them over with something palatable, so have I here covered the truth, well knowing how difficult it is to get it down in this age. Nay, I have even forborne to lead Gideon Giles through such scenes of misery as I could have done, from the circumstances into which he falls, having sacrificed "the effect" which might have been produced by consigning his family to the poor-house while he is in prison.

THOMAS MILLER.

Southwark, Feb. 25, 1841.



THE FALLOW DEER INN.

GIDEON GILES THE ROPER.

CHAPTER I.

THE FALLOW DEER INN, WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE CONVERSATION WHICH TOOK PLACE BETWEEN BEN BRUST AND THE HOST, AND HOW BEN DISCOVERED AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

It was early on a fine May morning, nearly three years ago, when a young man of gentleman-like appearance, alighted from one of the northern mails at the front of the Old Fallow Deer Inn, Newark,—a comfortable-looking public-house, as all know who have travelled that road, which faces the "sweet south," and overlooks one of those rich pastoral landscapes, such as are to be found nowhere but in England. A rudely-clad, merry-faced hostler issued from an opposite stable, whistling the tune of "We'll all be married when plums come in;" when nodding to the coachman, he patted one of the horses, and said: "This off-side leader improves a little, William;" then, shouldering the heavy portmanteau, walked into the house. The guard touched his hat in acknowledgment of the handsome fee he had received from the young traveller; swung himself once more into his seat, blew his horn to warn a sluggish waggoner to alter the course of his team, and the coach (with all its

muffled and thoughtful passengers) was soon lost to the eye in a distant turning of the road.

The young stranger, who appeared to be under twenty, followed the course of the vehicle with a calm meditative glance until it was no longer visible, when unlooping his heavy travelling cloak, he threw it carelessly over his arm, and stood gazing in silence upon the beautiful scenery which opened before him. The river Trent, curved its silver arm in the morning sunshine, and flowed along with a calm, sleepy, motion, through rich and expansive meadow-lands, where the gold of the kingcup and the radiant whiteness of the daisy, mingled with the varied green of the grass, over which the eye wandered with delight; until it was lost amid the sunny slopes of the uplands, the dim foliage of the far-off trees, and the dazzling distance of hill and sky.

His reverie was, however, suddenly broken by the re-appearance of the hostler, who pausing in the midst of his favourite tune, looked with a smile upon the landscape, and said, "It's likely to be a fine hay-season, sir. I never saw the meadows look better; there's a good depth of grass."

The young man turned round, stared at the hostler, and replied, "indeed," and was proceeding to link the beautiful lines together, so descriptive of morning, in Milton's "L'Allegro," when his matter-of-fact intruder again broke the thread of his meditations by saying, "Are you bound to journey further to-day, sir?" "Yes, to Burton Woodhouse," answered the traveller (for such shall we denominate the place fixed upon for the chief scenes of our story); "at what hour does the coach set out for the Low-road?"

"There is no coach along the Low-road now, sir," answered the man. "Those that used to run have gone all to smash long ago. Bill Bowley run himself into Lincoln gaol, and Frank Farrow, that started the opposition, got into debt all he could, then started off to America. He owed me a month's wages, sir."

"But the road," said the stranger, "is there then no conveyance?"

"None that you would like to go by," replied the hostler; "there's Turner, the carrier, but he doesn't go above two miles an hour, and stays to bait a long while at Newton. To be sure, there's the landlord of the Black Swan will be past here about ten in his gig, but he only goes as far as Long Collingham. As to a postchaise, they won't run that heavy sand road for less than double the common charge."

The young man shook his head, paused a few moments, and said, "Then I must hire some saddle-horse, and send the luggage by the carrier you have named. Who is there hereabout that keeps a good hackney?"

"Why, Matthew Garland has a pretty-going tit he lets out," answered the hostler, "but it's at grass now; and a horse ought to be kept up over night on hard meat, to make it fit to run over twenty miles of heavy sand road. Let me see," and scratching his head a moment, he looked on the ground, then added, "there's Mr. Slack, but Jackson the exciseman had his little bay galloway out about a week ago, and got drunk, and broke both its knees; it would hardly be fit to run yet. Joe Brommet's gone to Bingham, and won't be back before noon, then his horse will want a little rest; Kitchen's has got the bots—no, I know of nothing at this end o' the town, sir. You'd better go by Lincoln away in the Defiance. It isn't above ten miles round; and there's no other way of going without you walk."

"And how long will that coach be before it arrives?" inquired the young man.

The hostler pulled up one side of his waistcoat, straddled out his legs, and laying hold of a faded red ribbon, to which was appended a brass seal and key (bought of some hawker for gold), dragged forth a little old-fashioned watch, and said, "about three hours, sir. It's now on the turn of six, London time; my watch goes very regular; I set it by the coachman's chronometer. Old Jim's generally here within a minute or so of nine."

"I hope breakfast is not so scarce a matter along this road as coaches," said the young gentleman. "How say you, can I be accommodated?"

"With breakfast? O yes, sir! though ours isn't what's called a tip-top inn, you'll find every thing as clean and comfortable as if it was, and a good deal more so than some that I know." So saying, he led the way into the house.

Notwithstanding the hostler's boast about cleanliness and comfort, the room into which the traveller was conducted presented an appearance the very reverse of what was promised. This the guide (who had doubtless forgotten himself for the moment) detected at a glance, and he made off under cover of his favourite tune, though not before he received a volley of abuse from the servant girl, who was blackleading the grate, and exclaimed, "How could you think

John hostler, of bringing a gentleman into the parlour when it's in this state, and when you knew that Mr. Clark held his boot and shoe-club here last night; you might have shewn him into the kitchen till I'd done here; it is clean and sweet; but you never have no thought for one." And replacing the handkerchief which had slipped aside and exposed her neck somewhat too freely, she recommenced brushing the grate.

The hint was not lost upon the stranger, nor did the room offer any temptation that might induce him to stay; for the tables bore visible signs of the overnight's business—the marks of ale-jugs, half-burnt splints, broken pipes, and the ashes of tobacco, with scraps of paper in which were left the remnants of unsmoked "penny-worths." The floor also was strewn with sand, which had received its share of the homely libation, while the chairs stood at all angles, and one or two which were overturned, seemed no bad emblems of the state in which the guests had departed; added to which, the apartment smelt strongly of tobacco-smoke, that (however pleasant it might have been on the previous evening) offered up such an odour, as even a lover of the "soothing weed" would fain have avoided.

The kitchen or tap-room, into which the traveller now entered, was, as the servant-maid had described it, "clean and sweet," and very unlike such places as go under the same denomination in crowded cities. The slabbed floor was dry and white, having been well scoured with freestone, and looked (to use a country phrase) "as if you could have eaten your dinner off it." The tables had also the same clean appearance; the long settle was bright and free from dust; and in a large old-fashioned fireplace hung the huge kettle, "singing its quiet tune," even at that early hour; while a good-looking damsel, niece to mine host, was already setting out the breakfast-table. The hams and flitches which hung around, told that this was a "land of plenty," while a goodly array of brass, copper, and block-tin utensils, plated spurs, bits and stirrup irons, with a number of other etceteras, such as are only to be found with their proper names in an auctioneer's catalogue, told that Betty the servant-maid must have a good deal of "rubbing and scrubbing" to keep them all in such excellent order.

At one end of the settle sat the landlord, his foot cased in a large listing-shoe, and resting on a stool, telling at once a tale of good eating, good drinking, and—the gout. He was still a fine, tall,

hearty, old fellow, with a twinkle of good humour in his eye, and a glow of health in his countenance, which was mottled with hundreds of small red lines, telling (as he once said in a merry mood) "of the number of bottles of brandy he had drank in his lifetime." He had been a horse-soldier, and guard of the mail; had fought at more than one battle in the field, and encountered highwaymen on the road; and now seventy, hale, and sound (excepting an occasional twinge of the gout), had, for the last twenty years of his life, settled down, staidly and (sometimes) soberly, into the character of mine host of the Fallow Deer. He made an attempt to rise as the young traveller entered, caught his gouty foot against the table-leg in so doing, swore a huge round oath, and bade him good morning in the same breath; then smoothing down the wry face the accident had called up, resumed the conversation, in which he seemed deeply interested, with a man who sat on the same settle, and who, although at so early an hour, had already made deep inroad into a quart jug of ale.

This personage was a man of remarkable exterior, large and fat, with a countenance that seemed as if it had never known care; there was a kind of "come-day, go-day" appearance about him; he looked, to use a homely phrase, "a jolly-hearted fellow." And such a man in reality was Ben Brust,—one who never troubled his head with what his neighbours thought about him,—who never worked until he was fairly forced, or thought of obtaining new clothes until the old ones had all but dropped from his back. He looked too fat to think; he was too weighty a man for care to bend down; "waking thought" seldom sat on Ben's eyelids, for he had been heard to say, that "he never remembered being in bed five minutes without falling asleep;" he was a philosopher in his own peculiar way. If he was hungry, he could make a meal in a turnip-field; a bean-stack was to Ben a banquet: had you named poverty to him he would have stared, and said "he knew no farmer of that name,"—still he loved a good dinner. A comfortable man was Ben Brust.

Ben was married; his wife was a thin, spare, cross-grained little woman, with a sharp vinegar aspect, so thin that she was nicknamed "Famine," while Ben was called "Plenty;" he would have bumped down three wives, the size of his own, in any fair scale in England. Famine went out to work, while Plenty lay sleeping in the sunshine; she was "scratching and saving," washed and cleaned for people in the village, Plenty sat on gates and stiles, whistling, or sometimes standing on the bridge would spit in the water and watch it float

away; and, when the day was not very hot indeed, go on the other side to see it come through. "O, he is a lazy good-for-nowt!" his wife would exclaim, "but I never let him finger a farthing of my gettings. I keep my own cupboard under lock and key, and never trouble him for a bite or a sup, year in and year out; all I desire him to do is to keep himself."

Ben, on the other hand, used to say, "a man's a fool that kills himself to keep himself. When a rich man dies he can't take his wealth with him, and I've heard the parson advise folks to take no thought for the morrow; besides, it was a saying before I was born, that there is but a groat a year between work and play, and they say play gets it; all the comforts of life consist in "snoring and brusting" (for such were the elegant terms he chose for sleep and food); as to clothes, a flower and a butterfly are finer than anybody in the land."

Such were Ben Brust's sentiments, who now sat with his eyes fixed on the table, as if wondering to himself "why a quart jug was no bigger, and why they could not charge so much for a bellyful, without having such troublesome things as measures, which were only made to keep a waiter running in and out like a dog in a fair." There he sat, with his breeches knees unbuttoned, the tie of his neckerchief twisted in a line with his ear, one stocking half down, his waistcoat, just as he had slipped it on, and his boots covered with dust, for a brush had never passed over them since the day they were first given him by butcher Hyde.

But let us not wrong Ben, for he could both feel and think; and he who cared so little for himself, had been known to heave a sigh for the sorrows of others. And he was then talking with the host about old times,—and old faces passed before him. Death had removed many good dinners, Harvest-homes, and May-games, and all the good things he so well remembered, that were passing away with these ancient customs. And Ben sighed, a longer and a fainter sigh than what other people heave, but nevertheless as sincere. But we will resume the conversation which was carried on between these worthies, leaving our traveller, meantime, engaged with a good breakfast.

"Hey! it's a many years then," said Ben, "since you left our village. I should think almost before my time?"

"A long while! a long while!" answered the host, with a mournful shake of the head. "It's fifty years come next Lady-day, Ben. I

was born in that old thatched cottage, that fronts the large elm on the green. My grandfather was born under the same roof."

"It's been pulled down above seven years," replied Ben. "Farmer Rudsdale has built a new house on the spot; you wouldn't know the place now, it's so altered;" and he drank another glass of ale.

"Pulled down, is it?" muttered the host, with a sigh. "Then I shall never leave this house, until I'm carried out. I had thought, that if ever my niece got married, of leaving this business to her, and ending my days in that old cottage; but it's pulled down at last; well! well! And the old rose-tree, that covered the front, it's gone too! Do you remember the tree, Ben? I set it when I was about the height of this table."

"I do," answered Ben, "and many a May-garland it has helped to make. I've robbed it many a time, while Patty Simpson watched; but she's dead and gone, poor thing. It was a fine old tree, and bore to the last."

"It was! it was!" echoed the landlord, in a tone of voice which partook of sadness. "The last roses I gathered from it, Ben, were to put in a coffin, and the next day I went for a soldier—that's fifty years ago. Rebecca," added he, calling to his niece, "bring me my medicine; I'm forced to take a glass of brandy in a morning, else I feel shaky."

"It's a good thing at any time," answered Ben, "and far before tea; poor Joe Robinson used to say it was meat, drink, and clothing."

"Ah, poor Joe!" said the landlord, lifting the glass to his lips, then gazing thoughtfully at the fire, "I'd quite forgotten that he was dead, though Black Ralph, that drove the Diligence, wrote me word at the time; but in some things I find my memory fails me; poor Joe!—he was on the box when I was guard of the Edinburgh mail, and we were stopped by highwaymen between Darlington and Durham. You've heard me tell that story (Ben nodded); well, he's gone! brandy and old age finished him, as it will me some day; poor Joe—a better hearted lad never sat behind four horses," and he once more drank deeply; when, after another long pause, as if calling up the images of those with whom he was once familiar, he said, "I reckon poor old Giles the roper, is dead and gone?"

"Been dead a many years," answered Ben; "he came down very low in the world before he died—lost his rope-walk—and had to become journeyman to his former apprentice, Tom Brown; poor fellow, he had his ups and downs."

"And his son, Gideon," continued the landlord, "he was over here some time ago; I hope he's more fortunate than his father."

"Not a whit," replied Ben, with a sigh; "he's getting into years now; I should say past middle life; and still works journey-work for Mr. Brown, as his father did beforetime. Poor fellow; he's had a deal of bother with Sir Edward Lee, about that hut and bit of waste land by the road-side; and since the parish took up cudgels for him, and beat the baronet at law, he never seemed to like Gideon after. Lady Lee took Gideon's eldest daughter, Ellen, into service some time ago, but she left last week all of a sudden; there's been a deal said about it, for Ellen's reckoned very good-looking, and they tell strange tales about Sir Edward. Be this as it may, the lady and Miss Amy have often visited Gideon's hut, since Ellen left the hall, and never a week passes without their sending something by the footman in a basket; but it will all be known one day or other." Ben drank off his glass, and took up the jug to replenish it again, but it was empty. He looked into the jug twice, as if to make sure that his eyes had not deceived him; something he would have said, had not his attention been attracted by the voice of the young traveller, who had listened attentively to their conversation, and now said, "Does Miss Lee still reside at Burton Woodhouse with her father?"

Ben and the landlord looked with astonishment at the stranger, for so engrossed had they been with their own conversation, that they had all but forgotten he was present, and had left him to discuss his breakfast in silence. Ben's look, however, was the most intent; he raised his head gradually from the settle, muttered half aloud, "It is, no it's not, and yet, it looks like him" (the traveller smiled), and Ben sprung up, exclaiming, with a voice that made the roof ring, "Master Walter! Master Walter! to think that you should sit here so long, and me not know you, so often has I've helped you to fish, and look for nests, when Miss Amy was—"

"Yes, yes, I remember it well," said Walter, interrupting him, while his cheek coloured, and extending his hand with a familiar frankness, Ben shook it heartily.

CHAPTER II.

CONTAINS A FURTHER ACCOUNT OF THE HOST, THE TRAVELLER, AND BEN BRUST—ALSO HOW BEN FELL ASLEEP BY THE ROAD-SIDE, WITH WHAT HE FOUND WHEN HE AWOKE, AND WHAT BEFEL HIS BULLOCK AND THE TINKER.

WE shall not trouble our readers with the conversation which immediately followed this recognition,—it was full of homely inquiries and plain answers about the living and the dead, and the changes which had taken place at Burton Woodhouse in seven brief years. Perhaps the young gentleman would have thought it beneath his dignity to have shaken the brown hard hand of Ben Brust, if he had met him in the village street; but Ben was the first object that brought "home" before his eyes, and if our better feelings are awakened by gazing on some old familiar tree, stile, or footpath, after a long absence, why should we seek to shun the honest, though poorest, inmate of the lowliest cottage, if we have known him in former days? The human heart contains a thousand kindly sympathies, which are only held back by false pride.

Ben's jug was again replenished, at the expense of the young traveller, and the cold roast-beef (which had done duty at the breakfast table) placed before him. The ale-glass was filled, and taking off his hat, Ben said, "I drink to your very good health, and safe return, Master Walter, and hope you'll never leave us again." And Ben held his peace for a long period,—even until the beef weighed a pound and a half less than it did when first put before him. Once he did speak, in answer to the host, who, observing he had eaten up all the bread, said, "there's plenty more bread, Ben."

"Thank you," answered Ben; "but I wouldn't give a pin for a man who can't make a meal of good beef, without bread. I think it's wilful extravagance." And helping himself to another huge slice, he proceeded, according to his own notions, to follow this new system of economy.

Walter Northcot (for such was the name of our traveller) had resided, up to within the last seven years of his life, with his uncle, who was the rector of Burton Woodhouse. His mother died while he was but an infant; nor did his father (who had occupied the rank

of colonel in the army) long survive her death. Left thus early to the charge of the worthy clergyman, he felt not the loss of his parents, for never did a father love his son more affectionately than the good old bachelor did his nephew. Walter had been educated at Cambridge, and had already distinguished himself by winning the prize given by that celebrated University, for the best poem on the "Pyramids of Egypt," which had been printed and duly forwarded to his respected uncle. His limited funds had saved him from launching into those excesses which too many of the young students plunge into; but this had not prevented him from making friends amongst those to whom genius is ever the chief recommendation. But he had now quitted the "great seat of learning," and was about to spend the summer at the rectory, previous to entering the army; for the wealth he inherited from his father was but little more than sufficient to purchase his commission. His uncle had written him numerous epistles, in which he pointed out the advantages to be gained by preparing himself for either the bar or the pulpit; but Walter's "voice was still for war," and his reason was, "my father was a soldier." Such was the position in which Walter Northcot stood at the time we bring him before our readers; and, as he is destined to play so prominent a part in our story, we deem it necessary to divulge thus much of his history.

The worthy host of the "Fallow Deer" had known the young gentleman's father in former years, and now kindly remembered that he had some business with farmer Watkinson of Torksey, which was within two miles of Burton Woodhouse. "And now," continued he, "as the day is fine, I'll just have yon little black pony of mine put in the gig and drive over, if you've no objection to take a seat beside me."

The young traveller frankly accepted the offer, and thanked him for his kindness in such a manner as made the host proud of his proposition, for he was one of that class who like not their generosity to be rejected, who offer not their favours for mere form's sake, but have more pleasure in giving than others have in receiving—and there are many such kind-hearted men as our host in the world.

"If you would stay and take a bit of dinner with me," continued the landlord, "I should feel greatly obliged. We shall dine early, and the pony would run all the better after a good feed of corn, as it's been all night at grass. I'll warrant him to take us to Torksey within three hours, heavy as the road is; and it will do me good to

hobble out, and shew you my little garden, and stable before we start; you'll find I'm comfortably situated in my old age."

Walter Northcot was too much of a gentleman to refuse an offer which promised so much gratification to the feelings of the kind old host, anxious as he was to meet his guardian at the rectory; and the landlord again proceeded.

"Your father was a much younger man than me, but a kinder-hearted gentleman never lived. I remember his going up to London one bitter winter's day, many years ago, when I was guard of the mail; he was the only passenger, and he would have me dine with him where we stopped, when he found I was a native of the same village as himself. And he always spoke to me, meet where we would, ever after. Colonel Northcot had none of your stuck up pride about him. Ah! he was a kind gentleman." And the old man heaved a deep sigh, then took a long pull at the glass.

"Well," said Ben, having now eaten until he was full to the throat, "I must think about going, as yon bullock I have to take is very fat, and butcher Hyde said, I was to drive it slowly, for you see, if I was to hurry it, the fat wouldn't set so well when it's killed. I dare say you'll overtake me on the road. Mr. Hyde pays for the quart of ale I had at first, as usual. I've another quart, and bread and cheese, allowed me at Besthorpe."

"What, do you live without money yet, Ben?" said the host, casting a merry glance at his guest. "I thought you'd got weary of that plan before now."

"No," said Ben, undoing the last button of his waistcoat, "I've never carried money with me since I heard that clever man lecture, as they call it, at Lincoln, when he fairly shewed that money's all moonshine, and made it appear as plain as the nose on your face, by proving that money can't be eaten. He was right, and so I've found it ever since by doing without; yesterday I went to butcher Hyde's for some meat, and he says, 'Ben, you owe me three shillings;' it's right said I, I do. 'Well,' says he, 'you must fetch yon bullock I've bought from Newark, before I trust you any more.' Well, says I, if I must, I must; and accordingly I came. He pays for all refreshment that's allowed me, next time he goes by. By the same rule, when I've run up a bit of a score with Matthew Fisher at the Windmill, for ale, and he won't trust me any more, I grind his malt, or whatever he wants doing; same with the baker, same with everybody. Clothes I never buy. No Master, lock you up in a room full of money

without victuals, and you would soon want to come out. It's all moonshine."

"You are a strange fellow Ben," said the host, "and folks say queer things about you."

"God forgive 'em," said Ben, "words do no harm. Lord bless you! they talk against the king sometimes, but who believes 'em? I wish they would talk against nobody else but me." And Ben chatted away at such a rate, that however much it might amuse the host, we fear it would but be wearisome to our readers; but, be it remembered, he had drank two quarts of strong home-brewed ale. He then thanked the young gentleman for his kindness, grasped his huge stick, called to the dog, and puffing as if he had eaten until he found a difficulty in breathing, left the room with the grace of an elephant.

Walter availed himself of the time occupied by the landlord and his niece at breakfast, in washing himself, and making such arrangements in his person, as, after a night's travelling, are almost as refreshing as sleep. He was shewn into a neat little chamber for this purpose, the window of which overlooked the delicious landscape we have so faintly described. The walls of the room were hung with coloured prints, illustrating the History of Ruth,—the corn-field in which she was gleaning was painted in most "dashing yellow." The scene representing Boaz in bed, would have moved the staid muscles of a bishop—the set was unique. The bed was white and sweet, and as honest old Izaak Walton says, "you longed to lie in a pair of sheets that smelt so sweet, in a room stuck with lavender." The young traveller felt strongly inclined to rest himself for an hour or two, but was ashamed of being rallied by the host, who no doubt had many a tale in reserve, of the days and nights he had passed without sleeping. Walter Northcot was not one of those young men who think that gentility is enhanced by assuming habits of effeminacy, or that it was a lessening of his dignity to dine with the humble host of a road-side inn. The world would be all the better if the fetters which are worn by "high society" were broken; if rich and poor were to meet together on a more equal footing; if they would but oftener bear in mind that the king and the beggar are formed of the same "common earth;" and that even the dog becomes endeared to his master by kindness. Rank requires a necessary distance, but assuredly it would lose nothing if the chain was not always kept at full stretch. Respect is a cold, unmeaning term, and stands for

nothing, without kindness and love. We have heard of a poor man who took off his hat to a great lord's dog; he but paid the same compliment to "my lord."

After breakfast, the host put on his best suit, in honour of his guest; and, considering his years and the gout, managed to move about with tolerable freedom. He had many a little story to tell, and one connected with the blackthorn walking-stick on which he supported himself; it was a present from some one who had gone somewhere, whose brother once kept some inn, and lost so much money by "having" so many coaches, with a long tale of how much his father left him when he died. And Walter was much puzzled to disentangle the web of this intricate narrative; for brother was twisted with brother, and then came the father and *his* father, with such a confusion of tenses, as would have frightened a learned grammarian; and far be it from such unlettered wights as ourselves to venture upon a full explanation. The old man took the offered arm of his companion, paused at the door to point out the beauty of the landscape, uplifted his stick to mark the course of the river, shewed how far his own fields extended, told how many acres each contained, what plan he had adopted to bring them into such an excellent state of cultivation, gave him an account of "bush harrowing," and many other matters, to which his guest listened without once thinking he was a "bore." He then took the young gentleman across the road into his little garden, bid him not be afraid of the bees which were humming in the sweet sunshine, pointed out his promising crop of peas, pulled up a few radishes and onions to shew their size, told how many years such and such trees had been planted, what prizes he had won by his gooseberry bushes, in which he took especial pride. He then gathered a beautiful nosegay, supporting himself on his stick as he stooped, and having tied it up neatly, presented it to his companion. Having drawn Walter's attention to two cows which were feeding in the neighbouring paddock, he then led the way to the stable. The handsome pony was already munching its corn (for the hostler had lost no time in "fetching it up,") and pricked up his ears at the well-known voice of the host; he took a handful of grain from the crib, and next called his poultry together. Two of the finest pullets were that morning condemned to death, and a deep incision made in the primest ham, and many another little "kick-shaw," as Justice Shallow says, was in preparation for dinner.

But lest our readers should have less patience than Walter North-

cot, we will pass by all the little kindnesses which our worthy host shewed to his guest; make no mention of the good dinner he provided, and the "generous old wine" that sparkled on his board. We have a land of "wild adventure" before us, but must reach it in our own way; and those who journey with us must be content to travel at the same pace as ourselves, remembering that we have set out in an old-fashioned vehicle along a cross-road, which neither Mac Adam nor railways have yet improved. Wishing them, however, to bear in mind that whatever tricks we may play with names and localities, our characters are drawn from the life, and that the events we are about to record, are "ALAS! TOO TRUE."

After our handsome traveller had paid a parting salute to the sweet lips of the fair niece (an old-fashioned country custom), he entered the gig, and from the low curtsey of Betty the maid, and the many quick short bows of John hostler, there was but little doubt that he had remembered these worthy functionaries. The hostler led the pony a few paces, then off they set in gallant style, for our host was a most excellent driver. The town of Newark was soon past, and they made good progress along that little-known road, where a finger-post yet stands, and makes the humble pedestrian sigh, who knows the weary way, as he reads, "TO GAINSBRO' 25 MILES;" and 25 miles of such road cannot be found in all England in the present day. Sand! heavy, deep sand; with but few alterations; no doubt presenting nearly the same features as it did one hundred years ago. And what footsteps are now plodding wearily over it, and halting by some bank to empty the sand from their heavy shoes, or cooling their feet in a wayside brook? we know not; years have passed away since we went on pilgrimage and penance along that path.

And poor Ben Brust broiled as he followed the bullock, for he was hot with ale and full of beef. Peter Pindar's pilgrim never cursed his unboiled peas more heartily than Ben did that sandy road in the "sweat of his great agony." Plod, plod, went the bullock, and ankle-deep went Ben. O! that cursed common beyond Besthorpe. Ben sat down on a bank to swear. He pulled his heavy boots off to ease his feet; by degrees he threw his head back on the bank, he watched a skylark as it soared singing into the sky, and wondered how it ever managed to mount that height, so hot as it was; and then he fell asleep. While Ben was asleep, a tinker came by whose shoes were in a wretched plight, one of the soles having

come off a mile before he reached that spot. He tried on Ben's boots, and found them a capital fit, and he walked away, leaving a shoe and a piece behind. Ben's dog was a long way a-head, keeping guard over the bullock, or the "mender of pans" would not so easily have made the exchange. The tinker looked hard at Ben's hat, which lay beside him on the bank, compared it carefully with his own, and finding it the worst, kicked it into the middle of the road, and passed on. Shortly after, a cart, in which the driver lay asleep, came by; the heavy wheel went over Ben's hat, and almost buried it in the sand. A boy in a smock-frock went whistling past before Ben awoke, he picked up the hat and examined it, without ever bestowing a thought on the sleeper, and saying, "It i'll dow femously for our Measter's scarecrow," walked off with the prize—but Ben slept on.

Within the space of an hour our travellers drew up, and the merry host, on perceiving the sleeper, placed his hand to his mouth, and commenced a thundering "view hallo," which caused Ben to start like an affrighted fox. His dog too, which had by this time returned, added to the noise, by its loud barking. Ben rubbed his eyes, then stood staring at the travellers without speaking a word; he then looked round for his boots, and his eye alighted upon the wreck of a pair of shoes. "Well, I'm ——;" the words stuck in Ben's throat: he stooped, picked one up, and holding it by a flying patch, said, "Some cursed thief's stole my boots, and look what he's left. I shall never be able to walk home; the man that wore these shoes had two left feet. Whatever will my wife say?"

"Bad job, Ben," replied the host, "make you remember sleeping with your boots off; but where's the bullock? I don't see it on the road."

Ben stared, and shading the sun from his eyes with his hand, gazed in silence down the long line of road; but, saving a donky that was tethered to a post, no living object met his glance. Ben threw the shoes east and west, and bareheaded and barefooted (for he wore what is called "leggings,"—stockings with the feet either cut or worn off), he set off at full speed to search for the bullock, whose course he was able to trace by its footmarks in the sand. The travellers slackened their pace to keep company with the unfortunate drover, for Walter would not consent to leave him in such a dilemma, and another mile brought them to the entrance of the next village. The dog ran on first, and halted before the pinfold, where it stood

barking. Ben looked through the gate, and saw his bullock in the pound! he took hold of the lock, and his eye alighted upon a huge stone; but he remembered the law, and began to damn the Pinder most heartily.

"Money's not all moonshine now, Ben," said the host, "you've found the beast with a vengeance, as Mossy found his mare."

"It will take a good white shilling to liberate him," said Ben; "and what the devil harm could he do on this road, without he could live on sand. Boots and hat gone too; and I don't know a likelier man than this Pinder to have stolen 'em. A pretty day's work I shall make of it before I've done."

"We must find this Pinder," said Walter, laughing at Ben, who stood scratching his head and looking through the gate; then calling to a lubberly lad who stood by, he inquired where the Pounder of cattle was to be found.

"You'll find him at th' yeal-house, zur," answered the peasant; "he allos goes there when he's pinned aught."

"Never knew a Pinder far from the ale-pot," said the host. And they alighted at the Old Black Bull, for, as the landlord said, "a mouthful of corn, and a draught of water, would do the pony no harm after a run of ten miles."

In the kitchen they found the Pinder, beside him reared his long staff, and before him stood a jug of ale. He was a tall, weather-beaten fellow, with legs well adapted to stride along a heavy road. He knew Ben at a glance, and offered him a glass of ale. A thin, grim-looking man, who sat beside the hob, began to buckle on his budget as the guests entered, and was making for the door, when Ben caught a glance at his boots. "Not so fast, my fine fellow," said Ben, "turn and turn about is fair play they say, and as my boots have carried you one stage so comfortably, why I think I'll just try them myself again for the next."

"What do you mean," said the tinker, "by looking at my boots?"

"Come, off with 'em," said Ben, who had seized him by the collar, "you'll find the shoes you left behind none the worse for wear since you exchanged." And Ben uplifted his huge fist as he spoke.

"These are none of your boots," said the tinker.

"Had your boot a plate off the left heel?" inquired Ben.

"Yes, it had," replied the tinker, without hesitation.

"Then mine had not," replied Ben, and he tripped up the heels of the tinker in a moment, to convince the company that he spoke the truth.

The Tinker sat on the floor, and pulled off the boots without saying a word. "And now," said Ben, as he put them on, "just keep him a moment till I'm ready, and we'll settle this matter without going to law."

Ben got up, and made his boots so rattle on the tinker's leather breeches, that the host swore he would never forget the sound while he lifted hammer to tin. The mender of pans roared out most lustily, as he ran off crest-fallen and barefooted through the village, amid the hootings and hissings of the guests. The Pinder was so well pleased with Ben's method of doing justice, that he offered to liberate the bullock without the fine being paid, though he swore he himself should have to pay the lord of the manor half the fee out of his own pocket.

"That you will soon make up," said the host. "It is only going out in the moonlight and throwing open a few gates, the cattle will soon find their way to the high-road, and then you know where to drive them to be safe." The Pinder grinned, but said nothing, and our traveller arose to depart.

"Well," said Ben, looking at the Pinder and then at the ale-jug, "we'll never part over an empty pot, as the saying is."

"Fill it again, then," said the host; and turning to Walter, he added, "you can tell them at Burton-Woodhouse, that Ben's never coming home again; for if he and the Pinder wont part over an empty pot, I'll be sworn they never will over a full one."

This sally was received by the topers with such a laugh as even gratified the host, who had paid for the liquor. Walter was seen to slip something into Ben's hand before he departed, and the gig was again speedily in motion, and soon left the marks of its deep narrow wheels in another mile of weary sand.

"Now," said the host, as they rode along, "Ben has settled yon business in a much better way than dragging the thief of a tinker before a justice. Fending and proving, and committing the fellow to prison, would never have had half the effect on him that this public punishment has. I'll be sworn its the first time in his life that ever he was ashamed to shew his face in the open day." They passed along, by homesteads and villages of but little interest—places were a club-feast, a wedding, or a death, were the only changes that seemed to move the dreamy and listless inhabitants.

They arrived safely at Torksey; and as Walter Northcot had formerly known the wealthy farmer where the host stopped, he

could not well refuse the invitation to stay tea, which the handsome daughter, with a low curtsey, said, "was already on the table."

The sun was sinking behind the woody uplands of Nottinghamshire when Walter bade a kind adieu to the host; and as the distance he had to traverse was but short, and every spot of ground familiar to him from his boyish days, he refused the offer of a horse, and set out alone on the footpath, which on the one hand skirted the river Trent, and on the other sloped down into green and luxuriant meadows.

CHAPTER III.

A DASH OF THE DESCRIPTIVE—WITH A DISCOVERY MADE BY WALTER NORTHCOT, WHICH SOMEWHAT PUZZLES HIM, AND WHICH THE READER WILL IN DUE TIME BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH.

Walter Northcot was then alone, and for the first time after many years traversing the very scenes which were endeared to him by a thousand fond recollections,—he cast his eyes on the ruins of the old castle which were gilded by the last rays of sunset, that shot a dusky splendour through the rugged loop-holes and shattered mullions, now shorn of all their gaudy glass, and remembered that the last time he visited those ruins, he was not alone,—and how should he be received by that beautiful being, whom he had handed up the broken turret-stairs? for whom, at the risk of his neck, he had climbed those crumbling battlements to gather the sweet wall-flowers? He sighed, and walked thoughtfully along, as he unconsciously answered, "Amy Lee is now a woman;" and his fancy again conjured up the image of her stern father; but he knew not then into what an awful abyss the proud baronet was plunged. On he wandered in that lovely May evening, inhaling the balmy air, which came with all the sweetness of heaven upon earth, for the hawthorn was in full bloom, and threw out a rich aroma from its white and pinky blossoms. The willows on the banks waved to and fro like flowers in a stream, and the river glided along in the rich sunset like a moving mirror of gold. Sometimes the surface was broken by the finny tribe, as they rose to snatch at the hovering insects, and the ruddy ripples circled out to the reedy shore, bowing,

for a moment the tall water-flags and the rustling sedge. Walter Northcot saw a beauty in the scene he had never before witnessed; he had heard the ring-dove coo a thousand times from the fir-plantations, but the sound had never before fallen upon his heart so subdued and spirit-like -- a voice that seemed calling him home.

The grey twilight began to dim the face of nature as he sauntered along the river banks, and while within the last field or two that led to the village, he heard a light footstep behind him, and turning round, beheld a beautiful peasant-girl, who made a low curtsey as she passed, and without raising her eyes after the first glance, whispered a low sweet "good night," in answer to his greeting, and was soon lost in the deepening twilight. Walter was more struck by the symmetry of her figure, which was almost faultless, than the beauty of her countenance, for there was a natural grace in her motion very different to that of most country maidens; a tripping lightness in her step, and a freedom in the waving of her arm, while the little basket she carried sat upon her elbow more with the ease of an ornament than a burthen. The young man thought he had seen her face before, but it was associated with the figure of a girl, and he tried in vain to recal to mind the handsome young woman whom he doubted not was a native of the village. That she was poor, the humble neatness of her attire foretold, and he went on musing to himself until other thoughts occupied his mind.

At length he descended the bank, and passing between the barrier of willows, pursued his way along the edge of the river, for it was now near low-water, and the ground, which the ebb had left dry, was smooth and hard. The sun had by this time set, and nothing was discernible in the west but the billowy gold of the clouds, which like broken and crested waves had swallowed up the wreck of glory that still shone through the depths into which it had descended. The distant line of hills was dim and indistinct, and saving the dreamy whisper of the willows, and the low faint murmur of the river, all along the shore was silent.

Leaving him for a few moments to enjoy the beauty of the scenery, and proceed homewards at his leisure, we must follow the steps of the maiden who passed before him on the bank, and having climbed the stile, was lost to sight by the high hedge that divided the fields. She had not proceeded far before she was met by a tall man who, from his looks, must have been between forty and fifty, and whose outward garments bespoke him a gentleman. The young woman

trembled as he approached, and looked back in alarm, as if to see if the stranger was at hand that she had before passed. But Walter had descended the bank, and had it even been broad daylight, the height of the willows would have shut him out from her gaze.

"Be not alarmed, Ellen," said the stranger, who saw that it was her intent to descend the bank to avoid him, "on mine honour I will not harm you."

"I am not afraid," answered the maiden, in a voice tremulous with affright, as she made a circle through the wet grass, and passed before him.

"Walk not so fast," continued the man, keeping pace with her, for she seemed to hesitate whether or not she should run. "I have much to say to you; many things that you must know. I have a plan for bettering the circumstances of your family—of placing you in a station that becomes your beauty. Ellen, I would be a friend to you."

"God, in his goodness, will send us help when we need it," answered the young woman. "Seek not to do me further injury; you have already compelled me to leave the service of a kind lady: and—" she was silent, and walked along at a quicker pace.

"Well, well, that is past," said he, placing his hand on her shoulder, and drawing forth a well-filled purse which he attempted to force upon her; but she slided from his grasp and descended the bank, although the grass was wet as a river with the dew. "Come, be not so foolish," he continued, holding out the purse, "here is what will make up for a long loss of service; when it is gone I will give you more. Come, Ellen, and be friends with me."

The girl shook her head, and again passed on before him in silence.

"Think of the offer I have made you," continued her tormentor; "accept it, and I will purchase the cottage to-morrow, furnish you with a servant, or you shall choose one. Will not this be better than marrying some clown, and rearing up a race of beggars to fill yonder New Poor-house, and living in rags and misery all your days? Come, be kind to me, Ellen, you know how madly I love you." He made a sudden stride, and unexpectedly threw his arms round her waist.

"Let me go, for Heaven's sake," exclaimed the girl, sturggling to free herself. "Let me go, I entreat you. My little brother is very ill, and I have been to Torksey for his medicine; this hindrance may be his death, for the doctor bid me speed. Some other time I will

listen to you. Remember that you have daughters of your own;—that they may—"

But she pleaded in vain, for he held her securely in his grasp, and drawing her face towards his own, stopped her breath with his lips; he swore he loved her, called her his angel, his dear Ellen, and vowed that without her he could not live a day or an hour. His breathing became thick, his eyes flashed with fierce passion; and while he released his arm from her neck, to draw her yet closer, she raised her voice and called aloud for help, and extricating herself by a powerful effort from his grasp, let fall her basket, and shot from him like an affrighted fawn.

Walter heard the scream, and, dashing through the willows, soon gained the summit of the bank, though at a short distance from the spot where the man still stood: as for the maiden, she was already out of sight. He halted within a few paces of the stranger, and, without observing him closely, glanced around as if in search of the object that had raised the alarm; but seeing no one saving the individual that stood before him, he said,

"I heard a voice as of some one calling for help, and having seen a young woman pass by a few minutes ago, feared that she had been attacked by some ruffian. Heard you no one call, sir?"

"It might be some boy shouting to his cows, or the creaking of a gate," answered the stranger, and was about to pass on, when Walter drew nearer and said,

"I have the honour of speaking to Sir Edward Lee, if I mistake not? I am Walter Northcot."

"Ay, indeed! I hope Mr. Northcot is well," said the baronet. "I should scarcely have recognised you had it been noon-day, instead of this owl-light. Do you purpose making any stay at the rectory?"

"It is uncertain," replied Walter. "It will probably be at the end of autumn before I take up my commission. I hope Lady Lee and —— and the family are well." There was another name on his lips, but he remembered himself.

"Why yes, all tolerably," answered Sir Edward, coldly. "You will of course look in amongst us when you have leisure."

"Thank you, I shall not be unneighbourly," replied Walter; "but intend paying my respects to the ladies in the morning. But what is here?" said he, observing the basket, and the articles it had contained, which lay scattered on the grass. "If I err not, this is the very basket which the young woman bore that passed by so recently.

Did you not meet her, Sir Edward? she would scarcely have had time to pass the park-lodge."

"I might," answered the baronet, colouring; "but I observe not the rustic maidens so closely as to notice what they carry. Good night, sir." He raised his hat and passed on.

Walter stooped down to collect the scattered contents of the basket, as he said to himself, "I will leave them at the first cottage I pass; they may be of consequence to some poor family." So met, for the first time after seven years, the father and the lover of Amy Lee. Walter went along musing to himself, and sorely puzzled how to account for the appearance of things. That he had heard a voice calling for help he could not doubt; but then—Sir Edward Lee so near at hand—and no other person visible! he could not suppose that the baronet himself had molested the maiden. Indeed such a thought did pass through his mind, but it was only to confirm the impossibility of such a thing happening; and having reached the park-lodge, he deposited the basket with the old gatekeeper, who, as it was dusk, and she somewhat near-sighted, failed to recognise his features; nor did he make himself known. The old woman shook her head, as if to say, she knew too well to whom it belonged.

The baronet walked on until he came to the stile before mentioned, when, waiting for a few seconds, a man approached stealthily along the hedge-side.

"Is it you, Banes?" was the first question.

"It is," answered the man. "I have been waiting this half hour, and should have come up before, had I not seen a stranger loitering about the banks."

"She has escaped us for the present," answered Sir Edward; "you will turn the horses' loose into the far-field nearest the wood. Some other night we may succeed. Is the woman you spoke of to be depended on?"

"There is no fear of her," answered the man; "for since the affair about her child, which was found drowned, she seems to have no wish to change her quarters; and nobody's likely to trouble her while she keeps herself snug up yonder by the wood."

"I should think not," answered the baronet. "But there's no doubt, I believe, about the child's being drowned by accident."

"I have none," replied the man; "if I had, although I don't pretend to be better than my neighbours, I would not live under the same roof with her."

"Well, then, hold yourself in readiness," said Sir Edward. "I have hunted too long to despair of running down the prey. If you can get her safe up yonder without my help, all the better. Use her as gently as circumstances will permit, and remember she has every thing she desires excepting her freedom."

The man promised, touched his hat, and departed, muttering to himself, "I'll be sworn a heiress of twenty thousand might be carried off with half the trouble; but old fools they say ——." And so mumbling as he went along, he reached the bottom of the field, unloosed the horses from the gate, and the sound of their hoofs was soon lost as they passed the brow of the opposite hill.

Sir Edward Lee retraced his steps, and entered the gateway of the park in the moonlight, without ever deigning to cast a glance at the couchant greyhounds, which, cut in stone, were stretched on the summit of either pillar, or the escutcheon with its sinister hand couped, and erected gules, which his forefathers had so dearly purchased when escutcheons were first sold by the politic king James. The proud baronet was madly in love,—for so is the name profaned to express a guilty passion;—and how to gratify this all absorbing feeling occupied his waking and sleeping thoughts.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH THE READER REACHES THE COTTAGE OF THE ROPER, AND BEGINS TO SEE HIS WAY A LITTLE CLEARER; AND WHAT MRS. BRUST SAID TO BEN, AND HOW FOLKS OUGHT TO BEHAVE AT A DINNER-TABLE BEFORE COMPANY.

A little way beyond the field, which was the scene of the adventure narrated in our last chapter, and upon one of those slips of land which so commonly skirt the road-side, and are denominated "Waste," stood the cottage of Gideon Giles the rope-maker; or roper, as he was usually called. A narrow garden of considerable extent stretched to the right of the cottage, and was fenced off from the highway, by a low, thick-set hedge. The ground itself bore the marks of most excellent cultivation, and considering that it was what is commonly called "a kitchen garden," displayed no small degree of taste. The strength of the closely-clipped hedge, and the dimen-

sions of several of the fruit-trees, told at once that this was no very modern enclosure. A neatly-built stye and cowhouse shewed that the proprietors had formerly been "comfortably situated;" but these were now empty,—and from the moss and lichen which were fast overgrowing the lumber thrown into the sheds, an experienced eye might easily discover that they had long remained unoccupied. There was a look of comfort in the exterior of the cottage; the windows were clean, the door-stone white, the very besom looked clean, the mop was well wrung and reared an-end to dry; the pails were left to drain, and many another sign of neatness proclaimed that "woman's ready hand was there!"

On the opposite side of the road extended the moss-grown wall of the park, which stretched along the whole length of the village, then forming an abrupt angle,—again ran in a westerly direction, beside delicious meadows, and was bounded by the broad and beautiful Trent. And many a time did the proud owner of those rich domains sigh, as from his hall windows he beheld the blue smoke arise from that humble cottage, and curl amid the foliage of the huge oak by which it was overhung. And long would he gaze in the moonlight on that thatched roof which sheltered the beautiful form of Ellen Giles. King Cophetua, in the old ballad, pined not more for the fair beggar-maid he so fondly loved, than did the proud baronet for the lowly daughter of the Roper. But it is into the interior of Gideon Giles's cottage that we must now conduct our readers.

The moon had by this time climbed beyond the dark line of woods that crown the range of hills above Burton-Woodhouse, and lighting the thatched roofs of the village, shone full upon the casement of the Roper's cottage, as it broke in between the broad leaves of the ivy, which partially overrun the lattice, and here and there threw a chequered light on the floor. Before the fire sat Gideon Giles, nursing a sickly child, while his wife was busied in the affairs of her household. There seemed something stern in the countenance of the Roper, as it caught the full blaze of the firelight; a marked decision on the brow, which plainly told that he was not a man to be trifled with; and this look was strengthened at the moment by the deep frown which clouded his features as he gazed thoughtfully upon the fire. Although naturally a man of strong passions, care and suffering had done much in sobering down these dark colours; but if the fire had become low, and wasted, the hot embers were not yet extinguished, and few men were sooner roused by oppression or

insult than Gideon Giles. It might be that hard work and the "struggling" a poor man has to rear up a large family, had somewhat soured his temper; yet he complained not, but kept his privations to himself;—he troubled no one for assistance. Sometimes on a Saturday night, when he went to drink his pint of ale, and smoke his pipe at the White Swan, he ventured his opinions on politics, but these were never severe. If he thought the poor man would fare better with a cheap loaf, he had no wish to pull down the industrious farmer; he looked beyond this, and thought that the wealthy landholder ought to let his tenants sit under easier rents. But other thoughts occupied his mind at the time he enters upon our pages.

"Ellen is late," said he, without changing his position, "you had better hold the child; and I will set out to meet her. It is but a lonely path across those fields."

"It was seven when she set out," answered the wife: "and if she had to wait, she has scarce had time to go and come already, for it has not yet struck nine. And perhaps the doctor might be down at Nanny Penny's, for John Marshall called in as he went past at dark-hour, and said, she'd had a sudden touch of her old complaint." And she opened the door, and stepped out as if to fetch something, while she listened a moment for the returning footsteps of her daughter.

"You should not have sent her so late," said the husband. "I could have gone over myself when I had left the rope-walk,—but, take the child,—after what has happened, it is not safe for her to be out at this hour alone."

"I will but make him a little camomile tea first," said the wife, becoming every moment more alarmed, yet wishing to conceal it. "But lors-a-mercy, there's Martha Barker often goes as late as ten o'clock, and nought happens her. But I shouldn't have sent her so late, had, not Billy's cough been worse, and beside, I thought you would be tired, for you've walking enough all day, backwards and forwards in that long ropery, and—But I hope nothing's happened her."

"Happened her!" said Gideon, starting in his seat, and awaking the child, which gave a low moan, and called for "Elle, want Elle," —and, Ellen Giles rushed into the cottage. "Thank God, I have escaped him!" were the first words she uttered, as she fell into the arms of her mother.

"Him! who? what? has he again dared to molest you, after the

warning I gave him?" were the hurried inquiries of the father as he arose and placed the child on a little bed made on two chairs at the far corner of the cottage. "I will go and tear him out of his hall by the throat. I will do it, in the very teeth of his servants:" and he made for the door; but his wife suddenly turned round, and with her daughter still leaning upon her bosom, firmly planted her back against it. Gideon raised his arm, but lowered it again in an instant; he was a man of "iron frame," and one swing of his long muscular arm would have hurled mother and daughter across the apartment, but he drew back, and with the palm of his hand, struck his forehead.

"Not to-night, Gideon," said the wife, waving him back as she spoke, "not to-night! It may but be some drunkenly meddler she hath met with returning from the 'Statice,' and he is far away before this time. Perhaps he but tried to steal a kiss, as young chaps will when they've had a sup of drink, and you know how shy she is." Gideon sank back into his seat, and sat for a few moments, with his face buried in his hands, vowing vengeance against the Baronet, for on none other did his suspicion even glance.

Meantime, Ellen gradually recovered herself; for hers were not nerves to be long shaken after a fright; but the speed at which she had escaped had left her almost breathless, and she sank as much from fatigue, as fear; nor had her senses for an instant forsaken her: for when her father arose with the threat upon his lips, she made signs for him to desist, although he observed them not,—her heart beat too quickly to speak.

When she recovered, the quick drawing of her breath, the faded colour of her cheek, and the confusion of her dress, still shewed signs of the late struggle; for her bonnet would have fallen, had it not been for the firm tie of the ribbon, and her shawl only escaped through the secure hold of a pin, while the front of her gown shewed more plainly the marks of the invader, for the bosom had been dragged at with such force, as to tear out one or two of the loop-holes by which it was fastened. But Ellen Giles looked lovely even in her disarray, though her hair had slipped from the braid, and her bosom panted like that of a dove that had just escaped from the pouncing hawk.

It was sometime before she could acquaint her father with what our readers already know: many of the strong points she softened down,—"Sir Edward offered to carry her basket--perhaps she was

Lambert.

The Escape of Ellen Giles.

too frightened—he had hold of the handle—he might have taken too much wine." And as she from time to time caught the eye of her mother, so did her narrative subside, and the assault appear less aggravated; for she knew that her father was a lion in his wrath.

Gideon paced the cottage as he listened to her, his step sometimes slow and measured, then again increasing as his passion rose; for it was sufficient that his daughter had been insulted, and his anger was not easily to be lulled. "Is it not enough," said he, "that I have slaved early and late to bring up my children; that I have taught them to distinguish right from wrong, and shewn them that poverty and virtue are preferable to riches: that now, they are able to reward me for all my care, the spoiler should come with his strong hand and proud name, and because they are poor, snatch them up as things worthless; as if our very blood must be made to pay tribute to their pleasures! But face to face will I meet him, and put him to shame. He shall see, that poor as I am, the feelings of a father are not to be trampled upon, that the arm of a humble Roper, when uplifted in a right cause, is as strong as that of a Baronet's!"

"Passion," says an old writer, "vents itself in poetry or oaths, and the lover, like the wrathful man, can but vow, or tenderly swear." But Gideon Giles was no common man, although a roper. He was a deep reader and a deep thinker, and though James Kitchen had been heard to say, "he was almost too 'cute' for a poor man," yet he confessed that a man might be both poor and "nationly clever" at the same time. "But think, Gideon," said the wife, a lover of peace at whatever price she might purchase it, "how kind Lady Lee has been to little Billy since he was ill. And that never a day's passed without Miss Amy calling to see the bairn. I believe if it hadn't been for her sending John over on horseback as she did, he might have been dead afore this time; and her sister Lavinia—how kind they both are! And you ought to remember, that bad as Sir Edward is, he is still their father. And I am sure they love our Ellen almost as much as if she was one of their own." The worthy woman uplifted the corner of her apron, while Ellen pressed her young brother to her bosom, for she knew not what to say.

"They are very kind," replied Gideon, "nor do I wish to shut my door on their favours: they but do what I have done to others—it is their privilege. But these are not things to be bought at the price of our child's good name. Poor we are, God knows, but we are above want; and I would have the humble head stone that marks

the grave of my father free from a stain; and that lowly plot of ground in which we shall all one day sleep, known as the resting-place of the poor but honest roper's. But I will meet him on the morrow."

He walked about for some time until his passion had subsided, and then brought forth "the big *old* Bible, once his father's pride." It fell open at that beautiful chapter which contains Christ's sermon on the mount. Gideon read it through with a feeling of deep reverence, while his wife and daughter listened with profound attention. While he was reading, the old woman from the lodge brought in the basket which Walter Northcot had left in her care. She set it down without speaking a word, and waited in silence until he had done reading, then, bidding them all "good night", departed. She was at no loss to divine the cause of Ellen's flight.

Although Gideon Giles made no profession of religion, still he read a chapter from the Bible almost every night. It was an old custom of his father's, and he was never known to omit it. Gideon, however, did not read on Saturday nights after he came from the White Swan—his reasons he never assigned.

Trouble must not prevent poor men from working; and the humble roper climbed up the ladder that led to his welcome bed, for he knew that he must rise early to labour. He had decided that he would call on the Baronet as he returned from breakfast. His passion was now cooled down; for he knew, that although a poor man, if reason and shame had no effect on the wealthy landowner, England had still her powerful laws, and these were strong enough to protect the daughter of the honest peasant from the grasp of the proudest peer. But the wheels of justice too often move reluctantly along, unless set a-going on a golden railway.

We shall not at present follow the footsteps of Walter Northcot to the rectory, where his uncle received him with open arms, while the kind-hearted old housekeeper stood by and wept for joy at his return. Walter was weary through travelling on the previous night, and retired early to rest; but not before he had looked through his window at the hall of the Baronet, and seen a light shine through the same casement that had been his evening-star in former years. And had Amy Lee forgotten him? No! her chamber window darkened, and she saw the well-known light across the park, which told that her lover had returned. She might have met the old housekeeper by chance that evening, at the lodge, and heard

tidings of his coming,—but the old woman told no tales: though when Walter was seated at the supper-table, and the Parson's back was turned, she said, " Somebody, I know, sat in that chair this morning, master Walter; but if you guess, I shan't say who, and she forgot her glove, and here it is." The young man snatched it up in an instant, but what he did with it, our story sayeth not.

Meantime, Ben Brust had reached home in safety, and gone to bed. He inquired of the next neighbours if they had seen his wife. "Yes, she had gone out with a basket, and they dare say wouldn't be long." Ben was fast asleep when she came home. His slumber was, however, somewhat shaken by a blow in the ribs, and the sharp shrill voice of his wife exclaiming, "how you snore!—do you hear what I say? my cousin William's come over from Corringham."

Ben grunted, in the darkness, and began to snore again.

" He's coming to dinner to-morrow," continued the wife, "and I've bought a nice bit of a loin of mutton."

" How much," inquired Ben, for he at last began to hear.

" Two pounds seven ounces, good weight," answered Mrs. Brust, "and as I've got to go out to wash to-morrow at Mr. Thornton's, you must stay at home and cook it, and try to make cousin William comfortable. He's about the only relation I care for."

" Is he much of a eater?" inquired Ben, whose thoughts began to run on the forthcoming dinner,—" two pounds seven ounces a'int much."

" It's plenty, though, and would last me a week," replied the spouse, "and I shall leave you fourpence for a quart of ale, and see that you make him at home,—and put the meat down to roast exactly at twelve, and set the potatoes on at a quarter or twenty minutes past; he comes at one. And don't let the meat be done to death on one side, and left raw on th' other."

" I reckon there's plenty of bread and potatoes, to make up, if we should run short?" said Ben.

" There's plenty of everything," replied Famine, " and a good deal more than you would get for the nearest relation you have. And what's more, not a farthing of the money that bought it, is of your 'addling,' (earning), I can tell you that, Ben. And another thing I've got to say, if you don't nail yon palings up, to keep the pig in, I'll sell it next market-day, and you may go cough for your next year's bacon for me. It's been out to day, and eaten up nearly all the young cabbages in Mrs. Farr's garden, and she swears vengeance against it."

"The pig must have a living," replied Ben, "and she should keep her garden-gate shut; how could the poor dumb animal know it was doing wrong? But I'll drive a few nails in to-morrow or next day."

"Well, see and do," said the wife. "I shall set the table out before I go to work in the morning, and try if you can make shift, without putting your fingers in the salt-cellar. And don't sop every drop of gravy up with bread while the meat's cooking, nor eat such big mouthfuls; and remember not to lay hold of the meat with your hand when you carve—such filthy ways. Cousin William lived groom in a gentleman's family, and knows how to carry himself I can tell you. I've a receipt how to behave yourself like a Christian when you dine with folks, which cousin William copied from a footman's book, as had some money left him, and got to live among bettermost-sort of folks. I wish you would read it afore he comes to-morrow; they tell me it contains a deal of good advice; but you're snoring again, you lazy brute, and one had as good try to teach a pig how to be polite as you."

Benjamin had indeed fallen asleep during the latter part of this admonition.

To the curious in matters of etiquette, we submit the following hints, copied literally from cousin William's receipt, and entitled—

"HOW TO GOE ON WHEN YU GOE OUT TO SEE CUMPENNY AT A DINNER.

"*Item.* If yo hav to eat fish, and happen to swallor a bone, and bee choked, dont make no more noise nor yo can help, but drink lots of watter. Nor dont stick it on yure fork if it aint ower sweet, and say this smells 'queerish;' and if yo hant a knife, and cant get it up well wi bread, leave it, for its reckoned not the thing to scope it up wi your fist.

"*Item.* When yo sup broth, be sure yo dont take the dish up wi both hands, and sup it soe, for it may happen to all run down your busum and so scald you nationly. Nor yo musn't lick your spewn when yuve done, and look at it and say, "O," it looks soe, slaping your tung out. Nor dont stick it in your teeth, and make meagrams wi it, to set folks laughing, and make em choak their sens.

"*Item.* If yuve a lump of fat, or ought on yure plate yo dont like, dont goe and slap it on somebody else's plate, and say, 'I cant eat fat,' cos it looks as if you'd had no broughting up. Best way is, to slip it on, on the sly, when they aint (are not) looking; same

if yo want to take aught off their plates, do it, and say nought; but real gentlemen never do these things.

"*Item.* If anybody axes you to hand 'em aught at a table, and yo don't want, don't say, 'I shan't, my meat ell get caud,' but seem as if you didn't hear 'em, and eat away. If it's a lady, you may be polite enough to speak, and say, 'I wood rather not malm, axe th' next chap.'

"*Item.* If yo happen to cum into a room afore th' dinner's cum'd in, and don't no anybody much, it's reckned polite to speak, and yo can say, 'fine day zur, or malm,' just as it hoppens, but don't say, 'Do yo think we shall hev ought that's good for dinner, an if yo hev to carve, will yo cut me a good lot,' for it looks as if you'd hed nought to eat for a month.

"*Item.* In tip-top company, yo'll see a great glass bason full of watter, staning again your plate: this ai'nt to sup, but to wesh your hands and face in, when yo've dun,—though there aint no soap, but you mun may shift wehout. Sometimes they bring rose-watter round in real silver; you musn't drink this neither, for though it smells nicish, it aint very nice to sup. Yo may dip your hankercher in, if it's clean.

"*Item.* If anybody axes you to tek wine we hem, It doesn't mean yure to go and fetch their's away and sup it; neither are yo both to drink out o' th' same glass. Yure to do nought but look at 'em, and mek a polite bow, touching your yhead we your hand, like a lad does when he meets the parson o' th' parish,—then sup it all off. If you aint a glass, don't be sure you sup it out of the dick-canter, but say, 'Waiter, I'll be nationly obleged to you, if you'll just bring me a glass to sup my wine in;' You munt tek a spewn.

"*Item.* You ought allos to eat we a fork, but I've seen a book called 'Hints on Eat-a-cat,' where they say a spewn's best for some things. For if you cut your meat and things up first, then teck a table-spewn to shuve 'em into your mouth we, why it ell do, thoff the forks are nobert spewns we nicks in, yo may manage wi a fork if yo shuv the stuff on forst (first) wi (with) your fingers."

"There's a good deal more in John the footman's book, which he's promised to lend me some other time, then I'll copy it all out."

CHAPTER V.

SHEWS HOW BEN BRUST COOKED THE DINNER, AND HOW A SLIGHT MISTAKE OF TIME AFFECTED COUSIN WILLIAM.

THE next morning found Ben Brust at his post, for there was no employment upon earth more suited to his taste than that his wife had left him,—it was no pleasure in perspective, for there lay the reality before his eyes. He bestowed great care on the fire, and sat about half an hour before it with his coat off, until the whole front was one glowing red. The clock struck, Ben was punctual to a moment, and before the last stroke had sounded, the mutton was turning before the fire. No miner about to blow up a fortress had arranged his materials more carefully than Ben had: the fork was stuck in the hole of the mantelpiece; the worsted all ready for action, the stool planted to an inch, and the dish put in the right spot to catch the gravy; the skewer had long before been thrust into the joint. He turned the worsted round, and soon saw the delicious joint follow the right motion, the sure-slow pace, that told how "regularly" it would be done; and he rubbed his hands with delight—he licked his lips in ecstasy. When the fat began to drop, he could not resist the temptation of breaking off a piece of bread from the loaf, and having a sop: he thrust it at once into his mouth, and it so tickled his palate that he exclaimed, "delicious! sweetest bit of mutton that ever looked into a fire!" He then put on the saucepan, for the potatoes were ready peeled. He looked the very picture of happiness: as he saw the mutton beginning to "brown," his countenance was lighted up with "sweet anticipation;" the pleasure, that, feeding the eye, was so soon to be relished by the mouth.

Then he began to wonder what sort of a man this cousin of his wife's was. "If he's not a big eater," mused Ben to himself, "I shall come in for three ribs out of the five. If he is, I must contrive to cut my two the thickest, and so make it up that way." And he stopped the progress of the meat for a moment, and taking up a knife, drew a line across it, to ascertain how he might manage to cut himself the best share, and yet give his wife's cousin the three ribs,

BEN BRUST PREPARING FOR COUSIN WILLIAM.

"cutting aslant will do it," muttered Ben, and the joint was again set in motion: "it would have made five prime chops," continued he, for he had counted the number of bones a dozen times: "it must have been a sweet, pretty loin before it was cut; five chops ain't much for two full-grown men, and meat looses a little weight in cooking." His mouth then began to water, for the smell was growing delicious, his broad nostrils dilated, he snuffed up the rich fragrance with delight, and uttered a long, deep "Ah, glorious!"

The potatoes were boiling beautifully; he took off the lid to prevent them from doing too fast, he tried them with a fork, they were becoming soft, all was going on as it ought to do; the red gravy had began to fall, he had another sop, and this time sprinkled a little salt on it, "Capital!" said Ben: he looked again at the potatoes, they were beginning to crack, he got up and poured out the water, threw a little salt over them, let them stand over the fire a few seconds, shook them up, and taking another survey, exclaimed with delight, "Mealy as flour!" then sticking his fork into one, he dipped it into the gravy, and then into the salt, and it went down almost whole; it did burn his throat, but O! the flavour it had, Ben thought it worth the suffering of a thousand such momentary pangs.

"The meat is about done," said Ben, "I'll away and fetch the ale before he comes, else he'll 'maybe' be having a sop whilst I'm

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out." And he took the fourpence his wife had left on the mantelpiece, and trudged off for a quart of ale, taking care, however, to lock the door, for fear his wife's cousin should come. Ben had not far to go, and was soon back, and when he again opened the door, he stood still a moment on the threshold to inhale the provoking scent, which came both stronger and richer after the fresh air he had breathed. Just as he had taken down the meat, the clock struck twelve—he had mistaken the time one hour, and what made it more provoking, he had tasted the meat—a little morsel that stuck out and was crisped —Ben sighed at the disappointment.

He sat down in his chair and contemplated the little joint, he looked lovingly upon it, his jaws began to move, his mouth became moist, he wiped his lips with his sleeve, and said, "Pity it should spoil when it's just done to a turn, and one so hungry, I'm afraid I can't wait a whole hour—while one might walk four miles! and the clock's got to tick—let's see—sixty seconds is a minute, sixty sixties —one, two—how slow time goes! Happen he mayn't come, but I won't look at the meat." He shut his eyes, determined to resist the temptation; but it was of no use, he saw the luscious joint—the very spots that were browned, the mealy potatoes that were piled on the dish, just as well with his eyes shut as open, for they were imprinted on his "mind's eye," and while his eyes were shut he licked his lips. "He's none of my cousin," said Ben, opening his eyes, "although he's my wife's, and I don't think he would wait of me if the dinner was spoiling; I don't know him, never was beholden to him for a bite or a sup in my life, then why the devil should I wait for him? I'll get my dinner, and leave him a fair half."

Ben felt hungry, and his reasoning went in favour of his appetite; he was not a man divided against himself. He lifted the dish on the table with as much ease as if it had been a cork, "Mutton soon sets," said he, and he dashed through two of the ribs in an instant; he eat the first at seven mouthfuls, the second at eight, and it was marvellous to see his handiness in cleaning the bones, but his knife was very sharp. "Happen he's not a big eater," said Ben, looking wistfully at the remainder of the joint, "and if he is, he can fill up with bread, what right has he to the best half, and me only one out of the middle? he hasn't come to see me, and what's two little chops for a big man like myself? I'll have another." No sooner said than done. Ben knew to a hair's breadth where to strike for the joint, his knife grazed upon the next bone: "This one's prime," said he, "a good

thickness." He took up the dish and poured all the gravy on his potatoes, saying, "It's no good cold." Ben was just four minutes finishing the last chop, then he drank two glasses of ale. The potatoes now caught his eye; there were but two left, and these were small; he took up his fork and mashed them, they looked less. "Plenty of bread, however," said Ben. He then gazed at the meat, it appeared like one single chop, he turned it all ways, saw how it looked laid down, tried both sides, shoved a piece of bread under to raise it. It seemed nothing; "Wish I'd an onion," said Ben, "I would make him a little hash; plenty of water and cut it small, he would never notice the meat, and I'm sure I've had none too much. What is two pounds and a half? Why the bones and the cooking would waste half a pound; I hope he'll not come—dang it, it does look a bit, I'm ashamed of seeing it." He twisted the dish round, took off the meat and put it on his own plate, but he could make no more of it; "Good mind to go out," said Ben, "and leave him to make the best of it, else throw the bones away and swear some dog stole the meat. Dang my buttons! I won't, I'll eat it all, I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb." Ben went to work once more and cleared the dish, even to the last drop of gravy, which he cleaned up with his bread, he then drank off the ale. "And now," said he, "I'll lock the door and go lay down, when he comes he may knock till he's tired, he can't get butter out of a dog's throat, and grumbling 'ell take away his appetite." Ben was as good as his word; he locked the door, went to bed, and in a few minutes was fast asleep. Ben had only just buttoned up his eyes, when cousin William made his appearance. He was a tall, gaunt fellow, with a heavy stoop in his shoulders and an immensely wide mouth; he also possessed that enormous length of jaw which is said to be the unerring sign of a good "trencherman." He wiped his mouth on the sleeve of his smockfrock, before uplifting the latch, for Mrs. Brust had promised to get him a "bit of fresh-meat for dinner," and he had been living on bacon nearly the whole of the last twelvemonth:—he wiped his mouth and thought how much he should enjoy it; then he tried the door, and found it locked. "Gone for the ale happen," said cousin William, and he looked down the village street, in the direction of the White Swan, but beheld no Benjamin. He then began to reconnoitre the interior of the cottage, by peeping through the keyhole; he saw the table, and caught a glimpse of the plates, and then made for the window, and saw at a glance that dinner was indeed over—hopelessly over; for there lay

the clean bare bones. Cousin William had discovered that the key was inside, and having no doubt but Benjamin was there also, commenced a loud knocking at the door, saying, "I'll let him noah a piece o' my mind afore I goe." Benjamin heard, but answered not; the chamber window was, however, observed to shake, and one of the neighbours said she "believed it was owing to Ben shaking his great fat sides we laughing to think how he'd done his wife's cousin."

William walked down to the White Swan, and called for half a pint of ale and a slice of bread and cheese, and while he was eating it, told the company how he had been invited to dine with Ben Brust, and said, "I believe he's eaten up all the dinner, and gone and laid him down."

"Very likely," said the landlord, "he came here about twelve for a quart of ale, and said that he expected you, and that his wife had bought two pounds and a half, off a prime loin of mutton, and it was just done to a turn when he was here; but I dare say you was behind your time, and he thought you wouldn't come, so eat it, for fear it should spoil."

"Why dang his buttons!" said cousin William, "I was there to the very minute, and then I was too late." He finished his bread and cheese, and called Benjamin everything but a gentleman.

CHAPTER VI.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PARK OF BURTON-WOODHOUSE, AND THE MEETING OF GIDEON GILES AND THE BARONET — WITH SUNDRY REFLECTIONS, WHICH HAVE PUZZLED WISER HEADS THAN THE AUTHOR'S.

TRUE to his promise, on the following morning Gideon Giles entered the park, determined to reproach the Baronet for his misconduct to his daughter, and to warn him of the course he intended pursuing in case she was again assaulted. The old porteress at the lodge lifted up her hands as he passed, and said, "God speed you on your errand, Gideon." He muttered a low "amen," and trod the broad carriage-road with a firm, and fearless step. The humble Roper traversed the winding avenue, which was overshadowed with tall and stately elms—the growth of nearly three centuries—and sighed as he thought of

the owner of those rich domains. He mused over its proud possessors, whom death had swept away—of the triumphs and festivals which had ushered in their "coming of age"— the gloomy train of mourners mustering in solemn array when they died—the black hearse and nodding plumes, wedding favours and music, that had waved, and sounded, down that long aisle of elm-trees—and he walked along, sad and thoughtful. Sometimes his eye caught a glimpse of level and lawn-like pastures, where the sunshine slept on swards of velvet, that glowed in the richest green of spring. Further on, the broad river heaved in sight, now sparkling through the distant landscape, and again hidden by some clump of noble oaks, until it was once more revealed through the opening of the copse, that seemed to sweep, winding and woody, to its very brink. In some places the ground swelled into verdurous hillocks, reared pile above pile, like waves of flowers, then sank again into deep and delicious valleys, above which peered the thatched roof of a deer-shed, or the topmost boughs of the sheeted hawthorn. Gideon looked around, and marvelled why one so undeserving should dwell in such a paradise, forgetting for the moment that every bosom must have within itself its own quiet heaven. In some places little enclosures extended to the barriers of thicket and underwood, and in these green solitudes flocks of sheep were seen grazing; their long flaky wool forming beautiful contrasts beside the foliage, and breaking the monotonous colour of the uplands, by masses of dingy white. Sometimes a straggling deer crossed the sunlight of a distant glade, and moved leisurely along, until only his lofty antlers were seen above the burnished gold of the furze or broom. Then the eye swept over a sea of foliage, masses of light and shade, bronzy, and silver-bright, some hanging lightly together, or overspread by gloomy pines, that darkened the springing underwood, and saddened the sunshine which streamed feebly onhazel or hawthorn beneath. Anon, the road diverged into wild bridlepaths, or ridings, and wound through wooded solitudes, where the ring-dove built and the grey rabbit burrowed, and the gaudy plumage of the pheasant might be seen peeping between the briars and bracken—spots where a care-worn man might sit and brood, until he reconciled himself to the follies of the world, and learnt to pity and forgive mankind for all the injuries they had done to him.

Seek out these sweet solitudes, all ye who are sick and weary at heart! for nature hath a balm that will heal a thousand maladies; she will send a gushing thrill through the sinking spirit, will raise the

drooping head and the desponding heart, and shed over the darkened soul a tranquil light, that will fall upon it like a rich sunset, and streak the coming night of the grave with a subdued and solemn splendour. There is something in lonely fields and silent woods that seems to subdue the iron of our nature—that melts the sterner feelings, and makes us feel a spiritual alliance with the green and living things around; and we think how other eyes, in future years will be gazing on those very scenes, while we, freed from all feelings of hatred or love, sleep beside friend or foe, unconsciously; while suns rise and set upon our graves, and the busy world, with all its cares and heartaches, can interest us no more. And from these thoughts spring others of a more tender nature; we become wiser, and grow better; we see our own weaknesses, and feel our own follies; and we seem more able to bear with the faults of our fellow-creatures; for we know that in a few brief years, the fever and the fret of this life will be at an end, and the great eternal morning break at last upon all alike, and that mystery, which the fading eye of king and clown sought in vain to penetrate, shall be revealed. It might be that some such thoughts as these passed through the mind of the humble Roper as he threaded his way along the wooded paths of the park, and he muttered to himself, "We shall at last sleep in the same churchyard."

He turned up one of those secluded bridlepaths which we have already mentioned, and which was the nearest way to the hall,—for the park covered an immense space of ground. The road he now pursued was one that was but seldom traversed, for it wound past a spot which tradition had associated with some murder, committed many years ago by one of Sir Edward's ancestors, and the place bore an evil name. Owing to this, the pathway had been neglected, the grass rose high and rank in the very centre of it, and the straggling bramble and rugged furze, grew on unmolested in the very spot which in former days the beautiful daughter of the hall, and the humble domestics, were wont to traverse. The trees had also mingled their branches together overhead without interruption, and so intertwisted bough with bough, that it was only in a few places, in the height of summer, when the gloomy pathway was enlivened and chequered by the piercing sunbeams. By degrees the road widened, until it shewed a more open and desolate space than any the Roper had hitherto passed. A dark and sluggish pool of water, extending to a considerable distance, was overhung with black-firs, and other trees of dense foliage, which added to its gloomy and melancholy appear-

Gideon Giles meets the Baronet.

ance. An old fountain, now partially overgrown with long moss and wild weeds, which had shot out from the fissures, stood in ruins amid the solitude; for it had been partly destroyed, and suffered to fall into decay, and all that remained was the lower portion and the shattered head of a dolphin, from the jaws of which still trickled forth a stream of water, fed from some neighbouring spring on the hill. The low mournful sounding of the waterfall was the only voice that broke the silence which reigned around. Beside the ruined fountain stood a bold, bare, and blasted oak, presiding like a huge skeleton over the scene; it seemed to tell a tale of leven-fire and forgotten thunder-storms, for the bolt and the blaze had long ago laid low its ancient head, and it stood like a landmark of time, pointing out to its own destruction. Gideon Giles paused a moment to gaze upon the scene we have described, and when he again raised his eyes, Sir Edward Lee stood before him. The Baronet might have stolen away unperceived, so deeply was the Roper wrapt up in his own thoughts, and so noiseless was the approach of the former on the grassy pathway, had not his dog first given the alarm. As it was, however, they met face to face, and stood gazing on each other for the space of a few moments in silence.

Although the Baronet stood erect, and tried to appear composed before his opponent, still his colour changed from red to pale, and his eye quailed before the fixed glance of Gideon, as the latter exclaimed, with a firm deep voice, "Sir Edward Lee! art thou not ashamed to look upon my face, after the insult offered to my daughter?" He raised his arm as he spoke, and pointed out his finger, and the rich man stood appalled before the poor one, but answered not a word. "Was I a wealthy man like yourself," continued the undaunted Roper, "the society in which you move would no longer consider me worthy of the name of a man unless I made an attack upon your life;—I am not a man of blood,—if I were, on this spot would I wreak my revenge."

"Do you dare to threaten me, Sir," said the Baronet, now bridling up, though his voice trembled as he spoke; "Remember who I am, and where you now stand."

"I dare defend the honour of my child," said Gideon, his look growing sterner as he spoke; "Provoke me not to do what I dare —— in this spot we are at least equal." He clenched his teeth together, and his hand closed as if involuntary; another angry word, at that moment, and he would have struck the proud Baronet to

the earth;—but he spoke not, and Gideon mastered the rising passion which was fast overpowering him: he turned pale as death for an instant—then again seemed to become calm. "Let us change places," continued Gideon: "fancy for a moment it is your own daughter—that you stand face to face with a man who has attempted the dishonour of Miss Lee,—it was last night,—and you meet him now in this solitude. Ten years ago, Sir Edward Lee, and had this happened, that dark lake should have closed over either your body or mine;—then I knew no law saving my own passions;—even now I am tempted ——." The words seemed to stick in his throat.—Ten years ago, and the face of the Baronet would have blackened beneath such emotions. Gideon Giles would have taken justice into his own hands——and even then the old devil raged furiously within him; and man in his anger, like the brute, seems still to pant for blood. The law itself can in some cases only be appeased by taking away life: can it be expected, then, while this is done with a shew of pity—perpetrated coolly with hymns, and prayers, and tears—no passion, even no ill feeling, but done with signs of love and sorrow—that a man deeply injured, should, in the height of his anger, shew mercy? Oh God! what solemn mockeries are daily displayed before thee! Well might that great poet "who spake o' th' people as if he were a god—not a man of their infirmity," before whose eyes the human heart stood bared like a book plainly written, exclaim—

> "Man, proud man,
> Drest in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assured—
> His glassy essence—like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep."

"I can offer no excuse," said the Baronet, after a long pause: "I am no longer what I was. Your daughter's image hath taken possession of me—sleeping or waking, she is ever before me. There is a curse upon our race; I foresee my ruin but cannot prevent it. Gideon! I love your daughter, and were I free would make her my wife. Wave not your hand—I cannot help it—it may be madness; I have tried to forget her, but in vain. I will deal plainly with you, however this interview may end. I am no longer my own master."

Gideon Giles kept his eye riveted on the Baronet as he spoke; and there appeared something so sincere in this unexpected con-

fession that he was staggered for the moment, and almost at a loss to reply. At length he said, "You admit, then, that you are doing that which is evil, yet persevere in the crime. How would the robber fare in a court of justice who offered the same plea?"

"He would be shewn no mercy," answered the Baronet; "he would deserve none. Justice hath raised up this maiden to be a scourge to me, for the wrongs I have done to you. Yet they sprung not from any bad feeling towards yourself, and now I would——well, it matters not; all my resolves are weak."

"Whatever dispute there may have been between us respecting the slip of land I hold," said Gideon, "the law has already ended. But my daughter is dearer to me than these things, and that justice, which has once protected me from ruin, will not be appealed to in vain. It will be painful for me again to have recourse to it, and I would fain avoid it. Consider yourself for a moment, sir,—the fame of your daughter, your own name standing so high in this county—the honour of your family. Then think of what you are doing—of what you have already done—of the pain your conduct inflicts upon others—of the punishment it must in the end call down if you persevere. Pause ere it be too late."

The Baronet was not naturally a bad-hearted man: but "love," says an old writer, "is the loss of reason; neither is it to be suppressed by wisdom, for it is the strongest possession nature maintains;" and his imagination had clothed Ellen Giles in a thousand charms which she never possessed. He saw in her nothing but perfection; in his eyes, she was an angel upon earth; and the world has contained many fools like Sir Edward Lee; for love is a bedlam into which men shut themselves—the brain becomes a madhouse, where reason raves with reason of its own making, and clamours down every other thought that may spring up, until the whole man is mad, and sober sense walks away, or sleeps until he again recovers. Marriage, the great keeper of this bedlam, daily performs a thousand marvellous cures: he is a good, sound, sensible physician, and has done more to bring mankind to their senses than all your Socialists will ever do, were a million of years allotted them. The bit and the spur of matrimony manages the most restive steed—it makes your cooing lover talk like a rational being; it would have restored the Baronet to his senses: but there was a bar to his passing through the sober hands of this great keeper of bedlam, so he assigned his malady to fate—this was the reason for his madness. Neither are we in all

things masters of ourselves—the drunkard still drinks in spite of good resolutions. The man at death's door sometimes recovers, and forgetting all past vows, and, even with them weighing upon his conscience, follows his former evil habits. The thief who, two years ago, was all but drowned in the Serpentine river, and walked away with the coat of a fellow-sufferer who was just struggling between life and death, and when even he himself had been given up for dead, might have resolved five minutes before to leave off his evil practices, and doubtless consoled himself, when he had done the deed, with the old comfortable thought, "that all human resolutions are weak."

"I have thought of all these things," answered Sir Edward Lee, "and yet I cannot forget her. I cannot live without her. I know this is folly—madness—call it what you will. Would to God I had never seen her, since she can never be mine"——he checked himself, and averted his head.

"Yours she can never be," answered Gideon, "nor ever should, were there no obstacle. To her own good sense will I trust, well knowing that she will never disgrace me, by aspiring to a station beyond that to which she was born. Such as you, Sir Edward, have ere now made many a poor but happy home miserable—have taken away the daughters that gladdened the eyes of the parent—have nursed them in luxuries for which they never were born, and, when wearied of them, sent them back, sad and broken-hearted, and left them nought to hope for but a speedy grave, to hide their shame. Was this to be the lot of my daughter, Sir Edward, I should curse the day of her birth. You must, before we part, satisfy me that you will never again molest her. I will not quit you until you have pledged yourself to this. For what is past I will demand no reparation at present; that I will leave to be settled between God and your own conscience."

"I will endeavour to forget her," said the Baronet with deep emotion; and he was sincere at the moment. "I will not again throw myself in her way. It will be a strong struggle; for were these my last words, Gideon, and my tongue could never again find utterance; before God! I love her beyond aught on earth—even above name, power, wealth, and honour. My hall has seemed desolate since she left it. It was a pleasure for me to sit and watch her as she moved about it—as she swept from room to room singing snatches of sweet songs. I have sighed, and cursed the fate that has thrown such an

impassable gulf between us. My food had no relish unless I received it from her own hand, and every hour I sat conjuring up new wants that she might wait upon me; and she, unconscious of the passion that tormented me, passed to and fro with modest and downcast look—a thing too holy for me to look upon. Gideon, she hath driven me mad; but I will ere long quit a neighbourhood, every spot of which is haunted by her presence. For weeks past I have shunned the church in which my forefathers assembled to worship. The very presence of my family is a pain to me. I would fain shun my own thoughts; the poorest peasant that tills my ground is happier than myself:—but I will forget her."

Saying which he struck down a wild, dark avenue, and long after the bell had proclaimed the hour of dinner, did he remain alone in that solitude. The Baronet was deeply and madly in love; and like the lion in the hunter's toils, only drew the net more firmly around him in the struggles he made to extricate himself.

And did Sir Edward Lee keep his promise? We shall see ere long. His peace of mind was poisoned; he had drank deeply of the maddening opiate of love: the fair face of a lowly-born maiden had driven away all rest from the pillow of the proud Baronet. He had before tried to forget her, when no one but himself knew that she occupied his thoughts. He had bustled about in the business of the county—done much to ameliorate the condition of those children of misfortune who are crammed into English Bastiles—those cursed prisons, called Workhouses. He had ridden miles, and obtained the promise of numerous votes, and was determined to offer himself at the next election. He tried business, and he tried pleasure: but when he again entered his own hall, the foot-fall of Ellen Giles set all his blood in a ferment. Her voice rung in his ears all night: love had taken possession of his haughty heart. He felt jealous if he but heard her laugh with her fellow-servants; and had turned away a faithful footman for imprinting a kiss on her lips beneath the misletoe-bough at Christmas tide. Nay, he so far demeaned himself in his own hall, when flushed with wine, on that very occasion, as to lead forth Ellen Giles himself and salute her: from that hour he had never been at rest. Wherever he moved, the image of the Roper's daughter was before him, and at last he said, "I have struggled with virtue long enough; I will possess her." And he began to wrestle anew with this dangerous passion, and he began earnestly. But other things were gathering upon him that would call forth all his powers

of thought to counteract, for he was soon to be torn by strong and divided passions. That rich man was doomed to be unhappy.

Gideon Giles retraced his steps across the park, sad and full of thought: but there were a few moments, though they soon passed away, in which his heart felt lightened somewhat of its load. It was when he thought that Sir Edward Lee loved his daughter, and that but for circumstances, she might have been the wife of a baronet. True, he reproached himself for allowing such thoughts to enter his mind, and they soon vanished: but they had elevated him for the moment. Now Gideon Giles was a man of strong sense, and not in love like the baronet; and though he reproached himself for this, it made him acknowledge the weakness of our nature.

It might be that the feelings of the father were gratified for the moment at the thought, that she should be held worthy of filling so high a station: it might arise from excess of affection for his daughter. Be this as it may, it was nevertheless human weakness—a rising of one of those vain bubbles that mount up in the human heart, and springs from we know not what; that are to glitter, burst, and deceive us, as if only to shew how weak we are. The radical who, professing to dislike royalty, never lost an opportunity of telling the company he was in, that King William had bowed to him in passing, felt he had been honoured.

But as the roaring of the tide warns the traveller on the sands that he must reach firm land before the breakers overtake him, and tell him sullenly how incompetent he is to struggle with the sea; so did these thoughts warn Gideon Giles of the dangerous ground he stood upon, and when he left the park he was again a firm and collected man; and he walked along, proud of his poverty. And that very pride was still a weakness.

CHAPTER VII.

CONTAINS AN ACCOUNT OF MR. BANES, AND WHAT HE SAID TO MR. BROWN THE ROPER—WITH A CONVERSATION OVER THE WASH-TUBS.

In a former chapter we introduced a Mr. Banes;—it was twilight, and the reader but saw him imperfectly, as he skulked along the hedge-side, then led the horse over the distant hill, which was to have borne away Ellen Giles. This man was Sir Edward's game-

keeper, and looked after the immense woods which stood without the park. He lived in a large and lonely cottage, far away from any other human habitation, which overlooked a desolate heath on the one hand, and on the other was sheltered by the gloomy wood. He was a man of a morose disposition, and had been tried for shooting a poacher dead; but, through the influence of Sir Edward Lee, he was acquitted. He bore an ill name, and the villagers were afraid of him, for somehow or other he had managed to obtain great influence over the Baronet. He had accused many of trespassing and poaching, who had never either broken into an enclosure or set a snare;—he was both feared and hated. Ben Brust only, seemed a match for this savage keeper, and he gained the ascendancy through once giving him a hearty drubbing at the village-feast. Ben beat him until he was obliged to be put to bed, after a fair, manly, "stand-up" English fight. To Benjamin he was never rude—although the greatest poacher in Burton-Woodhouse. Mr. Banes had been instrumental in sending several young men to the tread-mill, and they had not forgotten it. They wanted but a leader, and they were ready to revenge these injuries;—the beautiful footpath through the Long Plantation had been shut up through his interference,—this they had never forgotten. He was a low-bred brutal tyrant, but, nevertheless, a good gamekeeper. He was as useful as the huge mastiff which the rich man keeps chained beside his gate, and as much beloved as the same brute is by the poor beggar. Very few would have been sorry to have heard of his death; and when such a man is found in a quiet English village, he must be bad indeed—for our rudest peasants will give a man a good word, if they can but find in him the slightest redeeming quality. He had offered himself to Ellen Giles—been refused—and, it was believed, now hated her; and he consoled himself by saying, "she is pretty, but devilish poor." He was quite a favourite with young Squire Bellwood, whose father was one of the richest men in the county. Rumour said the young Squire was to marry Amy Lee, and it was true that her father had given his consent to the match;—but then there was Walter Northcot, and — a great deal of gossip. And that very morning Walter had been seen to pass from the rectory to the hall, where we shall in due time follow him.

Our readers are aware of what passed between the gamekeeper and the Baronet; and how the latter had expressed a wish that Ellen Giles should be seized, and carried to the cottage by the wood. Now

the keeper was afraid of Gideon Giles—for the Roper had forbidden him to enter his dwelling, and had even threatened what he would do if he again crossed his threshold; and Gideon was a man famed far and wide for keeping his word.

It was during the time that Gideon Giles was absent, and while the interview we have described in our last chapter took place, that the gamekeeper made his appearance at the Rope-walk. Mr. Brown (the master roper) was busy in checking off a load of hemp, which his apprentice and journeyman were weighing: he raised his eyes from the book in astonishment, when the keeper expressed a wish to speak with him privately, and led the way into the shed.

"You seem pretty busy here, Mr. Brown," said the gamekeeper, looking round at the piles of hemp and rope, and the numerous barrels of tar which were ranged in rows on each side. "A thriving trade, ready money, and sitting at low rent,—that's the way to get rich, eh!" and he forced out a laugh, as if satisfied with himself at having said something very clever.

"Why as to the rent," answered Mr. Brown, "there's nothing to find fault with on that score at present. But if Sir Edward raises us, as you was saying he intended to do, why I am afraid I shall be compelled to shorten my rope-walk, and give up my garden."—Mr. Brown's orchard alone brought in double the amount of his rent.

"No fear of that at present, I think," said the gamekeeper, "since I see that Gideon Giles is no longer in your employ. Has he left you long?"

"Left me! no," replied Mr. Brown; "he was at work this morning, and said he had a little business to do, that would hinder him an hour or so. I expect him back every minute. I have promised farmer Swift his new well-rope home to-night, and they can't raise a drop of water until it's done. I hope Gideon will not be long."

"Look you, Mr. Brown," said the gamekeeper, striking the butt-end of his gun upon the ground as he spoke; "you know what's what as well as I do, and I needn't tell you how Sir Edward and your man Gideon stand with each other, need I?"

Mr. Brown nodded.

"Well, then," continued he, "if Gideon Giles didn't work for you, he would have to go and seek employment somewhere else; and let me tell you," added he with a knowing wink, "the further

he went off, the better it would be for you. How was it, think you, that Peatfield got the order for all the sheep-nets last winter?—why because Gideon was still your journeyman; and more I can tell you, if he'd left before now, you never would have heard a word about your rent being raised."

"But Sir Edward never hinted a word of this to me," said the master roper; "if he had, you may be sure I would have done nothing that could have given him offence, letting alone the losing of his custom."

"Say anything to you!" echoed the keeper; "you don't think that a gentleman would be seen in such a mean affair, do you? I should have thought that Peatfield's having done all the work lately had said sufficient of itself. But some folks can neither see nor feel until their nose is brought to the grindstone."

"But you don't mean to say that I must part with Gideon?" said Mr. Brown; "consider, I was apprentice with his father, and ——."

"If you like to let Peatfield get the rope-walk out of your hands," continued Banes, why keep him, and lose everybody else's custom, as you've done Sir Edward's, and go to the devil in your own way. Remember, I have but given you a friendly hint, and between ourselves, no one must know about this. Trade's slack, and Gideon must go on Saturday night. Very sorry, and so on;—you know—you understand me."

"Well, if he must, he must," said Mr. Brown, with a sigh; "but, poor fellow, I'm afraid he'll have to go a long way before he gets work just now. But I can't be expected to go to rack and ruin to keep him on, though I would sooner lose a ten-pound note than part with him. But if you say I must, why ——."

"You will of course," said the keeper, "and by the bye, we shall want five thousand more yards of netting for next winter, and you can get on with it when you like; we could hardly separate the sheep in the turnips this last winter for want of it. No bad order, Mr. Brown?"

"It's many a long day since I took such an order," said the other with a smile, "will you step into the White Swan and take a drop of something this morning, to drink luck to it?"

Mr. Banes had no objection, and they retired to the old-fashioned parlour, and sat together alone, in deep conversation, for more than an hour.

Now this scheme had kept Mr. Banes awake a great portion of the night; "Once get your father out of the way," said he, "then, Ellen Giles, you're mine." He knew right well that it would never reach the Baronet's ears, and if it did what matter; Brown dare say nothing. "And let me only get her up yonder, beside the wood," said he to himself, "and it shall go hard if I don't cry 'Halves, master!' and come in for my share of the game. I begin to be tired of yonder pale-faced maiden, that does nothing but wring her hands, and wet her cheeks all day long, as if crying would bring her child to life. Well, well; I have set a snare at last that will catch Master Gideon." So muttering to himself, he called his dogs together, and passed along the village street, until he came to a green lane which wound between the hills, and led to the wild heath and lonely cottage we have before mentioned.

Two women were washing outside their doors as he passed before a row of tumble-down places, which contained nearly all the crime and poverty of Burton-Woodhouse, and stood at the end of the lane. How different were these places to the residence of the Roper!

"Yonder goes Never-do-good and his dogs," said one of the women, who stood up to her elbows in suds, "what devil's errand's brought him down this morning, I wonder?"

"Some mischief or other you may be sure," said the other, wringing out a course towel as she spoke, and making a very wry face, then adding, as she threw it into a broken basket, "I wish I'd the washing and wringing of him out, I would have my water scalding hot, though it fetched the skin off my hands. Our Tom's never forgotten the three months he got him at Kirton, just for catching a hare; it'll come home by him some day or other, now mark my words if it don't. We shall live to see him come to th' dogs, lass; give us a pinch, and bad luck to him."

The other wiped off the suds from her arms on her coarse checked apron, and pulling out an old horn box filled with "high dried," handed it to her companion of the tub. Each took a long pinch.

"Did you hear what our Jack said last night, Nanny?" said the other in a low voice, as she deposited the box in her huge patchwork pocket, "there's something in the wind, old girl, more than 'ell dry our clothes."

"I didn't mark it," said Nanny—"bless me, this is hard soap—but I saw him and Tom whispering together, and thought they'd fun (found) a mare's nest somewhere or other."

"Ay, they hev that," replied the other, "there's a woman up yonder, at Cut-throat Cottage, as they call it, they heard Master Banes and her at high words the other night while they were out, and Jack says he would take his corporal oath that something was said about a child been murdered:—and a good deal more they would have heard hadn't the dogs barked."

"I'll goe see him hung," said Nanny, "if I have to walk to Lincoln and back on foot, and sit up all night to do my washing after I get home—that I will if God spares me. So he's murdered a child has he! I allos said he had it in his looks. I wonder what poor mother's bairn he has collyfoggled up yonder and ruined?"

"That we mun find out," was the answer. "I've been thinking whether it isn't one of the Rawsons, they've worn a deal finer things lately than they could ever come honestly by, for the father's only fourteen shillings a week, and if that ell find 'em boas, and veils, and Leghorn bonnets, and dresses that cost a pound a-piece, I'll eat my old shoes! We have'nt seen her that we called the pretty one for some time."

"You mean Mary," said Nanny, "no it isn't her, she's living in sarvice at Gainsbro', I saw her only a week ago cum Tuesday."

"Then whoever can it be?" said the other, making a dead stand.

"I don't know," answered Nanny, also pausing in the midst of the finest lather she had produced from the hard soap, "I shouldn't wonder if it isn't one of the Wilsons." And she again scrubbed away.

"Or what think you of the Trippetts?"—there was another rest, and then the soap was passed very slowly over the linen; "look how they've been lifting up their heads lately; why that shawl that Bet had on, at the mart couldn't have cost less than a pound, and where was she to get the pound?"

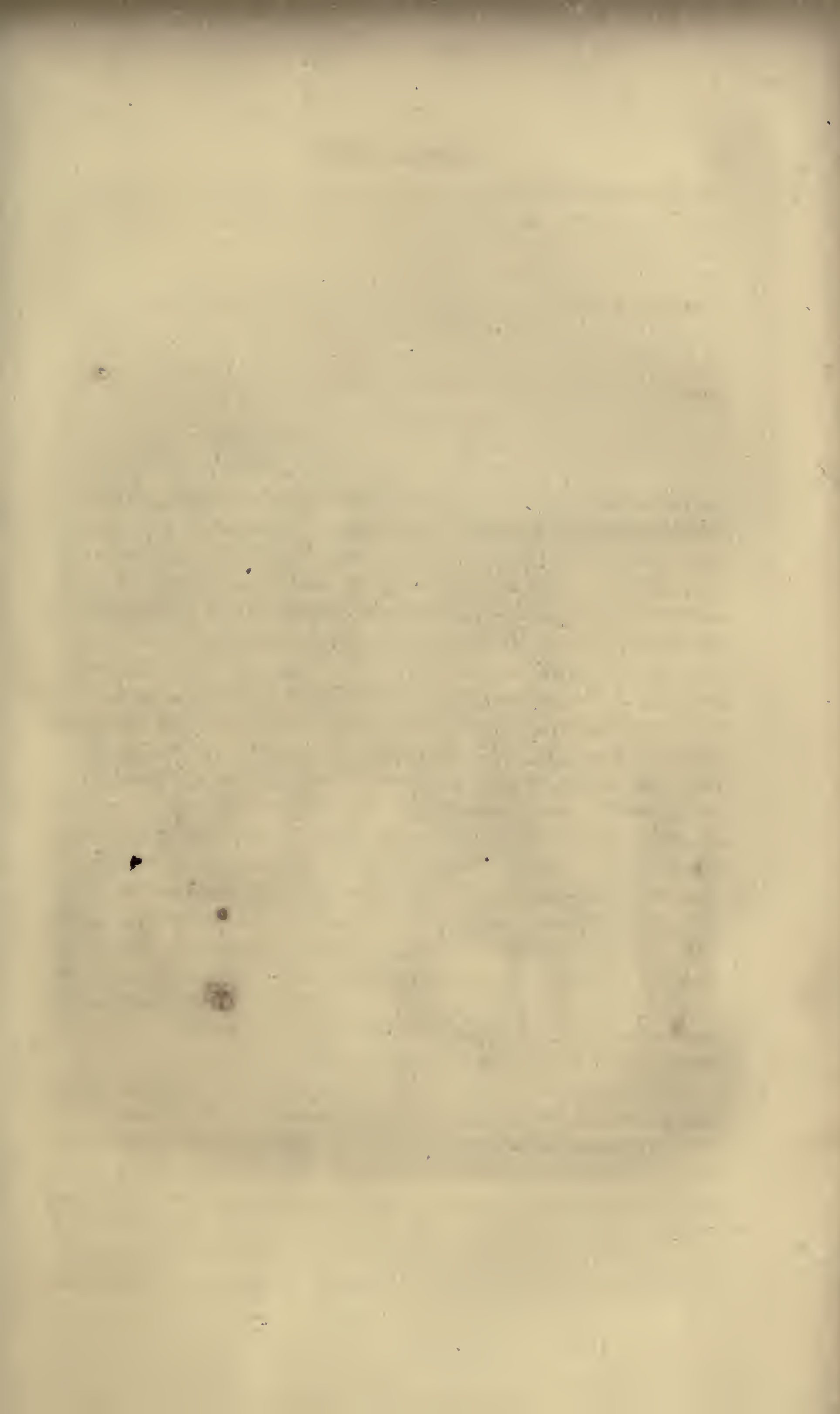
"Ay, where indeed;" echoed Nanny, "where could you or I get a pound, honestly, eh?" and the old women scrubbed away, and scandalized half the families that lived within five miles of the neighbourhood, nor ceased until they were fairly out of breath. And they got through as much genuine abuse and hearty detraction over their wash-tubs, as any brace of old gossips could have managed at a tea-table, though they had sat together through their sixth cup.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE ARRIVE AT THE HALL OF BURTON-WOODHOUSE, OBTAIN A GLIMPSE OF 'SQUIRE BELLWOOD, AMY LEE, AND OTHERS; AND INDULGE IN A LITTLE PHILOSOPHY WHICH, LIKE A JACKASS'S GALLOP, IS "SHORT AND SWEET."

Sir Edward Lee left the hall about the same time that Walter Northcot opened the little wicket-gate at the end of the rectory-garden, and entered the park on his way to visit the family of the Baronet. His heart beat quicker as he drew nearer the ancient pile, which rose with its twisted chimneys and picturesque gables through the trees. He passed by many a well-known spot, which seemed to have become more endeared to him by absence; sunny banks and moss-covered stems, where he had sat side by side with Amy Lee. There they had read Shakspeare together; in that spot he had heard her sweet laughter, while Malvolio seemed pacing before them in Olivia's garden, and Sir Toby, hidden behind the shrubbery, wished "for a stone-bow to hit him in the eye." Further on, he had seen her sit, with the tears coursing down her cheeks, while they sighed over the love of the ill-starred Juliet; or reposed at her feet, while she, as Rosalind, taught him how to make love—a sweet lesson he had never forgotten. His passion had mellowed by absence, for when away, he but kept count of time by the scenes it recalled to his memory. His was love subdued and cherished long: the seed that dropped unaware into the heart, had grown on unchecked, and at first unheeded, until it shot up like a tall and stately tree, and overshadowed all that grew around.

At length he caught a glimpse of the huge baywindow, on which the morning sun flashed brightly, and his fancy recalled every object in that old summer-parlour, wherein he had spent so many happy hours in former days. He crossed the lawn and the wide carriage road, and set foot on the broad hall steps: the door was wide open, and each side of the passage ornamented with choice flowers, which stood on neat frames. He paused a moment, with his hand on the huge knocker, and looked around as if in expectation of seeing some



Walter Northcot's reception at the Hall.

domestic. He saw the door of the ancient parlour stand open, and he heard a voice that drove the blood back into his heart. At length he summoned up courage enough to enter the apartment unannounced, for an old homely feeling came over him, and made him forget for the moment that years had passed away since his footsteps echoed through the hall. It was the sound of that voice which clave through the space of time, for it came upon his ear just as low and sweet as when he heard it last at parting.

He entered the room, and before he had uttered a word, the hand of Amy Lee was within his own; for, forgetful of all form and ceremony, she sprang up the instant she perceived him, her colour heightened and her eyes bright, while she exclaimed, "Walter! I am —" then paused, and glanced upon the floor, as if ashamed of having received him so warmly, she remained silent. The young man saluted her sister Lavinia, without releasing Amy's hand; indeed, he scarcely knew what he was doing.

As for Lady Lee, she sat still beside her little work-table, as if she could scarcely credit her eyes, while she exclaimed, "Is it really Walter Northcot? Why a few years have made you look so manly, and so thoughtful, that I should never have known you again had I even met you face to face. God bless you, my boy! somehow, I've always been led to think, and feel for you, as if you were one of my own."

The kind-hearted lady rose and folded him in her arms, while a tear stole down her cheek; he had been her favourite from a child. Even the eyes of Walter Northcot filled with tears: it was but for an instant, a sudden gush of affection; a silent thrill, in which the heart tries to speak, but bursts amid its full utterance,—bowing every feeling beneath its powerful eloquence;—the struggle of the soul to find words.

So much had been felt and said within a few brief moments, that they had entirely forgotten a horse-jockey-looking young gentleman who stood with his back to the fireplace, and who, having made his teeth ache through biting the butt-end of his whip, now drew their attention by beating the devil's tattoo on his boot-tops.

"I beg pardon," said Lady Lee, "for being so neglectful, but our feelings make us forgetful of all forms for the moment; and—Mr. Bellwood, this is our long-talked of acquaintance and favourite Walter Northcot. It will be a long time, Walter, before I learn to call you Master Northcot, but I know you love our plain old-fashioned

country manners too well to quarrel with them. Amy, my dear, I see you are as rude and forgetful as myself; but why should Walter wait to be invited to take a seat in this house that for so many years has been like his own home?"

Walter went through the ceremony of introduction with a good grace, while Squire Bellwood just condescended to favour him with a slight nod; then again began to gnaw the end of his riding-whip; in fact, he disliked him. The cordial manner of his reception was gall and wormwood to the great foxhunter. Now, Walter Northcot was a gentleman, and in spite of the forbidding aspect of the young Squire, was too well bred to pass over this cold reception in sullen silence; but began to discourse on the beauty of the weather, the delight he had experienced in revisiting the scenes endeared to him by absence; the gladness the river inspired him with; what he felt while running his eye over the monuments in the old churchyard; and, above all, the pleasure in meeting with the smiling faces of old friends.

Mr. Bellwood stared; then he nodded; then said that the river had spoilt many a good chase; that he left the state of the weather to clowns who had to look after their crops; and concluded by adding, "But I believe, Mr. Northcot, you are troubled a little with the poetical itch, and may scratch something out of these trees and flowers, which will keep young ladies at home, when a good airing on horseback after the hounds would be all the better for their health. For my part, I read nothing but the newspapers, and they are devilish dull, except in the hunting season. But I must ride over and see what Banes is doing with yon brace of puppies I bought the other day. They promise to be fine fellows, Miss Lee,—thick heads, short noses, large in the nostrils, ears thin and hanging low, tails like rushes, and capital wind. Good morning, ladies, good morning, sir." The bell was rung for Mr. Bellwood's horse, but he hurried out to see after it himself, and have a little chat with the groom, muttering as he passed across the court-yard, "All your poor gentlemen turn fools, and talk poetry,—the fellow's a bore."

But Walter soon forgot him, for he was again seated beside Amy Lee, and her mother sat with her eyes riveted upon them in silence, and sighing she knew not why, at that moment, though Lady Lee would have exchanged her high estate for a humble grange, and peace of heart:—for happiness reigned not in the old hall of Burton-Woodhouse.

Walter cast his eyes around the apartment; it seemed just the same as when he first knew it. There hung the breastpiece and helmet, which had stood the blows of Cromwell's iron-sided soldiers, when the gallant Colonel Cavendish fell in the neighbouring marsh; the spot which to this day retains the name of Cavendish Bog. Walter had gazed on it many a time in his boyish days, until his heart had taken fire and his imagination kindled, while his ears rung with the fancied sounds of trumpets, and the clashing of sword and mail; until he wished he had lived to fight on that forgotten day, and deal a blow in the defence of that gallant leader. The baywindow, the old portraits on the wall, the harp that Amy was just beginning to play when he left; the roof, with its rich scroll-work,—the pride of Elizabethan architecture,—were all unaltered.

Lady Lee gazed upon him; and while a smile lighted her face, such as had not played there for many a day, she said, "Walter, you are thinking of past times. The old apartment, you see, is unchanged; the very pane you cracked when playing with Amy at Christmas-tide, has never been replaced. We alone are altered," and she sighed heavily as she spoke.

"We shall be happier now, mother," said Lavinia, "since Walter has returned. We have had no one to make us cheerful of late; as for Bellwood, all his talk is about hounds and horses; for if he sees anything beautiful, he begins to think of building either a stable or a kennel after the same model."

Amy hung down her head, but said nothing.

There was a striking contrast between the two sisters. Amy was shy and sensitive; Lavinia bold and open,—what she thought, she in general gave utterance to without reserve; for there was an artlessness about her,—a kind of rude innocence, which when once understood, never failed of pleasing. She was gay and thoughtless; would cry and laugh almost in the same minute; but nevertheless she was high-spirited, and tender-hearted to a degree of weakness,—a strange compound was Lavinia Lee, and dearly did she love her sister. Amy, on the other hand, was the more intellectual of the two. She was a dreamer, a lover of poetry and music, a timid retiring creature; her feelings were deep and noiseless; she could endure disappointment and trouble, without much outward show,—would brood over her own sorrows in silence, rather than make another unhappy by sympathizing with her. She might droop the soonest under acute suffering, but she would bear it the longest without murmuring.

Her's was a heart, that once tenanted, may be crushed and ruined, but never can be made to receive a new occupant. She once had a favourite nightingale which died, but the empty cage still hung in her chamber, never to be inhabited again. That cage was an emblem of Amy's heart,—what had once been cherished might die, but the space remained sacred for evermore.

Amy Lee was a character that almost baffles description; the beholder felt at once that she was beautiful, but it seemed to exist more in the harmony of the whole than in any separate feature. Her eyes were blue and soft, but it required some emotion to light them up,—then their expression could never be forgotten; they seemed to search rather than look upon you:—you felt their power unaware. Her face was like a fine picture broken up into different groups, wherein the whole story comes upon you by degrees. The longer you look at it, the more you discover to admire; and when you have examined each proportion, then, and then only, does it strike you with astonishment, and you marvel how much you have discovered that at a first glance seemed hidden. But, "the light, the light," did much. She was, in a word, a woman that made man feel thankful that this gross earth was blessed by the presence of a being so loving, gentle, and worthy of heaven itself. Even the cross old crones in the village—those whose natures were soured by age and infirmities, declared that the sound of her sweet voice made them forget all their pains. The little children forgot their rags, their hunger, and their wretchedness when she passed, and the countenance of the sullen drunkard would brighten to look upon her. There was not a lip in Burton Woodhouse but would bless the name of Amy Lee. The loops of that little silk bag which she carried were never drawn, while want and misery stood in her path. Pity that such forms should ever leave the earth! little suns that light and cheer the dark underwoods of this world, and but for death and evil men, would make "a little heaven below."

She was slender, and fairer than Lavinia. The old gardener called her the Lily, and her sister the Rose, and by these names were they known to many a one for miles around Burton-Woodhouse. And as such had they been coupled together and toasted at the county ball; albeit, a rich matter-of-fact old florist rose up, and in his cups proposed the tulip and dahlia next, adding, "I've made a deal most money out on 'em."

After staying some time, Walter expressed a wish to look round

the park, and Lady Lee proposed to accompany him, then added, after a pause, "But Amy will, I doubt not, be the most cheerful companion; and I have now other matters to care for, than your books, and your poets, and there are some things which you must hear sooner or later. I had thought, Walter ——; but God's will be done; Lavinia shall walk out with you in the evening." The Rose hung its head a moment, but was too sweet-tempered to prevent the lovers from being alone.

They set out arm in arm, and were soon lost in a winding of the road, as they made their way to the banks of the river.

For some time there was a mutual silence between them; for both had many things to say, and Walter had learnt a good deal from his uncle's garrulous old housekeeper that was unpleasant to hear.

At length they reached their old and favourite walk, beside the "pasture Trent."

"You met my father last night," said Amy, first breaking the silence.

"I did," replied Walter; "and the reception I have met with from your kind mother has strongly marked the difference of those meetings, Amy. Sir Edward received me but coldly. There was a chilling winter in his welcome, —— but I know it all." Amy was silent, and was hurt, for she felt at once that the feelings of the proud and spirited boy had but strengthened in the man.

"My mother's kindness," continued Amy, "must enable you to bear up against the harshness of my father's nature. It is all I have to comfort me now. He is greatly changed of late. You have returned to find us all unhappy, Walter; but let us hope for the best."

"We were young, and knew not what we did when we last parted here," said Walter. "We had been reading the old ballad of Bateman, and deploring the inconstancy of the fair Maid of Clifton, and we vowed to love each other until death. We knew not what we did, when we broke the large gold coin between us, and wished the same fate might befal us, if we proved false. I have, however, worn my token like a knight of old ever since," added he, taking from his bosom the half of a large gold coin of Charles the First's time. "I doubt not, but that you have long since forgotten all this folly, and will pardon me for recalling it. I have often thought of it, but more as a childish keepsake, than aught of a serious nature." Then added, with a smile, "you but played the betrothed of the old ballad."—

Walter tried to appear gay, and treat it as a matter of no consequence, but his heart beat high while he awaited her answer.

"Mine is here," said Amy, producing the counterpart from her bosom, and the faded blue ribbon, which she had never changed; then added, while her eyes filled with tears, "and I never regretted wearing it till now, —— when it seems esteemed so lightly." She tried in vain to subdue her feelings, and burst into tears; and in another instant was clasped in the arms of her lover.

What passed between them further, need not be told;—they vowed their loves over again, and they were happy. The smooth calm course of love has but little in it that is interesting; it is when the tempests set in, that tears and threatens to separate, that we become most interested in watching the progress of the little barque and caring for its tender freight. But they saw not then the distance where the sky loomed up heavily and tempestuous. Amy Lee had not kept her secret hidden from her mother; she sighed, and approved of the deed. And could Sir Edward Lee blight their hopes; he who was himself a slave to love? No! there was hope that "out of this nettle danger, might be plucked the flower safety." It was a painful thought, and the heart of Lady Lee ached long after she had forgotten it; but nevertheless, it passed through her mind. "The pelican," says an old divine, "feeleth not the pain while tearing open its breast to feed the young ones which it loveth." Man knoweth not what the heart of a woman can endure; the pang of death is the last and least felt,—it is the dragging of the barb to and fro, after it is launched, that she bears with a patience and a suffering, that put the boasted endurance of man to shame. Look around in the world, reader, and see what a mother bears daily for her children; survey closely the ragged forms that you meet on the lonely highways with their children at their backs, or pacing over a heath that seems to have no bounds; and this is nothing to what women endure! When they fall, the footmark of man is upon them, —they may deny the blow that struck them down, but the mark it left, is surely there.

And could it be the same passion which raged and tore through the bosom of the proud Baronet, that left so calm a smile on the face of Walter Northcot, and so tender a lustre in the eyes of Amy Lee? Is the love that springs from circumstances over which the weak have no control, and grows on and overturns honour, and rank, and reputation, another passion from that which calls not down the

world's censure? or is it the position only that makes the crime? There is less danger than some might be led to imagine in the investigation of this theory, though to many it may appear strange. The foundation of truth is deep, and digging for it will but lead us sooner to the impenetrable rock on which it is based, and which all the batteries of falsehood can never shake or remove.

The root of a great evil that is now stretching far and wide, is in this answer easily laid bare. Nature, without the rein, is a wild steed that might by chance run some distance along the right road; but the marvel would be that it plunged not aside, and dashed its rider down the first precipice.

We have an odd habit of our own, of reading every bit of soiled paper that comes wrapped round a pennyworth of tobacco or cheese, or is made up as a wrapper to keep decent the tail of a red herring. And sometimes we pick up rich morsels of intellectual food along with the above-named luxuries—fragments of old authors, whose names are unknown, and whose works are dealt out sparingly, like all good things in this world; scraps of ancient wisdom, which are almost worn to shreds through having been so long preserved in our right-hand waistcoat pocket, among loose snuff, tobacco; flower-seeds, which some day we may set; pencils that never have a point, and superannuated knives that have long been unable to make one, and all odd little morsels of dust, that when we slip our watch into the aforesaid pocket, after having wound it up, and forgotten to put on the case, find their way in at the key-hole, and go grating and grinding amongst the wheels, to the great obstruction of our keeper of time, and the benefit of those who dust the hours. And thus readeth our fragment:—

"There being no proposition, for which something may not be said, many men (whether out of passion, interest, want of ability or leisure, laziness, or whatever other cause) rest with the first appearance, and by little and little take root, and fix in error. Alas! how few can judge of probabilities; of those who can, how few will take pains to weigh and consider. How many are concerned that *Error* should be *Truth!!!* and who are so easily deceived, as they that think themselves wisest? Hence it comes, that so many men abandon themselves to sensuality, covetousness, and other vices, without remorse, or discovering the fallacy; for they assume to themselves certain reasons built upon slight foundations, which they are concerned should be true, and therefore they will not examine

them: but because they have some, though but very small, show of reason, they serve them, first to discourse with others, and then to fool themselves."

We are not certain that we understand clearly what we are "driving at" in the latter portion of this chapter, but if our readers should happen to discover it, it will just amount to the same thing. It is surely sufficient for an author to write a book, without presuming to understand, or give an opinion upon what he does; it is for others, not himself, to read it. "What I have written," says a wag, "will be of advantage to posterity; which, if it happen, will be a mighty satisfaction to your humble servant, an hundred years hence."

But it is time we returned to the Roper.

CHAPTER IX.

GIDEON GILES GETS DISCHARGED FROM THE ROPERY—SMOKES A PIPE OF TOBACCO, AND BEGINS TO STUDY WHAT TO DO FOR THE BEST—WE ALSO TAKE UP OUR PIPE, AND "LET A LITTLE OF OUR SOFT OUT"—BETTY BRUST COMES HOME, AND GIVES BENJAMIN "A WORD OR TWO OF A SORT"—BEN AND COUSIN WILLIAM MAKE A "LIGHT SUPPER."

Gideon Giles had just finished his day's work, and was unrolling the bundle of hemp from his waist, when Mr. Brown sent word that he wished to see him before he went home. The boy who turned the wheel delivered the message; and by some strange sensation, which there is no accounting for, Gideon felt that something evil was about to happen. Running his hand along the lines which he had that day spun, and picking off the bits of shives as he passed, he entered the shed, where Mr. Brown stood ready to receive him.

There is something villanous in the look of a man who is about to utter a cold, deliberate falsehood. Your off-handed lie comes out with a better grace: it falls trippingly from the tongue before the speaker is at times aware of it; but your long-studied and carefully-worded lie seems to "stick i' th' throat," like the "Amen" of Macbeth. A man cannot look at you in his usual way—even if he "brazens it out;" his features are set for the purpose, and assume a

very different appearance to what they do when beaming with the truth. The case is different with your hardened and practised liar, for he is used to the trade.

When Gideon entered the shed, Mr. Brown looked downwards—a real downcast hang-day look; for, to do him justice, he was heartily ashamed of what he was about to do. Then he "hemmed" two or three times very distinctly, and at last commenced as follows:—"I am very sorry, Mr. Giles, but—that is, I would say, I have found my trade falling off lately, and am afraid that—you understand me—I shall be forced to part with you—I am very sorry indeed."

"This change must have come very suddenly," answered Gideon. "It was but yesterday morning that you was talking about employing another hand, unless I could work over-hours, which I promised to do. But you know your own business best, and I have no wish to pry into your motives, though, to be plain with you, sir, I suspect that there is something more at the bottom of this than being short of work."

"Nothing more, I assure you," replied Mr. Brown; now hardening as he went on—for lying, like drinking, only requires practice, then a man may double his dose without feeling himself much the worse at the time. "You may be sure, Mr. Giles, that it is painful for me to part with you, after having worked for me all these years, and the more so since the rope-walk was once your father's. But you can stay a week longer if you choose."

"No, if I must go, the sooner I'm off the better," said Gideon; "for I shall never settle down to work as I ought to do while this discharge hangs over my head, and I would rather leave to-night. The few shillings I owe you, you must deduct out of the four days' work I have done this week."

"No, I shall not do that—it can stand over until you get employment;" answered the master Roper, and opening his ledger, he said, "Out of the two pounds I advanced you when your son died, you have paid me a shilling a week since last October—fours are twelve, and—thirty-four shillings you have paid in all; that leaves you in debt six."

"The journey to Hull you never paid me for," said Gideon; "that was to be five shillings; deduct the one from my present week's work, and when that is settled I shall owe you nothing."

"I had quite forgotten it," said Mr. Brown. "Four days, at three shillings, is twelve: here is a half-sovereign and a shilling—I think

you will find that right. I like to pay to the very farthing." And he breathed more freely when he had closed his ledger.

Gideon packed up the few tools which were his own, and departed from the rope-walk with a heavy heart. For the first time in his life he was out of employment, and he thought of what his family must endure until he again got work. "God will not desert us," said Gideon, as he passed down the village street; "and my daughter Ellen," added he, "He will protect her when I am gone." He sighed unconsciously and walked on.

The humble Roper entered his cottage, and throwing his tools upon the floor, seated himself beside the fire and said, "Troubles thicken upon us apace, wife; to-morrow I must set out to seek work. I have done at the ropery."

"Done at the ropery!" echoed his wife. "You don't mean to say he's discharged you?"

"Call it what you please," said Gideon, "he has no longer employment for me. I might have stayed a few days longer—but he wished me to be gone; and I cannot guess why."

"Never mind, father," said Ellen, a shade of sadness passing over her beautiful brow; "Miss Lee taught me how to use the needle, and I can work early and late at dressmaking. I have already the promise of several jobs, and something will turn up soon. Have faith, father,—we never yet wanted bread."

"And were never yet driven to seek it abroad," replied Gideon. "But I have no fear of finding work before I 'tramp' far; all that concerns me is, how you'll go on until I can send you money. We have not a pound in the world."

"I shall be able to earn a few shillings," answered Ellen; "and Mr. Lewsly will be glad to credit us for what bread we want until you can get employment. As for other things, the new potatoes will soon be ready—I was looking in the garden to-day; and you know how kind farmer Swift is—he will give us what milk we want for fetching. It was but the other day he told me they'd so much they were forced to give it to the pigs. As to the other things, I can make shift to get what my mother will want; and for myself—I can do without. All I think about is yourself, father, and how you'll go on until you get work."

"Heaven bless thee, my daughter!" answered the father, in a tone of voice which was unusual to him. "While thou remainest in safety behind, I have but little fear of them. But think, my

dear, of the danger thou didst escape last night: I have his pledge never to molest thee again; but when I am away, how will he keep it? Were it not for this bit of homestead, which was my father's, we would remove to some distant place, where we might live without the fear of these things;—fill my pipe, love—it is the only comfort the poor man can command in his troubles."

Ellen reached the black clay pipe from the corner, and filled it out of the old-fashioned tobacco lead—the very same which his grandfather had used before him—and Gideon took the first few whiffs in silence, while his wife sat rocking the sickly child.

He grew calmer as he smoked—his spirits seemed to settle down into a quiet state of resignation, and when he again spoke, it was to say, "God does all things for the best."

Let those abuse that cheap luxury, a pipe of tobacco, who never knew the enjoyment of it. We would not quarrel with any man on this matter, although we are avowed worshippers of the "soothing weed." Dear old pipe! what happy hours hast thou and I spent together—in the still midnight, when the busy world slept, have we kept watch and close communion. We hatched no treason—we did injury to no one; we rested lip on lip with sincere affection, and our loves but grew stronger through this renewal. Thou art a fond mistress, that causes me no jealousy—thy look and welcome are ever the same. I parade not thy beauty before the world, and thou complainest not if I abandon thee for a time. I have ever found thee faithful. Thou hast been my comforter in sorrow; and when elated with joy, thy old familiar whisperings have soon made me thoughtful. Thou art my wisest, and best adviser. There is something venerable in thy brown and dim looks: the thoughts of long years are imprinted on thee; the musings of many a midnight are chronicled on thy huge bowl. The faces of dear old friends have passed in long array before us, when we were alone; we have mingled sighs and smiles together, which the world can never know of. Thou hast endured much for me, my dear old pipe!—thou hast passed through fire and water for my sake. Thy voice is ever low, and I love to hear it, and I can regulate it at my will; at times it seems measured and solemn, as it keeps pace with my thoughts; and when the brain runs riot, it comes laughing from thy lips in quick succession, and thy ebony end curls up its volumes in silent delight, and we mingle our breath together, and waste our efforts upon the empty air, while we make "ambrosial clouds." What shapes have

I seen spring from thee!—forms of beauty ascending with their scarfs blown into arches as they rose with their floating drapery, then dwindled into air. Mountains crowned with blue mist, with winding paths that seemed to lead into the clouds; valleys deep and purple; ocean depths, which no eye but our own looked down into, where the huge sea-snake curled and moved in its watery cave, and looked as if its blue folds would girdle a world. What hours have we sat dreaming together with half-shut eyes, giving wink for wink, as something new rose before us, and whispering in "whiffs," lest our speaking aloud should break the spell! How our forefathers passed their long winter nights without such a companion as thou art, we know not. All great discoveries came to light with thee. Our steamships and railways are but pipes set in motion; we pass over half the globe smoking. Let no man, then, despise a pipe. Even the great Homer sent his heroes to battle with it; and Achilles "*smoked* along the plain." And now thou art out, I will rear thee gently on end, for I would not have those who love thee not, grow weary at hearing me praise thee, my dear dreamy old friend.

By this time Gideon Giles had got into "the very marrow of his pipe;" what that is, a true smoker can only know. It is when a pipe seems to smoke of its own accord—when the lips have but to breathe out the fragrant volume—when the cloud comes up without compelling.

"Well," said Mrs. Giles, after a pause, "it's a good job I didn't have that new gown to-day of the young Scotchman that called. If I had, I should have had to pay him a shilling a week. As to the tea-man, I paid him the last sixpence on Monday, so he can leave another half-pound. And I mun may shift wc my bonnet for another summer, and have it cleaned a bit. I reckon you'll teck your best clothes, Gideon?"

"No, they will be too cumbersome," answered the husband. "A shirt or so, and a pair or two of stockings, will be all that I shall need. We must think about bread before finery, wife. And I may have to tramp some distance before I meet with work."

"You may," said the wife, with a sigh; "for the poor man that called a week ago, and asked for a job, said that he'd tramped all the way from Newcastle, and never had but two weeks work. Poor thing, his feet were sorely blistered with walking, and he said he'd left his wife and two children in the workhouse. Rich folks little think what poor ones go through to get a bit of bread. I shall never

forget how he eat his bread and cheese; he seemed quite famished. Mrs. Brown never asked him in, when he called there to inquire for work, but stood with the door in her hand, as if ready to slam it in his face. Well, well; she may know what it is to want herself before she dies; but folks never think of these things when they're well off. I never saw such a fright as she looked the other day in one of her new caps; it was just for all the world like them things as the Turks wear that come round we' nutmegs and rhubarb. I shall feel lonely without you, Gideon; but it's no mander of use fretting one's sen to fiddlestrings. If you go by Nottingham away, you might call and see my sister Sarah, just to say that we're all well excepting little Billy, and tell her that I think his complaint will end in the "hooping cough." She'll make you as welcome to a meal's meat as th' flowers in May. I wish I was going with you, just for a week; but I can't leave Billy till he's better."

Gideon answered but little to this long tirade, for he was thinking of Sir Edward Lee and his daughter Ellen, and of the interview he had that day had with the Baronet; and then he wondered where he should be the next night at that time, and whether it would be best to go by the way of Retford or Newark to seek work, and how he must contrive to send money to his family if he was fortunate enough to obtain employment. And he sighed when he thought how expensive postage was, and how, if it was cheaper, he should hear from them once a week. These were considerations to the poor man, and they had occupied many a brain before Gideon Giles's; but, thank God, this little evil is now remedied, and "every little makes a mickle." Let bread be as cheap in proportion as postage, and fewer beggars will knock at your doors to crave it. Give us the means of keeping body and soul together at less expense, and see how few the walls of the New Poor-houses will imprison. The loaf is the life of thousands of poor families in England,—this is a simple truth, and needs not a moment's thought. Too many now almost "live by bread alone," save and except the potato—as for salt, it is plentiful. They who endeavour to starve the poor will assuredly be punished hereafter; the curses of the hungry fall heavy. All cannot obtain a living alike, who are willing to work; old age and sickness and misfortune are of as old a date as the world. Let the lazy and the evil-disposed be punished—we have "most biting laws" for them; but let the hungry be fed; drive not the needy and the deserving to desperate deeds. One who has both suffered and endured patiently

writes this—one who knows what the poor feel and undergo —even those who "have nowhere to lay the head." Let us have cheap bread; Englishmen are proud-hearted, and beg not until they are upon the threshold of starvation: men and women in our day have died in the streets for hunger. In England has this been done? look at the Newspapers—let any one run over the files of the last year—whig or tory, it matters not—there are the same records of misery. A few extracts from any of their columns, we care not which, printed in a cheap form, and given away among the million, would do more than all the nonsense uttered at ten thousand of your meetings,

> "Where asses congregate to hear each other bray,
> And 'eckaw' answers 'eckaw' all the live-long day."
>
> *Tomlin's Modern Orator.*

Gideon Giles is an honest and industrious man—he is out of work; shall he throw himself upon the parish, and see his wife locked up in one ward and his children in another, then get up some night and hang himself on the first beam he can reach? No; he is willing to work, and England is wide, and we are a people proverbial for industry; even our dreamy authors are "faggs." Gideon will do something. Pity but what he had all the threepences he has spent for the last twenty years on a Saturday night at the White Swan—they would amount to—but the sum is awful. Let him but apply for relief to an overseer, and he shall be told to a fraction what they would come to. Then all those shillings he had laid out in books—could he eat books? Gideon, you might have been worth pounds, if you had been a brute instead of a man. Remember, Gideon, that twelve pennies make a shilling, twenty shillings a pound—that a pound a year in a hundred years is——But Ellen is filling his second pipe, and he is out of work—thoughtless, reckless, spendthrift Gideon! Those two pipes of tobacco cost thee nearly a halfpenny—two halfpennies would have purchased thee a penny loaf; they would have bought oatmeal enough for the breakfast of four paupers. Even the candle that Ellen lit might have been saved; surely thou couldst have seen to talk by the firelight—and what need of a fire in May? If thy extravagance brings thee to the Workhouse, who will wonder at it! Thou may'st sigh, Gideon, there are troubles in store for thee of which thou but little dreamest; but the future is not all dark. Thou wilt meet with friends where they are least expected to be

GIDEON GILES RESTING BY THE ROADSIDE.*

found. The strong hand may triumph over thee for a time; thou mayest have to endure hunger and fatigue and heartaches; but rest secure in thine own integrity and uprightness of purpose, and thou shalt live to conquer all difficulties.

The pipe was at length put aside, and the Bible brought forth; and that night Gideon Giles dropped a tear upon the holy page.

Ellen took up the candle and retired to her humble resting-place, but not before she had bowed her knees before her Maker. The daughter of the poor Roper knelt down with closed eyes and folded hands, and prayed for strength to endure whatever trials she might be doomed to undergo. She then laid down and slept a "peaceful sleep."

That night, Sir Edward Lee tossed to and fro upon his pillow, like a ship over which the pilot has no command, that is left to drift over a perilous sea. He slept, but it was a restless sleep; the image of Ellen Giles rose before him in tears, then her face changed and assumed the stern look of her father, with the same bent brow which he wore when they met in the gloomy solitude of the park. The visage of Walter Northcot also stood before him calm and collected, and he saw the figure of his daughter weeping and leaning upon her mother for support. Anon he was in the lonely cottage with Banes,

* See page 73.

then joining the chase with Bellwood, and the deep voices of the hounds mingled with the neighing of steeds, and the wailing of women. A terrible night did that proud Baronet pass.

Ben Brust was unlacing his boots, and preparing to go to bed, about the same time that Gideon Giles reached home. Benjamin had no thought of what the morrow might bring forth. True he did not much relish the return of his wife, and was therefore making ready "for roost," as he termed it, before that event took place. "Get into bed," said Ben, very leisurely undoing the lace, "before she comes, and pretend to be fast asleep; for if she's seen her cousin, her tongue ell run like a mill-clapper. But she may blether away—there's no ripping of bellies. It was a sweet pretty bit of mutton, though; but law's what was it for two full-grown men, But it was all owing to that slight mistake about the clock—and time and tide, they say, waits for no man. Well, it ell be a warning to her to buy more another time, so that there may be a bit left when she expects her company to a dinner. Then, all her palaver about how to go on at a table—as if natur didn't teach a man how to eat right. Ah! ah! ah! I wonder how cousin William behaved where he dined. He knocked loud enough, however, to have broken the drum of a deaf man's ear. Whew! here she comes, and her cousin—but words break no bones."

It was indeed Betty Brust, followed by cousin William, who came in, looking daggers at Benjamin.

"Well, my wench," said Ben, looking out of the corner of his eye; for he saw that a storm was brewing, and was determined to keep cool while it lasted. "Well, my wench—thou'st done for to-day, I hope—and now can rest thysen and feel a little comfortable; shall I fetch thee thy half a pint of ale?—I dare say thou'st had a hard day on it."

"Don't my-wench me," said Mrs. Brust, looking very pale as well as thin; "I'll not be my-wenched we you; don't think to come round me with your colly-foggling. Where's the mutton, you lazy-good-for-nowt!—the two pounds seven ounces good weight, I bought out of my own hard 'addlings?' Here's my cousin William; aint you ashamed to see him?"

"Very glad indeed to see him looking so well," answered the philosophic Ben; "very indeed. Sit down, cousin, and meck yoursen at home. I hope you'll come and teck a bit of dinner with us to-morrow. I made a mistake of an hour to-day in the time, and it would have been done to death if I'd waited; and after I'd had my

own dinner off it, really it looked sich a bit that I should have been ashamed to have offered it you. But one must expect to meet we disappointments in this world, as the saying is—mustn't we, cousin? But I wish you'd happened to have cum just when it was done: it was really very nice."

"I did come," replied cousin William, very sharply; "I was here two minutes before the time by the Gainsbro' clock. I made a very slight breakfast on purpose; and when I got here you'd locked the door, and I saw a lot of bones staring me in the face through the window; an I was forced to go and get a half a pint of ale and a crust of bread and cheese, for I felt fit to drop, after the walk I'd had. I never met with such conduct from a relation in my life, and I shan't forget it in haste."

"It was scandalous! infamous! heathenish!" chimed in Betty. "Two pounds seven ounces! O Ben! that ever I should have tecken up we you—sich good offers as I had when I was single. He came to me almost famished, and if Farmer Thornton hadn't axed him into the kitchen to some cold bacon and cabbage, I don't no whatever he would have dun. Pretty treatment this to one of my own near relations, to be forced to be beholden to the people I wash for for a dinner. It ell be talked about all among my relatives. If it wasn't for my rewmaticks I could find in my heart to strike you, I could, Ben."

"Now, Betty, love, keep thy temper," said Ben unmoved, "and do hear a little reason, wilt ta? Don't throw thysen into sich tantrums, my love; if ta does thou'lt be bringing on a fit of thy old complaint."

"Don't my love me, don't," said the irritable Betty; "I won't be my-loved we you any more; I'll have a separate maintainance I will. I'll get a warrant out against you and be divorced. Where's the mutton, and the fourpence I left for ale, you gormandising, ravenous brute? O Ben!—and the only relation I care for."

"Laws, that a woman we sich a sweet temper should throw herself into sich airs," said Ben, "just for two pound when it was cooked. Thou sees, my wench, I knew it would be too little for two, and I did it all for the best; for I shouldn't have liked cousin William to have made half a meal; thou sees when anybody strange comes I like 'em to have plenty. As for the ale, why thou knows there's plenty more where that came frae. And we'll have a drop to-night, else we'll know why; and I'll go pull a few nice radishes and

onions, and a head or two of lettice; and thou can go out and get a bit of prime cheese. She's a capital judge of cheese, cousin, and the doctors say a light supper's better to sleep on than heavy meat; at least I've heard say so, though, for my own part, I rather prefer meat mysen like; but you see it's all fancy, cousin. But I was grieved though, that the mutton should have been done so soon." Whether Benjamin meant the cooking or eating was not very clearly made out. "But we'll have a bit of meat done over a Yorkshire pudding to-morrow, won't we, love?" continued Ben.

"No we won't," said Betty, snapping as if she would have bitten his head off. "Two pounds seven ounces good weight! O Ben! I'm ashamed of you. One and sixpence did they want for it, and after a deal of haggling I could only get a penny off."

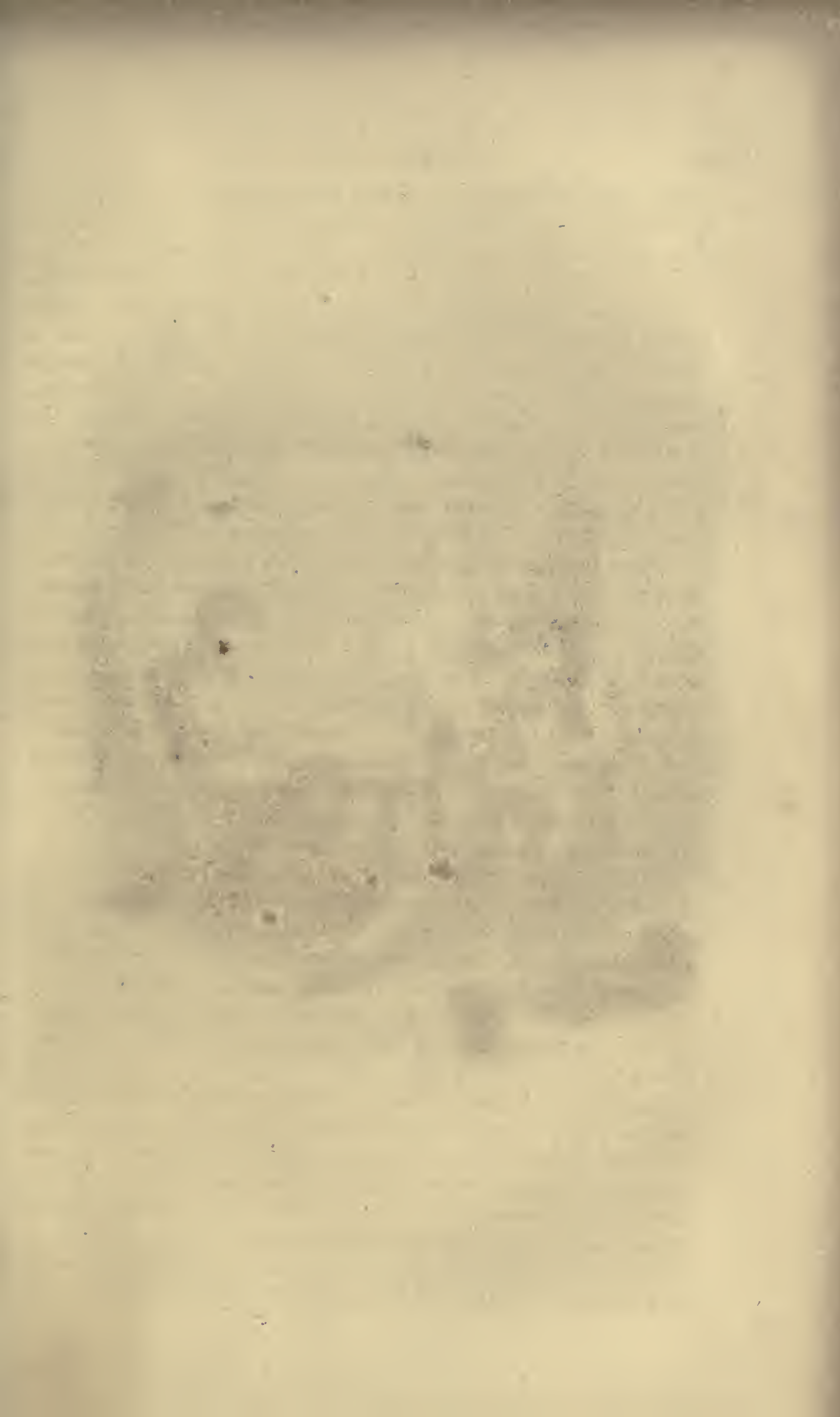
"Hey! catch em getting over thee if they can, my wench," said Ben, who saw a chance of making a point, for he knew Betty's weak side. "She's the best hand at driving a bargain, cousin, you ever saw, though she's here, and I say it afore her face. She can make a shilling go farther than some folks would two—but about this cheese; it's getting late, love, and they may be shut in, and I dare say cousin William's in the habit of having his supper afore this time."

William expressed his readiness to encounter anything at hand, adding, "I but made a poorish dinner after all, for the bacon was rather rusty; but a Yorkshire pudding to-morrow would be a treat; I've not tasted one since Scotten feast afore last."

Betty went out for the cheese and ale, and Benjamin into the garden to draw a few onions and radishes, and while stooping down he unconsciously said to himself, "I wonder, whether we shall have a Yorkshire pudding and a piece of beef to-morrow. Laws, if it was ready now, what a lot I could eat, and how comfortably I could but sleep after it. These radishes and things lay cold on one's stomach: they say a man may eat bread and cheese till he's hungry, and I believe it."

Notwithstanding Ben's disapproval of so homely a supper, when they sat down it seemed a race between him and the cousin which should eat most. The radishes went down, tops and all, almost whole—the onions vanished without any apparent effort, while the bread and cheese seemed to vanish off the table, as if by magic, so quick did mouthful after mouthful disappear.

"Capital cheese," said Ben; "excellent!" echoed cousin William, half choked by the effort of speaking.



E. Lambert.

Ben and Cousin William at Supper.

Mrs. Brust sat down and looked on in terror and astonishment, glancing first at one then the other, with hands and eyes uplifted; the cranching they made was like horses feeding after a journey. The perspiration fell from their brows with eating. They sat face to face; their jaws keeping equal time, as they gave champ for champ, until the pound and a half of cheese was all devoured, even to the very crust. There was one radish left, a fine thick one, and they both seized it at the same instant of time. Ben got it, and snapped it in two between his teeth, with a look of triumph. "Dang thee," said William, "I won't be done again." And he snatched up the ale jug and emptied it at a draught. Ben stared at him in silence, but consoled himself with the thought that he had not shared his dinner. Betty had a fainting fit: she was shocked to see how cousin William went on "when he went out to see company." The fragments they left would hardly have done to have supped up a grashopper. It was one of the heaviest of light suppers ever eaten.

CHAPTER X.

GIDEON GILES SETS OUT TO SEEK WORK, AND IS UNSUCCESSFUL—THE PRIVATIONS THAT POOR MEN ENCOUNTER WHO ARE THROWN OUT OF EMPLOYMENT—WITH DIVERS OTHER MATTERS, WRITTEN TO BE READ.

It would but be telling a tedious story to describe how Gideon Giles separated from his family; his parting advice to Ellen, and the few "natural tears" that were shed on the occasion. He left his home at an early hour, bearing in mind the good old adage,—"it is better to walk in the cool of the day than in the burning heat of noon;" but although the sun rose brilliantly, and the sky was almost cloudless, and the birds sang sweetly from amid the blossoming May-boughs, still the heart of the poor Roper felt sad within him: he had no feeling in unison with the glad things that moved and sang around—for he had no certainty of obtaining bread—and it is a sad thing when an honest and industrious man is troubled with these misgivings. He was leaving his home and his family, and setting out a wanderer in the world; and he was aware that if he did not obtain employment in the neighbourhood, but had to journey many miles, that he should be compelled to give up the little cottage in which he was

born, and to remove far away from the village where his forefathers slept. Then came other thoughts. Who would protect Ellen when he was absent? and he regretted that he had not seen Ben Brust before his departure, for Ben was a "good man and true," and would have broken even the bones of a baronet in the defence of a woman. "I must leave all to Providence," said Gideon, with a sigh. He passed through the corn-fields beyond Marton, along that picturesque footpath which is overhung by tall old trees, and shaded by lofty hedges. He heard the lazy rumbling of the wains along the heavy sand road, the crack of the whip, and the "gee-hove" of the drivers, and wondered when he should hear those voices again. His little bundle, containing the few necessaries he was compelled to carry, was slung on a stout walking-stick, which rested on his shoulder, and he walked along at a rapid pace. The moss-covered walls of Knaith Park were soon left behind; the home-field, bordered with willows that seemed to elbow out the river Trent, and the rich marshes that broadened out to his left. Few were astir as he went through the picturesque village of Lea, with its primitive cottages of "stud and mud," and low-thatched roofs covered with a hundred varieties of moss. He glanced at the church-clock on the hill side; it was just on the stroke of five, and he was soon pursuing his way with long and rapid strides over the fields which skirt the foot of the Long Plantation; then he came in sight of the oil-mills, the square old tower of the church, and the straggling roofs of Gainsbro'. He called at the ropery at the entrance of the town; the men were already at work, and he found to his sorrow that he had no chance of "a job" there. Mr. Furley had discharged two of his men on the previous Saturday night, and neither of them had been able to get work in the town. He paid his halfpenny at the bridge without grumbling at the imposition; for he thought if the inhabitants of Gainsbro' sat down so quietly to be plundered he had no right to complain, though he knew that foot-passengers ought, according to the terms on which the bridge was built, to have passed over toll-free years ago.

"These things must be altered, ere long," muttered Gideon. He turned down the steep path at the end of the bridge, passed another ropery, which was not yet opened, and along the hauling-path beside the Trent; then struck off past osier-bolts and rich meadows, in the direction of Bole and Wheatley, passed the tall May-pole, and so on over the wide space of corn-lands which stretch far as the eye can

reach without either bound or enclosure; then along the canal side to Welham, and reached East Retford at eight o'clock. He halted at a homely-looking public-house, and calling for a pint of ale, took out the cold bacon and bread and cheese from his bundle, and made a hearty breakfast. But hungry as he was with travelling, he did not relish his meal so well as if he had been at home: his basin of milk-porridge, and the faces of his family looking happy around him, would have been sweeter than the more costly and substantial breakfast he was compelled to make. He called at the ropery, but received the same answer,—trade was very bad, and they had not full employment for the old hands. The master invited Gideon to breakfast, and the poor Roper regretted that he had not calculated on such an offer, as it would have saved him twopence-halfpenny and spared the provisions which Ellen had packed up for him. The two journeymen gave him sixpence each, and the master added his shilling, and Gideon again commenced his journey towards Worksop. It is a good custom—that of one poor man relieving another who is seeking work, and Gideon had never omitted doing it while he was in employment, but still, like many others, it is abused at times; for there are many impostors, who would rather "tramp" from place to place, and live on the charity of the industrious, than accept of work when it is offered to them. Gideon was not one of these. The road for the next seven miles was beautiful, winding through the picturesque villages of Babworth and Marton, and beside the rich domains of Clumber-Park, the residence of that manliest of tories, the Duke of Newcastle, who made so bold a stand, within the last few days, at Nottingham, against the unpopular Rural-Police Bill, the last fetter that the pretended "givers of liberty" have forged for us. God grant that it may not lead to evil. The same feeling that led the Saxons to take vengeance on the Norman invaders, reigns throughout our rural districts at this hour. There are thousands of stubborn English spirits that will not brook these laws. For heaven's sake, call not back again those days, when the Hundred had to answer for the deeds of violence,—when every morning that broke upon the lonely paths and wild highways revealed the corpse of a Norman. How many worthy men, fathers of families, and men of kind feelings, who have had the ill-luck to be gamekeepers, have been shot? Are those who made the game-laws innocent of these murders? The men themselves were compelled to do their duty; they were not to blame, —they obtained their bread by doing what thousands were ready to

do if they refused. There is blood upon the heads of the framers of these laws; they seem to stand up, like the Norman, looking in safety from his battlements on the blanched bones of the Saxons. The gothic doorway that leads to the dark chambers where these gory rolls are kept, is encumbered with the dead. It is time that the days of the blade and the bludgeon were at an end; the human mind cannot be subdued by cold steel;—reason and right are becoming mightier strongholds than they were in the days of yore. We live without raising the drawbridge at a night, or encircling our houses with a moat—our freedom and our safety rest on a stronger base. The fire that frightens away the savage beast in the desert, warms the traveller who is seated beside it: the eye of the lonely wanderer would brighten to see such a welcome signal in the distance, and hasten towards it, and be welcomed like a brother; and such ought the law to be. The traveller is not mad enough to leave his fire and his camp, and go in search of all the beasts of prey that prowl about the desert; they have their lairs and their caves, and these are known to the huntsman; to arouse the whole herd is dangerous—to force the same laws upon the evil as well as the good is unjust. But we are wandering, and getting beyond our own depth; we feel our incompetency to splash and struggle in these deep streams, where an easy swimmer would move in safety; we are minnows, that but keep the water from becoming stagnant.

Gideon Giles reached Worksop by eleven o'clock; that morning he had walked above twenty miles, but could obtain no work. The answer at Worksop ropery was,—they had set a man on the day before, and he had only the promise of a week's work. Gideon refused the sixpence the poor man offered him, adding, "Nay, if you are but to stay a week, you will soon need it: I will travel further." He passed on to Norton, and came to the village of Warsop, where he took his dinner: he finished the remainder of the provisions in his bundle, drank a pint of ale, and smoked a pipe of tobacco, and found himself much refreshed. He then proceeded to Mansfield, called at the rope-walk, and was told that trade was so slack they could not keep even one journeymen; that the apprentice, who had but three months to serve of his time, would have to go on tramp when his "time was out." The master and his son had but employment enough for themselves. "I must try Nottingham," said Gideon, and he turned his face in the direction of Sherwood Forest, perhaps trod the very path which Robin Hood and his merry-men had tra-

versed. But Gideon's feet were hot and blistered, and his heart too sad to think of the belted outlaw; his thoughts were of the safety of Ellen, and how he should obtain bread for his family. He passed the sign of Robin Hood without noticing it, although the verse underneath the gentleman in a green frock-coat, and a modern beaver on his brow, with "bow and shaft in hand," would have awaked a smile on the face of any man who had less care than Gideon. For although the former landlord, John Little, claimed and deserved some credit for composing a verse, which linked his name so happily with the outlaw chief, and which read—

> "My sign hangs well, my ale is good,
> Step in and drink with Robin Hood;
> If Robin Hood is not at home,
> Come in and drink with Little John."

The new host had only struck out the old name and inserted his own, thus making the last line—

> "Come in and drink with Nathaniel Wigglesworth."

which left the feet rather of the longest.

Poor Gideon! he passed the hut on the lonely road, and neither thought of Byron, or Newstead, but with weary feet and a heavy heart descended Red Hill at the hour of sunset, he walked on towards Sherwood, and was compelled to rest himself on a stile. A horseman rode by, but he never cast a glance at Gideon; a rich hosier rolled along in his carriage, without deigning to look at the poor Roper,—he was thinking how he could knock off another halfpenny a pair, and further reduce the wages of the poor stockingers. The shadow of Gideon fell in a dark line across the road, as he supported the little bundle on his knee: the guide-post pointed forward, as if to tell him that his labour was not yet ended—a little further, and he would finish a journey of fifty miles in one day. Then came the thought, what course shall I pursue to-morrow, if I meet with no work at Nottingham? The poor Roper listened to those home-sounds which we everywhere hear. The rooks flew over his head as they made their way to their nests; he had heard that sound many a time, at the same hour, as he sat smoking at the door of his cottage. The trees around had just the same old familiar whisper as those which overhung the park-wall and waved above his own home. Then he wondered what his family were doing, if anything had happened during his absence, and wished he was with them, to share their homely supper, for he felt hungry, weary, and faint, and there

was no house of refreshment at hand; all around was green, wide, and silent,—his heart yearned for home. Then he began to draw a picture to himself of what those must suffer who have to wander for days and weeks in quest of employment, and the colouring was heightened by the remembered comforts of his own home. He thought how such a life must waste the spirits of a man, who day after day followed the same weary round; and wandered from place to place without knowing any one,—and then those hours that must be spent in some lonely public-house among strangers, who know nothing of what the wayfarer feels; to enter, as he would have to do at dusk, into a large town, where he knew no one; to be tired and faint, and hear no word of comfort spoken, and there to sit till bed-time, which in winter would be for some hours, and with finances so low as only to admit of the most humble fare. To sit there alone, hour after hour, and see the different classes of working-men come in to enjoy their pint and pipe after the day's labour was over; to be eyed askance; to hear suspicious whispers circle round, if you are not over-well clad, while you sit in a corner silent and solitary amongst the merry, your mind wandering back to the dear family you have been compelled to leave, or the friends assembled round the cheerful hearth of the old public-house, just like those before you, who have only to step outside, walk a few yards, bid each other "good night," and be at once at home—while between you and those you love lie many weary miles, which are lengthened every day; they cannot even write to you, for you know not where you shall be on the morrow. You see fresh towns and fresh faces every day; the brown, barren, weary highway only appears the same. And thus, thought Gideon, weeks may pass away. You never enjoy even a warm meal, as a consolation on the road; bread and cheese and a cup of ale are the greatest luxury the poor "tramper" finds; cold looks are too often his only greetings. No eye looks brightly upon him after the day's dreary journey—there is no smile to comfort him at night. The time comes, and he is shewn to a miserable bed—for he cannot afford a better one; and if he is allowed a candle, he places it on the broken chair, and sits down to sigh. Poverty and misery stare him in the face; he is suffering, and there are those far away he has not heard from for weeks. Perhaps the few articles that furnished their humble home have been sold, and they are in the Workhouse. Those whom we love, and would endure aught to make them comfortable, are subjected to the insults of some ruffianly overseer.

"Thank God," muttered Gideon, half aloud, "it will be long before they come to that." Then he thought of the morrow; how he might again traverse lengthy highways, which he knew not—see spires rising in the distance, that pointed above towns and villages he had never heard named, and in which there was no human face that he could call a friend. Reader, think him not weak! though a tear stood in the eye of the firm and manly Roper, and rolled down his brown cheek,—it was at the thoughts of others' sufferings, and not of his own, that it fell.

Gideon arose and continued his journey in pain; his feet were now scorching in his boots—hot and blistered; he clenched his teeth when he planted them on the earth, and walked on with a stern effort. He reached the foot of Forest-Hill, the steep ascent where Nottingham race-course stretched to his right hand: the sun was sinking in the distance, and throwing a golden glow over the rich pastoral landscape, which, five centuries ago, was one wild wide forest. A clear stream of water bubbled beside the road; there seemed something soothing in its very sound, and Gideon took off his boots to bathe his heated feet in the refreshing stream. He sat on the bank-side, and a strange feeling of drowsiness crept over him. He heard the laughter of young men and women, as they walked past arm-in-arm, or talked in low tones the language of love, and thought how some of them would, ere long, be married, have families and cares, such as then weighed heavily upon him,—and the poor Roper heaved a deep sigh. One or two there were who paused, and looked kindly upon him; and a young man took out the only shilling he was worth, and offered it to Gideon. He thanked him, but refused to receive it, adding, "I am not in want." He drew the arm of his "sweetheart" closer to him, and they passed on in silence to some distance; and when the young man spoke again, it was to say, "Mary, that may be my own fate some day, if ever I am thrown out of work."

"But you would take me with you," said Mary. "I would not let my husband leave me behind: I should be happier while I shared his sufferings."

Saint Mary's clock had struck nine, and Gideon still sat with his feet in the stream, sound asleep. The coolness of the water, the dreamy kind of murmuring it made as it flowed along, and the weariness occasioned by a journey of fifty long miles, caused nature to sink beneath these united efforts. At length he was suddenly aroused by a smart blow over the shoulders with a walking-stick, and a deep

voice that said, "Are you weary of your life, my man, that you sit there with your feet in the water, and the dew falling like rain? Come, get up, before you catch your death of cold."

Gideon told him the distance he had that day walked, who he was, and that his feet were in such a state that he could proceed no further without rest.

"You know Gainsbro', then," said the man, "and must have heard of Tom Ironmonger, captain of one of Cutt's 'catches.' Come, on with your boots, and I'll take you where you shall have a good supper and a good bed. Gideon Giles, eh? Don't you remember me coming to Brown's ropery for a new hauling-line, when ours broke at Torksey-lock. There now, give me your bundle, and just put out for about another hundred yards, and I'll stand a glass of ale to help you over the next mile of ground. I stay at the Ship, in Pelham-street,—Nat Warren, the landlord, is a Derbyshire man, and as good a fellow as ever broke bread."

They drank a glass of real Nottingham ale at the bar of the public-house opposite, and soon reached the brow of the hill that looks down Mansfield-road, and commands an extensive view of Nottingham. The long rows of houses shewed that a good space of ground had yet to be trod. At length they passed the Milton's Head, struck down Clumber-street, and turning to the left, soon reached the Ship, one of the oldest public-houses in Nottingham. Honest Nat knew the Captain, and holding out his hand, gave him the "Derbyshire grip," that is, such a friendly shake as makes the fingers ache for an hour after. He then called out, "Missis, get supper ready directly," smiled when the Captain praised his excellent ale, and promised to shew him over his malt-rooms in the morning.

After supper Gideon smoked his pipe and entered into conversation with the host and his parlour-customers; and the remarks of the poor Roper were attentively listened to. The working of the New Poor Laws were discussed, and many a fact brought forward that proved the necessity of some speedy alteration. Free trade and free religion were topics that next arose, and were fairly handled on both sides; for there were those present, who, although dissenters, had still a veneration for the Church of England. And from little meetings like these arise new thoughts and feelings, that cause men to arrive at a just estimate of their positions and privileges, and which, in the end, work out that great and universal object—the bettering of the condition of mankind. The changes that have been

wrought in a few brief years are mighty ones. Our ancestors had their bear and bull baitings, their dull or savage recreations, which look best while gleaming from the canvass, or filling up a gap in the pages of a romance. Ours is another age; we have thrown aside the bow and blade, and taken reason and right for our weapons—our very amusements are tinged with this mental warfare: politics draw thousands together to spend their social hours in discussing them. These may look like "trifles light as air," but it is the very air we breathe—the very element we live in—and the few strong gusts that occasionally blow, are necessary to purify it.

Gideon Giles retired to rest at eleven o'clock, not a little gratified at the hearty shakings of the hand he received from the company at parting. The strong sense, and the manly arguments of the humble Roper were long talked of at the Ship Tavern.

CHAPTER XI.

WE ARRIVE AT THE DESOLATE DWELLING OF MR. BANES, THE GAMEKEEPER, AND GET A FURTHER INSIGHT INTO HIS CHARACTER, HIS QUARRELS, AND HIS MASTIFF.

We must now conduct our readers to the desolate Grange, where Mr. Banes, the keeper, resided, and which we have so often made mention of. This building had in former times been a farm-house of some consideration, and here and there portions might still be discovered that told the original structure was of ancient date; but ruin and repairs seemed in some places to have kept so equal a pace, that it was difficult to separate the old from the new portions. There was a look of desolation and solitude about the place, which was strengthened by the gloomy and ancient wood behind, and the broad wild heath, with its gorse-bushes and straggling hawthorns, which lay before it. The green pool, mantled with duck-meat, that, surrounded with seedy and sickly-looking rushes, skirted the road at the front of the mansion, made the beholder feel melancholy while looking at it; and the dreamy motion of the trees, as they waved to and fro with their incessant rustling, seemed to sadden the spirits: there was nothing cheerful in the scene. Decay and ruin seemed to have taken possession of the building both within and without. The

moisture from the trees that stood by the wood-side, and overhung the roof, served to feed the dark moss and lichen which grew thereon, rotting away the beams, and hanging on the chamber walls in damp and slimy green. The rusty vane, that creaked as it waved in the wind, and the shrill cry of the tufted plover from the heath, were the only sounds that seemed alone meet for that sad and solitary ruin; for there was a murderous kind of look about the place, so much so that the peasants in the neighbourhood called it Cut-throat Cottage. Only a few of the most daring poachers ventured to visit that spot in the night; for the howling of the dogs which the keeper had charge of, the barking of the fox, and the hooting of the owl from the adjacent covert, were sounds which the fearful villagers believed came from spirits that still haunted the lonely Grange.

It was about the same time that the foot-beaten Roper reached the inn at Nottingham, when Mr. Banes entered the house we have so imperfectly described, in one of his angry moods. He had been hovering, like an ill-omened bird of prey, about the dwelling of Ellen Giles, seeking for a fair opportunity to carry her off, and had been disappointed, for none of the family had stirred out after sunset, but had retired early to rest. The savage gamekeeper entered the house in an evil mood, kicked the faithful dog that stood at the door to welcome him, then turning to a female who was seated at the window looking out upon the lonely heath in the moonlight, said, in a stern voice, "Why the devil do you sit moping there without a light, and the fire nearly out; jump up and get some supper ready this instant, or I'll—" and he concluded the sentence with a deep oath and a terrible threat.

The female rose without replying, and after some difficulty succeeded in lighting a match at the grate, when laying the cloth, she set out the table for supper, and again took her seat beside the window in silence.

The brutal keeper took no further notice of her until he had appeased his huge appetite; then he turned his head in the direction where she sat—for her deep sobs, at first stifled, now sounded through the apartment—and with his mouth half-full, he exclaimed, "What the devil are you crying for now, eh? I wish you were a thousand miles off, then you might blubber your eyes out for me. Come and get your supper, before I make you; I'll have no stunting here."

"I wish I was dead," said the young woman, in a faint whisper; then added in a tone just audible, "I cannot eat to-night: I am not well."

"Not well!" echoed the brute, "and what ails you, my lady, eh? I reckon you've been stuffing yourself whilst I've been out. Not well! and plenty to eat and drink, and scarcely anything to do. I know you're well enough, so don't think to come over me with one of your crying fits. I know what would soon cure you."

"My poor child!" exclaimed she, clasping her hands together, and speaking as if to herself; "I would that we were laid in the cold grave."

"Your child! no, a constable," added the wretch. "A warrant at your heels, and a gallows staring you in the face, and I'll be bound you would find yourself well enough to clear thirty miles of ground before morning. Why didn't you keep your child when you had it, instead of drowning it, as you did?"

"Drowning it!—what! my child!" said she, springing up, and approaching the table by which he sat. "Do they say I have murdered it? Dare *you* say so?" She drew her figure to its full height as she spoke, and fixed her wild dark eyes upon him as she stood erect, and in a threatening attitude.

The glance of her eye was fierce and fiery, and there was that strange unsettled light about it, which tells that the brain is bewildered, and that troubles have been battering hard within and without, until the throne of reason is shaken; still it was far from being settled madness—it was that derangement which arises from sorrow, and which is brooded over and nursed by those who are of weak nature. Such as it was, however, it startled Mr. Banes, and he overthrew his chair as he sprang up to confront her: he was speechless with passion.

"Dare you say that I have murdered my child?" exclaimed the woman, drawing yet closer to him, and raising her arms as she spoke, as if ready to tear him asunder, for her lips quivered, and her thin fingers were bent, while there was an appalling terror in her eye. "Do you believe that I have murdered it?" added she, following him up as he retreated before her.

"I—I—but told you what was said," stammered the cowardly keeper. "They found it in the pond beside your cottage—and—and—as you were absent, of course they do say that—that is, they think, it looks suspicious."

"And what says Bellwood?" continued she, her eye still fixed upon him. "And why did you lock me in while he was here the other day, and refuse to let me see him? But he can never rest.

Murdered him! O God!" exclaimed she, now bursting into tears. "Did they but know all my poor heart felt when he was lost, the weary miles I wandered in search of him, over hill and meadow and through woods, tearing my limbs with briers and thorns, and calling on his name until my voice was hoarse. And you, villain that you are! found me in my misery, brought me here, and bade me take comfort, and you would go in search of my child; then returned in the still midnight, and when I was exhausted with weariness and sorrow—when there was no one at hand to hear my cries—you came and—O heaven! I shall go mad. Why did I lend an ear to you on the morrow, when I ought to have given you up to justice, or with my own hand have done the deed that would have buried this second shame. Say that I murdered my child," added she, seizing a knife as she spoke, "and I will do something to deserve the name. Banes, you are a villain!" She threw the weapon upon the floor, and stood before him, pale as death. He saw in an instant that her passion had reached its height, and now began to gather courage: it was one of those pauses in the storm that a bully and a coward knows how to turn to advantage.

"And is this the return you make," said he, trying to look very bold, although he was pale with fear, "after I have given you shelter, and protected you from the laws, and even saved your life? You talk about your character, as if you had it still to lose, when Bellwood, and I know not who beside, know best what's become of it. I'll tell you what it is, my fine madam, if I ever see you throw yourself into such tantrums as these again, or dare to raise your arm up at me, I'll break your neck out of doors. Now, just make that fire burn, and take a pan of coals and air yon bed in the large chamber—it may be wanted before morning. Come, move quick, and don't let me have to tell you again."

Now Mr. Banes, by throwing himself into a passion, thought to accomplish what he had long been aiming at—that was, frightening and making the poor woman subservient to his deep-laid and villanous plans. But he was mistaken; for although her anger had wasted itself, a stubborn resolution was still left behind; and it is said that man may break the heart, but not the temper of a woman. He was also ignorant that she had overheard a conversation between himself and the Baronet, in which they had decided upon securing Ellen Giles in that very chamber, as soon as she was in their power. Nor is a woman, however low she may have fallen, in the best mood for

Lambert

plotting against the virtuous of her sex, while writhing under the reproach of her own shame. All these were points that the keeper had overlooked, and when she refused to do his bidding, he had again recourse to oaths and threats.

"You think me ignorant of your designs," said the woman, "but are mistaken. I will sooner die than be made the means of drawing another into your snares. A fit den is this for an unfeeling monster like yourself to hide your villanies in: I should not marvel if one day it was struck with lightning, and you destroyed amid your own wickedness. I will neither air the bed, nor lend a hand in any of your devilish plots, but do all I can to keep yonder innocent girl from falling into your power. I will stay no longer with you," added she, raising her voice, and opening the door; "I will away and clear myself of all these false accusations." She put on her bonnet, and throwing the shawl over her shoulders made for the door.

"You shall not go," said the brutal tyrant, without moving a step as he spoke; "you shall not go from this place to-night."

"I will," said the woman, confronting him, nor once displaying a symptom of fear; "Ay, though we have a struggle for it. I will not sleep another night under the roof that shelters such a villain as you are. I will away and seek out the daughter of the poor Roper, and let her know what plans you and the evil-minded Baronet have laid for her ruin."

"Ay, will you indeed?" said Banes, now almost choked with passion, and making a rush at her as he spoke; but she stepped aside, and shot out of the door, while he came with all his might against a chair, and fell.

When the gamekeeper got up, he hurried out of the door, and saw the woman running off at full speed across the heath. "Seize her, Tiger," was his first exclamation, and the huge mastiff shot off with a bark and a bound in the pursuit.

The moonlight streamed full upon the wild heath, revealing the jagged hawthorn and the rugged patches of furze and rushes which stretched far as the eye could reach; and amid the wide and desolate landscape was seen the figure of the woman, followed by the mastiff and Banes, the latter clapping his hands, and hallooing to the dog, which soon overtook her, and at one spring brought her to the earth. Once down, the dog attempted no further injury, but stood barking, with his fore-feet planted upon her breast, and awaiting the arrival of

his master. "Get up," said Banes, striking her with his foot as he spoke, "and let me see no more such airs as these; if you do, by the flames of hell! the dog shall never loose his hold again until he has torn out your hated throat. Move on, and let me not hear another word from you to-night," added he, clenching his fist in her face, as she was about to reply. "You shall know now with whom you have to deal!"

The poor woman arose, and walked on without uttering a word. Banes followed close at her heels, and behind him came the mastiff, as if ready in an instant to rush upon her, should she again attempt to escape.

She entered the house once more, the tears streaming down her cheeks, and her spirit for the time totally subdued; and without either lighting a candle, or speaking a word, went into her chamber. She heard the keeper draw the massy chain across the door, and secure the bolt, then order the mastiff to "lie down" on the mat beside the threshold. She looked out upon the wild scene before her window, and sighed as her pale forehead touched the cold iron stanchions which guarded the casement. "I cannot escape to-night," said she, and she threw herself into the large old-fashioned chair which stood beside the window, while her deep sobbing gradually subsided.

Long and silently did she sit there, her dark eyes wandering over the heath, until the outline of every gorse-bush within the range of her vision was clearly defined, and the gloomy rushes beside the stagnant pool slept in the shadow which fell from the Grange, as the moon receded. Even then she kept her eyes fixed on the darkness which closed over these objects, and her mind sank slowly into a stern repose,—but it was the silent and slow blackening of the thunder-cloud—the filling of her soul with that awful revenge which is so terrible in woman,—the change had passed, and now she bitterly hated him.

The shutters were closed, the door secured, and the savage mastiff stretched on the mat, as before described, when Mr. Banes seated himself in his arm-chair beside the hearth, and drawing forth a bottle of brandy from the cupboard, began to prepare for his evening's debauch, for he rarely went to bed sober. He looked into the jug, there was no water,—he tried the kettle, it was empty; the well was beside the wood behind the house, and he felt afraid of opening the back-door; the water-jug had always been placed in readiness by the woman. He thought of calling her down to fill it, then he hesitated,

and while he held it sideways in his hand, he discovered something like a white powder, at the bottom, and his countenance instantly changed. "She intends to poison me," said he, and he wet his finger and took up a small portion and tasted it. It was flour, which by some accident had fallen into the jug. He poured forth a portion of the spirit, and drank it neat, then sat with his eyes fixed on the candle; but still his thoughts ran on poison, and he tried in vain to get rid of them. There were rats in the house, and he startled at the noise they made behind the old wainscot; he got up and looked round, then drank off another glass of raw brandy, to keep up his courage. By and by, his thoughts ran into other channels; and his eyes lit up while he turned over his deeply-laid schemes for getting possession of Ellen Giles, and he rubbed his hands, and chuckled again as he thought of what he should be able to accomplish, when once she was within those walls. "The time will soon come, master Gideon," said he, "when I shall cry quits with you for threatening to kick me out of your cottage; and Miss Ellen, that I was once fool enough to have married, will be a very amusing companion up here, when the Baronet is tired of her." And he again drank deep, then added, "I must keep a tight rein over yonder fiery devil up stairs, or she may do some mischief; I wish I was fairly quit of her, she knows too much." So he continued to ruminate, until he drank himself to sleep. The candle had burnt out, and day was beginning to break through the chinks of the shutters, when he again awoke, and went to bed with his mouth baked hot and dry through thirst.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. BELLWOOD BEGINS TO SHEW HIS DISLIKE TO WALTER NORTHCOT—HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH SIR EDWARD LEE, AND SHEWS "THE WHITE FEATHER"—MR. BANES AND THE BARONET MEET, AND THE KEEPER PLUNGES DEEPER INTO "HOT WATER."

The next morning found Walter Northcot and Squire Bellwood again visitors at the hall of Burton-Woodhouse, for at the moment the squire was alighting at the front-door, Walter was crossing the lawn. He bade the great foxhunter "good-morning," in his usual

kind manner, and was answered with a marked coldness. "Good-morning, master-what-the-devil's-your name," said Bellwood, and marched up the hall steps with all the dignity of a turkey-cock. Walter felt a strong inclination to knock him down. Sir Edward Lee sat in the parlour when they entered, his head resting on his hand in deep thought,—neither did he rise to receive them. The welcome of Amy and her mother was as warm as before; but to Squire Bellwood they only curtsied, while Lavinia gave her haughty head a proud toss as he approached. The squire pulled up his shirt-collar, and tapped his boots as if he intended driving a hole through the tops; then he turned round to Walter, and eyed him with a frown, and received in exchange such a look, as caused him not to raise his eyes again in that direction while he stayed, for there was something in the looks of Walter that, to use a homely phrase, "shewed fight."

It is a good rule that, of never quarreling before ladies, if it can be avoided,—it saves a deal of useless swagger, and much unnecessary screaming;—not that we dislike to see a man act while his "blood is up:" it looks like earnest, and is, withal, the manliest course. Wrath cherished, is a bitter thing,—and your systematic form of duelling, devilish. Two men meeting to commit murder, because it is considered dishonourable to overlook the unpremeditated insult given in a moment of passion—to meet coolly together when the fumes of the wine-cup have passed away; nay, too often, scarcely conscious of what took place over-night, until awoke by some kind and honourable friend. This, alas! is the system pursued in duels. But this is not our present business.

Walter was invited to a seat in the deep bay-window, and Amy seated herself beside him, near to Lady Lee and Lavinia; Squire Bellwood stood watching their movements in a mirror which hung at the opposite end of the room. Lavinia was the first to notice him, and being thoughtless, reckless, and fond of little mischiefs, she invited the Squire to join them, for she well knew what a poor chance he would stand in a conversation where Walter and Amy must each take a part.

"Thank you," said he, shewing his teeth, which he wasted ten minutes over brushing every morning, and which were really very white,—"thank you, I shall but mar the reading of the pretty little verses, which I dare say have been written since last night. For I understand your loves and doves best in a pie, and the breeze and trees at a chase. Thank Heaven! I have no love for such kill-time

stuff as poetry," and he gave his boot-top a smart tap, made an attempt to smile, which was but a frowm, with the sun on it, and consoled himself with the thought that he had said something very cutting and very clever.

"And will you not come and help me out with my pretty verses on the chase," said Lavinia, with all the tartness her good-nature was capable of. "I want a few of those sweet words you use when the fox is in view, and I think the way in which you call to the hounds would be something new and original in poetry. Beside, how can I get through the descriptive without a knowledge of kennels, stables, gates, ditches, and the pretty speeches made after dinner, in which I hear you excel."

Bellwood smiled again: the last was a home thrust, for he was celebrated far and wide for being the soonest drunk at a hunting-dinner, and crying "yoix, yoix!" and "hark-forward!" until he was carried out of the room. Indeed, his feats bid fair to rival those of a notorious young Marquis, whom he was proud to call his friend, and who had pronounced him "a trump of a boy," at Melton.

"Are you for a turn in the park this fine morning," said Bellwood, turning to the Baronet, and glad to get rid of Lavinia's raillery.

"I care not to walk a little way," said Sir Edward, ringing the bell; and taking his hat and gloves from the footman: they then crossed the lawn and struck down the wild avenue, which led towards the ruined fountain.

"You see how the wind sits and the game runs," said Bellwood, breaking at once into the business. "I knew how it would be if yon fellow once got in scent, with his cursed poetry, and sentimental stuff. Sir Edward, we must bring this chase to a close, or I must run my hounds elsewhere."

"Whenever you please," said the Baronet; "my daughter has long been apprised of my intentions, and it rests with yourself to bring matters to a conclusion; that is," added he, his voice deepening as he spoke, "if your sentiments are unaltered, after this long acquaintance." Sir Edward Lee knew in his heart that Bellwood was unworthy of his daughter, but he also knew that the connexion would give him the weightiest electioneering influence in Lincolnshire, and the Baronet was as deep in ambition as love.

"My sentiments for Miss Lee are such I believe as—that is, as do her justice," said Bellwood; "and, in fact, I am willing to stand to the bargain,—I mean if it can be settled at once, and before yon poet

makes her his Pegasus, and bolts off after some other pack; though I don't remember hearing that this Pegasus was ever good after the hounds. To be plain, Sir Edward, she likes yon fellow a devilish deal better than myself, and a man wall-eyed may see it; and as I was going gently to hint, the sooner you can horsewhip him out of your hall the better for us both. I'm a plain blunt man, Sir Edward, and I don't like him at all."

"He is an old acquaintance of my family's," answered the Baronet, his brow growing cloudy as he spoke, "and a descendant of a good family, though now reduced. He is, in fact, a gentleman, Mr. Bellwood, and as such I must treat him; though I shall not fail to inform him that his presence stands somewhat in the way between yourself and the position in which I wish to see Amy placed. I shall accomplish this without rudeness, so high an opinion have I of Mr. Northcot's honour. Have you any other proposition to make?" added he, pausing on the very spot where he had parted from Gideon Giles.

"None in particular," answered Squire Bellwood. "I will talk to my father when I return; but he is so wrapt up in his business as justice of the peace, that I can scarcely get a word from him, unless it is connected with law. By-the-bye, I think Lady Lee is somewhat too kindly disposed to this Mr. No-cot, or whatever you call him," added he, laughing at what he thought a good pun on Walter's poverty, "and I think if you could hint to her that his company might be dispensed with, it would do no harm,—for mothers you know, Sir Edward, have their own influence and the devil's to boot; and if they run counter, why it's as difficult to get a right scent as when a fox runs a mile under a deep drain."

"I will think of this," said the Baronet, somewhat impatiently, for he saw Mr. Banes approaching. "I shall probably overtake you before you reach the hall. I have a little business which will detain me a few moments with my gamekeeper."

"Good morning, Banes," said Bellwood, accosting the keeper before he departed; "I think yon liver-tanned puppy will make a fine heavy dog, and just suit a hilly country; the other looks lighter, and will do best for level ground."

"I like his looks very much," said the keeper, touching his hat to the Squire as he spoke, for he understood the qualities necessary for a good hound; "but I wish the flews of his upper lip hung a little lower. I don't think he'll have a merry mouth. That light one I

fear will be too quick, and outrun the scent. I had him out this morning, and he made a many circles." The Baronet stood with his back against a tree, absorbed in deep thought, and seeming to pay no attention to their conversation.

"Better be quick," said Mr. Bellwood, "than so slow that the scent grows cold. But you are right, Banes, your good hound is not the swiftest runner, but one that puts the fox to his shifts, to lose the scent; and I like a deep-mouthed one, that puts you in mind of looking into a bell, and makes the bass part of the sound; then your loud ringing mouth, doubling an echo, and coming in with its counter, and your soft sweet mouth to fill in, eh! Banes. I know something of a dog's mouth, don't I?"

"No gentleman in the country knows better, sir," answered the keeper, who knew all the weak points of the Squire. "I tried them on the scent yesterday with Fowler; he's a fine sober old dog, and would hunt through a flock of sheep. I mean to try them on a hare soon; it's the best chase a whelp can be put on; they followed a skin through three different gaps in the wood this morning, and never missed once: you're a good judge, sir."

"I thought I was not far out," said the Squire, smiling, and slipping a sovereign into the keeper's hand. "I'll look in the next time I ride by." He then gave Mr. Banes a deep-meaning look, and the gamekeeper shook his head, and pointed the butt-end of his gun towards the Baronet, as Mr. Bellwood departed.

When he reached the hall, Walter Northcot stood on the steps, waiting until Amy and her sister made ready for their morning's walk —for ladies require some little time for matters of this sort when a handsome young man is about to become their conductor. Mr. Bellwood would have turned aside and gone round in the direction of the stables—a way he knew as well as any groom in the establishment,—but Walter met him half-way, and taking out his card, said,— "Here is my name and address, sir; when we meet again I trust it will be in such a place, and in such company, as will make us properly acquainted with each other."

"Happy to meet Mr. Northcot anywhere he pleases—as a friend," said the Squire, "and especially one of whom Sir Edward Lee has spoken so highly within these few minutes past. I trust that although there is a lady in the case, we shall not be the less friends; hem! hem!" and he cleared his throat. "Do remember having accosted you somewhat rudely; no offence meant, I assure you, Mr. Northcot.

Left home angry with my groom for having put on the wrong saddle this morning; hem! hem!"

Walter curled his haughty lip, and disdained either to reply or accept his apology.

Mr. Bellwood was an arrant coward; and all the vengeance he took on a gentleman who had horsewhipped him publicly at Lincoln races, was to threaten him with the law; but his own father refused to grant a warrant. Such was the man who aspired to the hand of Amy Lee. But what he lacked in courage he possessed in cunning: he was a meet companion for Mr. Banes.

Let it not be misconceived for a moment that he did not understand Walter Northcot's meaning; he did, and writhed beneath it, for he had not the courage even to accept his challenge. There was something in the fine countenance of his rival that made him afraid, and though he turned away with a low bow, he had at that moment decided that he would in some way or other work his ruin, and destroy his reputation with the family of Sir Edward Lee. Squire Bellwood was one of those who can "smile, and murder while they smile;" but it was a *hating* smile; he had not all the "guard" necessary for the formation of your great and clever villain. There was a natural littleness which he could not conceal: if he disliked a person he was sure to shew it, though he intended to work his injury, or even tried to hide it. An out-and-out villain executes, "and makes no sign;" but if caught, seems to hug more fondly the victim he is bent upon destroying. Bellwood had all the meanness, but not the greatness necessary to make a *perfect* scoundrel. But more of his nature will be revealed as we proceed; at present we must leave him to shape his plans of vengeance, while Walter walks forth in the park with Amy and her sister, and we return to the Baronet and Mr. Banes.

Sir Edward Lee leant against the withered oak we have before mentioned, his arms folded, and his eyes riveted upon the ground: there was a care-worn look about him. Banes stood opposite, resting upon his gun, and watching, when unobserved, every change the countenance of the Baronet underwent.

"I waited about until dark," said the keeper, "but she never stirred out after sunset. I did not leave the place until she went up stairs; I saw her figure move across the window-blind, and then I knew it was all over for the night. But now is our time, Sir Edward, we shall never have such an opportunity again; you have but to touch and take, now Gideon is gone."

"Gideon gone!" exclaimed the Baronet, appearing only to catch the last sentence, for he betrayed no emotion before. "Gideon gone! did you say, Banes; where—when—for what—answer me?"

"Something happened between him and Mr. Brown," answered the keeper, without changing countenance, "but what it is I know not; however, they parted, and yesterday morning Gideon set out to seek work. I am sorry for it one way."

"Gone to seek work?" echoed the Baronet, and starting from his recumbent position; "has Brown dared to discharge him? This must be looked into, sir; if he has, he shall not hold his rope-walk another day. I will set out this instant, and inquire into the matter. No upstart shall lord it over one of my oldest tenants; I have done the poor Roper injury enough already, and from this moment do I resolve to make him amends."

Mr. Banes stood dumb with astonishment; he was unprepared for a change like this, and he well knew that if an interview took place between the Baronet and Mr. Brown, all his villany would at once be revealed. It was, however, only for a few moments that he stood undecided, when, collecting his thoughts, he said,—"Had I not better walk down to the ropery, and make some inquiry first? Perhaps Gideon has left of his own accord, and has gone to seek employment in some distant place to which he intends removing with his family; if so, his motive must be the safety of his daughter: he may have heard something of your meeting with her, or he ——."

"Enough," said the Baronet, waving his hand impatiently; "all this he knows; and I have pledged my honour never to molest her again. I will keep my word. See this Brown immediately, and let me know the whole truth of the affair. As for the rest, I abandon all thoughts of Ellen Giles, saving such as may lead to the benefit of her family." He drew forth his purse, and, taking out ten sovereigns, said, "Seek out some one who is trustworthy, and let this be forwarded to Gideon's wife, and on no account let it be known from whence it came."

"I know but one," said Banes, "who will keep it secret, and succeed in persuading them to accept it, and she seems to know more about Ellen Giles than any other person does. And if all be true she says, in spite of Ellen's shyness, she likes you better than she cares to tell everybody."

"Likes me!" said Sir Edward Lee, changing colour in an instant, and never dreaming that this was a sudden creation of Mr. Banes's,

who was resolved upon keeping the fire in a blaze, whether the Baronet would or not: "she must have changed suddenly then;—madness—folly—it cannot be."

"I thought not at first, Sir Edward," answered the villanous keeper; "but when a young woman begins to say—'If he wasn't married it would be different,' and, 'the Baronet's a man that any woman might fancy;' and, 'if it wasn't for Lady Lee I wouldn't mind this, that, and the other;'—you see it makes one think different. And after all, there's not a poor girl in the shire that is not proud of being noticed by a gentleman. A woman's still a woman, whatever she may pretend to be beside. It's a good old country saying, Sir Edward, that some men would risk the breaking of their necks in climbing a tree for a sour apple, while another man waits until it is fully ripe, when it falls of its own accord."

"This is very strange," said the Baronet, musing, while Banes kept his eye fixed, as the fabled basilisk, upon his countenance: "very strange; and yet I have often thought that there was something in her fine eye that said, 'Despair not,' even in her angriest moods. But it is better thus. We may, then, hope that she will come to of her own accord?"

"Not a doubt about it," said Mr. Banes, now resolved to risk all, and trust to chance to extricate him from the dilemma into which he was plunging. "I should not be surprised if she makes an appointment of her own; and instead of being her captor, I have to come as messenger from herself; and that some day she takes it into her head to walk into my old Grange without inviting. When a young woman once changes, Sir Edward, she does a many stranger things than these."

"It is even so," said the Baronet; "and my virtuous resolves are soon knocked to pieces, for I have a foolish affection for the girl, which I try in vain to conquer. But who is this woman so far entrusted with Ellen's secrets. I would fain see her myself. I might do much with her."

"Were you to see her, it would spoil all," said Banes; "at least at present. She is a silly sort of a good-natured body, and having lost her husband, I dare say thinks that a gamekeeper's wife would be no very bad berth. I must not say more now. She is Ellen Giles's confidant, and if I am hers—ah! ah! ah!" and he pretended to laugh, but it was a poor apology, for in another moment his high receding forehead was as thoughtful as before.

"I must trust all to you as usual, Banes," said the Baronet; "you understand running down this game better than myself; I am but a novice in these matters after all, and now farewell until I see you again. Remember, and let the money be forwarded to them as speedily as possible. I will send more in the course of a few days. I would rather fast a day myself than that Ellen Giles should be in want a single hour."

"Farewell!" said the keeper, touching his hat, and smiling with a kind of familiarity at the Baronet. "If all I hear is true—and it's likely enough — Ellen Giles is rather glad than sorry at Gideon's absence. But leave it all to me."

"I will—I do," said Sir Edward Lee; "let me know how matters progress as soon as you can; and if you succeed, Banes, a stewardship and a new house are your reward:" and the Baronet turned up the wooded avenue which led to the Hall.

When he had gone, Mr. Banes pressed his finger to his forehead, and said "It's all here: Ellen Giles, I must have you now by hook or by crook, and must tame you down to meet this fool of a lover of yours on my own terms. I have brought many a savage hound to subjection by sharp blows and long fasting, and it shall go hard if I don't you before I've done. Ten sovereigns!" added he, taking them out of his pocket, and counting them carefully over: "I will deliver the sum myself, and say it is my own gift—it will be a capital introduction. Let me once get on a fair footing with you again, my lady, and you are mine. A stewardship and a new house are things worth striving for. But I must hasten home; yon woman will be wanting her breakfast, for devil-a-bit has she had in her head to-day. A good lock and an empty stomach do marvellous things for a woman."

The gamekeeper felt that every step he was taking was but plunging himself deeper into the plot; but still he had no fear of extricating himself in the end, or at the worst throwing the blame or failure upon others. He loved mischief and brawls,—to tyrannize over all those within his power, and he was revengeful even to the last and meanest stage of vengeance. The keeper made his way towards the park-gates, along woody copses and wild winding-paths, with every turning of which he was familiar; and when he came to the open space which spread like an huge amphitheatre around, he beheld Mr. Bellwood riding leisurely along the broad carriage-path. The keeper waited his approach, and the Squire extended his hand

with an apparent frankness that seemed to acknowledge him as an equal, while he said, "Banes, I was about to ride over to the Grange,—yonder cursed Northcot is like a serpent in my path, and I want your aid to remove him. Come more into the centre of this glade, where we can see all around us. There may be some listener in the thicket." Mr. Banes walked close beside him, and placed his hand on the mane of the horse.

CHAPTER XIII.

BEN BRUST MEETS WITH AN UNEXPECTED ADVENTURE, WHICH AT PRESENT LEADS TO NOTHING—MR. BANES AND SQUIRE BELLWOOD "LAY THEIR HEADS TOGETHER," AND HIT UPON A SCHEME WHICH WILL LEAD TO SOMETHING IN THE END.

The road from Burton-Woodhouse to Torksey, and so on to Newark, as we have before described, was one mass of heavy sand, and is but little better even at this hour. There was, however, a footpath at the top of the hills, which was only known to a few of the villagers in the neighbourhood, and which was but seldom traversed, although a nearer way. This very path, edged upon the dwelling of Mr. Banes, skirted the side of the wood to some distance, then crossed a corner of the heath, and led down to Torksey. If there was a road in the wide county of Lincoln that cut off only a few yards, that road was well known to Ben Brust, for Benjamin was not a man to take one more stride than was really necessary when upon matters of business; and it chanced that Ben had to journey to Newark on the very morning that the events took place which occupy our last chapter.

It was a lovely morning when Ben, with his waistcoat unbuttoned, his hat cocked jauntily aside, his cudgel in his hand, and his dog at his heels, struck up the green lane between the hills that led to the desolate Grange, on his way to Newark, to fetch a score of sheep for his old employer — butcher Hyde. Ben whistled and sung as blithely as any bird in the hedges, for that morning he had eaten a good beef-steak, and drunk a quart of ale, at the honest butcher's expense, and there was not a happier man in the wide world than Ben Brust, for at that time he neither cared for his wife

Betty, or cousin William. He had not, indeed, a care upon his heart, for he knew that he should get a good dinner at Besthorpe, and a good supper at the old Fallow-deer Inn, at Newark; and if he did think at all, it was only to wonder at what he should find cold in the pantry when he reached the end of his journey.

"Lamb's in season now," said Ben, drawing the cuff of his coat across his lips at the thought, and speaking unconsciously to himself. "Laws, if they should happen to have a fore-quarter for dinner to-day, what a blessed meal I shall but make;—cold brisket's prime. I should think they're sure to have it at either Besthorpe or Newark. If I could afford it, I would have it every day. But if they haven't lamb—why they're sure to have something else. Happen a leg of mutton," continued Ben, "that ell do. A fine prime leg!—Laws how I shall enjoy it. Not over-done, happen; just red, and a little rare, a crusty loaf, and a pot of good ale;—I could eat some now. Happen it may be beef; a round or a sirloin—it's a fine thing is good beef: I could live on it for seven years at a stretch. I think it's the prettiest sight in the world, is a piece of prime roast beef, just browned. Laws! when the gravy follows the knife,—capital! Mealy potatoes, and carve for yoursen: O delicious! But it may be a cold ham;—good again,—it gives sich a relish to one's ale. I love a prime ham dearly,—some veal with it's not amiss. But they're sure to hev someat good. I've lived rarely this last few days. Yesterday—a beast's heart, stuffed;—dang that cousin William, though,—he eat a precious lot of it. I'll just please my wife when I come back: I'll buy a leg of real Northamptonshire mutton at Newark, and bring it home we me, and hev it cooked for Sunday's dinner,—I will as sure as I live;" and Ben stamped his stick upon the ground, to confirm the oath, just in front of the gamekeeper's residence, when he was suddenly startled by the voice of a woman, which came from the chamber window.

"Want me, marm?" said Ben, looking up at the pale face which was seen behind the iron stanchions, and which was the countenance of the woman we have before introduced to our readers, whom Mr. Banes had left locked up in her room.

"Come nearer," said the woman; "I would speak with you. But first, are you a man that may be trusted? But why should I ask, who have no choice left—there is that in your countenance which tells me you would not betray an injured woman."

"If I would I'm ——;" and Ben struck his stick upon the

earth, and clenched the oath with a good weighty blow, which would have made the ribs of Mr. Banes to have cracked again, had it alighted on them. "Trust me with anything but a good dinner, and hang me up if I deceive you. My name's Ben Brust—I've wapped Mr. Banes—and I live at Burton-Woodhouse."

"Ben Brust is it?" said the woman, clasping her hands together. "You have heard of me, Ben—I am Mary Sanderson."

"God bless you, my wench!" said Ben. "Are you little Mary, that I used to nurse when I came, years ago, for cattle to your father's? What can I do for you?—knock a wall down, or kick a door in. Say the word, and here goes;" and Ben off with his coat and hat, and threw them on the ground, for he was in earnest.

"More than that," answered the woman: "but listen to me, and see that Banes does not come upon us unaware; for he has the stealthy step of the cat and the hearing of the hare. If he sees us, I am undone for ever."

"I only wish he would come," said Ben, spitting on his buck-horn fist, and grasping his cudgel as he spoke; "I only wish he would come for thy sake my wench. O, how I would but rattle his jacket! I would break every bone in his cursed skin—the thief—I would."

"Do that after," said the woman, "and I will thank you; but not now, Ben. Should you see him coming, hurry off, and exchange not a word with him, but meet me at another time, when he is absent. You will see him enter the village. He is a villain, Ben; and I am here a prisoner. I have had nothing either to eat or drink since yesterday."

"Laws, if I had but known," said Ben, "I would hev saved you part of my breakfast. But I'll break in, and let you out in about a minute." And without waiting for an answer, Ben made a run at the door with his heavy foot and ponderous boot, and shook the whole building.

"Desist!" said the woman. "Were I as free as you are yourself at this moment, it would avail me nothing. I shall not fast longer than while he returns, and now hope that that will not be until you are far out of sight. Hear me, Ben, while there is yet time. Should Ellen Giles be missing, bring a good force, and come here with all speed. Warn Walter Northcot to be aware of Banes and Bell-wood. Seek out Gideon Giles, and tell him that there is a villanous plan laid for the ruin of his daughter. Tell them that they have

a friend within these walls, and one that will not leave them while there is danger abroad, and that will be while Banes remains unhung. Should you hear aught said of my child, which they say I ——. Ben, leave me — begone this instant; I shall go mad if I talk with you longer." She waved her hand, and left the window; nor did she again appear, although Ben begged of her to let him rob the larder, and hand her something up before he went.— "If it's only a piece of cold bacon and bread," said Ben, "you would feel a deal refreshed, and have more strength to scratch Banes's eyes out when he comes back."

"Now what an obstinate thing is a self-willed woman," said Ben, putting on his coat, and walking away, after he had tried all his arguments in vain. "And whatever can I do in this affair, but fight a bit? — and that I don't mind. And Gideon I hear 's left home; and I must fetch yon sheep, and I shan't get back until to-morrow. Well, there can't be much happen between this and then. But dang a man as won't stan up for a woman. I'll hev a shy if I lose my stick, just for my old Betty's sake. I've only to shew mysen to Mr. Banes to meck him shake in his shoes. But I must leave all to chance till I come back—then I'll put some on 'em to the right about. But laws, to think of that poor creature heving nought to eat since yesterday! I'll dust Banes's jacket for that. Happen no supper last night, and no breakfast this morning! I'll meck him as he can't lay in bed we any comfort.—Not so much as a drop of beer or a bit of bread!—I'll meck his two sides meet.——But she's right — she's better there for a bit; and I know a thing or two. But yonder comes Banes; I hear the barking of his dogs. I should just like to give him a taste before I go," added Ben, twirling his cudgel. "But I'll be ruled by her for once." And Ben made a cut across the heath, and was shut out of sight, by a descent of ground, before Mr. Banes made his appearance.

But our story must retrograde for a few moments to the conversation which passed between the keeper and Squire Bellwood in the Park, where we left them at the end of the last chapter.

"We may help one another in these straits," said Banes, "for I have need of some assistance. Of course you know that Sir Edward is madly in love with the Roper's daughter?"

"That all the shire has heard of," said Bellwood; "and to tell you the truth Banes, he has a good taste: I have tried it on, and called at the cottage when I have been out hunting, but it wouldn't do. She's a devilish handsome girl,—but go on."

"Well then," continued Banes, "I must get her up to yonder place of mine, by some means or other, and I think the best time is the present, while her father's away. Now if you could help me out of this scrape, I'll soon find some means to make this neighbourhood too hot for Master Northcot. He's a spirited fellow, I hear, and the likelier to get soonest into trouble. Is it to be a bargain?"

"O! as to getting the girl away," said Bellwood, "I see no difficulty in it: that I'll undertake to do myself at any time, on condition that I have my share of the game when it is hunted down. You have heard of Black Boswell," continued the Squire, "the leader of the gipsies? He is encamped on the opposite side of the wood. What think you of him? He is one of my particular friends, and would either cut a throat or break into a house at my bidding."

"That with such help we need not despair to carry off the girl," said Banes. "I like your allies: they may do something. Trust me to find out a way in which they may be useful."

"Well then," said Bellwood, "that business is arranged, and now how do you purpose to rid me of this new upstart, Master Northcot?"

"That I must think upon," answered the keeper. "I have some influence over the Baronet, and shall have more, when Ellen Giles is safe in my keeping. Meantime you might manage to pick a quarrel with him, or anything that would seem to make him the aggressor;—but I will hit upon some scheme before long, that shall sink him in the estimation of Sir Edward's family."

"Do," said Bellwood, extending his hand, "and you are a made man. As for quarrelling with him, why that might lead to—to something—a duel, or what not—you understand me,—and that you know gives one no advantage. But I will see Black Boswell, and bid him make ready. We may manage a woman with his help; but this Walter is a dangerous fellow."

"I see," said Banes, "the one must be overcome by force, and the other by stratagem. Let me once have the girl safe, and all shall be right."

And these two worthies once more shook hands, then separated, to put their schemes into operation, and, like moles, to work underground in the dark.

BEN BRUST AT THE BLACKSMITH'S SHOP.

CHAPTER XIV.

BEN BRUST MEETS WITH GIDEON GILES AT THE OLD FALLOW DEER INN, NEWARK — KINDNESS OF THE HOST — GIDEON'S PROSPECTS BRIGHTEN FOR A FEW MOMENTS—HE RETURNS HOME, AND THEY ARE AGAIN OVERCLOUDED.

It was in the afternoon when Ben Brust drew towards Newark; nothing of importance occurred on his journey, save that he made a hearty dinner at Besthorpe out of a leg of lamb, for which butcher Hyde would pay a shilling the next time he past that way, and for which the host swore half-a-crown would leave him a loser, and that some day or other he would be even with Benjamin. Ben smiled as he passed the pinfold, had a look at the bank on which he slept when the Tinker stole his boots, and thought about a many things as he walked along, until he reached the street which led up to the old Fallow Deer Inn, at Newark, when a voice hailed him as he passed the blacksmith's shop. It was the well-known tongue of old Nock the nailmaker, who had just brought in a quart of ale.

"Hilloa, Ben!" was the exclamation; "you aint going to pass by without looking in, are you, and us here with a full quart? Will you sup?" added he, holding out the full pot, which "was crowned with beaded bubbles to the brim."

"Will a duck swim if you throw it into a pond?" said Ben, stretching out his brawny arm. "Here's God bless us all, my boys!" And Benjamin did indeed drink, for he was very hot and very thirsty.

The man who was shoeing a horse looked up in dismay, as he saw Ben raise the quart pot to his lips, and gradually lift it higher, until he almost emptied it at a draught. Nock the nailmaker drank up what little there was left in silence.

"Come," said Ben, "fill it again—I'll stand my pot, however; just go into the Fallow Deer, and say it's for me—it 'ell be all right."

Nock the nailmaker obeyed, and in a few moments returned with another full quart. "And now," said the nailmaker, blowing aside the foam, "I'll just bet you an odd penny, Ben, I drink half-a-pint out of this quart, neither more nor less."

"Adun," said Ben, throwing his penny on the window-bench.

Nock raised the pot to his lips, and never took his head away until the quart was emptied, when, throwing down his penny beside Ben's, he said, "Dang my wig, I've lost this time, however."

"I'm done," said Ben, laughing at the joke; "but I'll hev many a pot at the same price, if I live. I'll teck the old landlord in at Besthorpe the first time I go by, just for his looking so nation glum at the dinner I made to-day."

"Do," said Nock, handing the empty pot to the man who was shoeing the horse, and who again took it to be replenished. "By the way, there's an old acquaintance of yours at the Fallow Deer—Gideon Giles the Roper; he came in about half an hour ago from Nottingham. He's out of work, poor fellow; I treated him with a pint of ale, for he looked very weary."

"Come in, and I'll stand two for it," said Ben, grasping the hard hand of the nailmaker. "You shall have a bellyful just for that kind action; for there's no man living I like better than Gideon Giles."

"I've just got to point two or three horsenails for my man," said the nailmaker, "and then I'll be we you in the hotting of a rod-iron, if I can."

Ben entered the kitchen of the old Fallow Deer, and extending one hand to the host and the other to Gideon, gave each of them a hearty shake, as he said, "Glad to see you, Gideon—glad to see you, my boy. Hope your gout's better, landlord. We'll hev a bit of a snack if you've ought handy. Deal to say to you, Gideon. A quart of ale, while Rebecca gets a bit of lunch ready. Never let one

no you was going, Gideon. It warnt the thing, my boy; but never mind, you'll go back we me. Hang old Brown, you shall begin for yoursen; I'm sure every farmer as I no 'ell buy their things of you."

"Ah, Ben!" said Gideon with a sigh, and shaking his head as he spoke, "it would take some money to begin business with, and that I have not got. I must tramp round by Grantham and Lincoln way. I may meet with a job yet."

"How much money would it take to set you up in a small way of business for yourself?" inquired the host.

"Hey, how much?" said Ben, setting down the full pot without tasting it, so much was he interested in Gideon's welfare; then adding, "But I have no money, Gideon, I wish I had, it should be yours."

"But I have," said the host, "and if he will but say what he wants, he shall have it, without either bond or interest. I have it in the house."

Ben had again raised the pot to his lips, but he drank not, although the foam mark was still left there, he lowered the quart leisurely, his eye still fixed on the host; and when he did set it down, he placed his hand in the landlord's, and said, "God bless you! I knew you would never see a honest man want. God bless you!" And there was a moisture in Ben's eye, such as his own privations had never called forth; for Ben had a heart that could feel for the sufferings of another.

Gideon sat in silence, with his eyes riveted on the floor. The poor Roper felt more than he could give utterance to, and a big tear coursed down his brown cheek.

"Rebecca," said the host, first breaking the silence, and calling to his niece, "go up stairs and bring down my old yellow bag." The niece, who had overheard her uncle's offer, tripped off with the speed of a fawn. "And now, Gideon," said the host, "tell me what sum you will need, and it is here," added he, chinking the bag, which was filled with sovereigns, on the table. "Remember, it shall be no debt between us. If you are successful in business, why, sometime or other we may talk it over again; if not, it shall never be named. Rebecca, love, bring me a little brandy, I feel rather wanting."

"You are very kind," answered the poor Roper, "and as I have a wish to be with my family again, I will accept your offer, and borrow five pounds for a few months. I have an old wheel, which

can easily be repaired, and five pounds will enable me to buy a little hemp, so that I can begin in a small way: it will be better then tramping."

"Five pounds will be too small a sum, Gideon," said the host; "you will want a trifle to live upon while you get a few goods beforehand; beside you may get your hemp cheaper by purchasing a larger quantity at once. Here is twenty pounds; should you need more, come over, or write, and it is at your service at any moment."

"Twenty pounds is more than I require," answered Gideon, pushing back the pile of sovereigns; "however, as you are so kind, I will borrow ten pounds. It will be more than sufficient for me. My own garden will be large enough for a rope-walk, and saving the buying a little hemp, I shall need no great out-lay: a day or two will find me at work for myself."

"I will help you to fix up your ropery," said Ben; "I can drive a nail and plane a piece of wood as well as James the joiner."

"Thank you, Ben," said Gideon; "the old cow-shed will soon be put into order with your help; and I hope God will reward Mr. Bent for his kindness."

The worthy landlord smiled as he uplifted his glass; it was one of the happiest moments of his life. He had done a good turn to a poor and honest man, and he felt more than we can describe: it was as if a sunshine played round his heart—a warm bright glow that only such men can feel. He took up the remaining ten sovereigns with reluctance, and securing them in a separate paper, said, "I shall keep these apart until you need them, Gideon. Ben often comes this way, and he has only to axe and hev. You shall not stick fast for fifty pounds. We will make old Brown shake in his shoes before he's dun, and be ready to tie himself up we one of his own ropes. And now, Ben, here comes the cold veal and ham. Gideon, help yourself, you are both as welcome as my heart can wish you."

Gideon ate but little, his feelings had checked his appetite; he felt happy, and wished he was at home, that he might comfort his family with the good tidings he was now laden with. Ben Brust made a hearty meal, and every time he laid down his knife and fork to take breath he cast a kind glance at the honest host and Gideon.

"Come, my boy," said Ben, "it's all right now, hev this piece of fat, it's prime, and try a little more stuffing. Your niece makes capital stuffing,—she just gives it the right flavour. Here's a bit of veal here, Gideon, nice and juicy. It's beautiful, my boy. What, not hev it? then I will. It was a fine calf this, landlord!"

"Fed on good milk, Ben," said the host. "It was reared by farmer Lion of Ingham, and he never yet sent a bad hoof into the market. I'm glad you enjoy it."

"It's capital!" said Ben. "I can't do we your poor half-fed stuff at all. I hate beef that's fed on oil-cake, with its jaundice-looking fat. I'm no advocate for ought been forced. I don't think anybody's a right to make a poor dumb animal fat against its own will, no more than they have to make a man work that isn't inclined. Cos you see some things, like me, are intended by natur to be fat; and others, like my wife, to be lean; and I've no doubt this is done for some purpose or other, which these learned men can tell you all about."

This was a long speech for Ben while eating, but he fetched up in about four more mouthfuls, by curtailing each of half the number of champs.

Having once appeased his appetite, filled his pipe, and replenished the quart jug, he narrated his adventure at the ruined Grange, and repeated pretty accurately the conversation he had had with Mary Sanderson.

"I always suspected Banes to be at the bottom of this affair," said Gideon, "and never had but one opinion of Squire Bellwood; however, I shall be home by ten o'clock. I shall be sorry if their plans succeed against Walter Northcot. This Bellwood is a bad fellow, and what is worse he is rich, and may tempt the poor and evil-disposed to enter into his plans. Black Boswell, the gipsy leader, is one of his followers, and with such a gang he may do anything."

"Black Boswell's not so bad as some folks think him to be," said the host; "he may take the Squire's money and destroy his game, but he's always turned out to be the friend of the weak party at last. Beside, if he was ever so disposed to do an injury, there are those among the gipsies who would oppose him, unless it was something that affected the whole tribe. They may make free with a little poultry in a hard winter, milk a cow, or pick up a stray sheep, and rob a potatoe or turnip field, when they are hard pushed for a meal: but there are worse-hearted folks on earth than these gipsies, and I have seen a good deal of them in my time."

"So have I," said Ben, "and had many a meal in their camps, and many a good warm, by their tent-fires on a cold winter's night, and I've always found that if you let them alone, they would you. I once had some thoughts of joining 'em, for you see it's a roving

sort of a life, and they don't work much. Only in winter I prefer a roof over my head, to a blanket in a bleak lane."

"If aught should happen Walter Northcot," said the host, "I wish you would let me know. Somehow, I like that young man as well as if he was my own son. There's something about him that's homely and honest, and very unlike most of your finniking, stuck-up, milk-and-water sort of gentry;—I would go a thousand mile to do that young man a good turn."

It was now getting on for five o'clock, and as Gideon had nearly twenty miles to walk, he took his departure, shaking hands, and thanking the host for his kindness, and promising to pay back a portion of the ten pounds as soon as it lay in his power.

"I shall be home by to-morrow," said Ben. "I've got to teck a score of sheep, and they only travel slowly. I expect meeting my cousin William on the road,—he's going to see a relation at Winthorpe. There's butcher Farr owes me a trifle for driving his bullock from Torksey, and I mean to have a leg of Northamptonshire mutton home we me; I should like you to come and hev a bit of dinner we me on Sunday, Gideon, if you will."

Gideon said they should meet again before that time, and he would let him know. He set out on his journey homeward, having placed the ten sovereigns safely in his watch-pocket. How different were the feelings of the poor Roper, to when he started out to seek work. Still, he was low-spirited, for Ben had told him that his youngest child was no better;—but he was going home,—and there was something in the thought that comforted him; he was going to look upon those he loved: to see faces that would greet him with smiles,—to hear voices that to his ears made sweetest music. He knew that he should soon have his little children climbing about his knees,—that they would come creeping out of their little warm beds, to kiss him. And—Ellen! beautiful Ellen! would welcome her poor care-worn father home again with open arms!

Thank God! the poor are not altogether miserable; love has not yet forsaken the huts in which they live; but if aught soften their hearts by suffering, their tears are ever the readiest—their hands soonest open, to help one another. Rich men know but little of what poor people do for one another,—how they will join their last sixpence to help a neighbour who is worse off than themselves; how the basin of broth is carried in, and the best bit of meat cut off for the poor sickly person next door! How they club their few pence

together to make the funeral "come lighter" when "death has been in a house!" The poor people of England are not selfish, they will help one another in distress, even beyond their power. And, oh! how gladly is it done! then, all former quarrels and all old grievances are hushed up; nay, even those who have been long at "outs," who have "fratched," as they term it, are often the first to render assistance. This is one of the oldest and noblest of English feelings. We carry not our dislikes to the wretched,—we wait not to let the grave close over our quarrels, but make peace with want and misery; we strike not the fallen.

And what were Gideon's thoughts as he journeyed homewards? They were like the mingled colours of a landscape, where light and shadow vary the scenes. His mind was filled with little pictures,—he wondered how the things looked in his garden; saw some tree that seemed like the one which overhung his own cottage; now, he caught sight of some pasture that had just the same green look as the one behind his house. He heard the voices of little children as he passed through Collingham,—a mother was singing to her child; a few miles further, and he saw a labourer returning to his cottage, a little boy run up to meet him at the gate, and leaped into his arms. He saw the fond father kiss the child. "God bless them!" said Gideon, "I shall soon be home." Then he thought how his own family would be in bed, how a light would be seen through the blind, and he called up the very foliage which partially drooped over the casement. Then he thought his little son might be dead, or Ellen have fallen into the power of the Baronet; and he walked along with greater speed. Poor Gideon,—he was very weary—nearly one hundred miles in two days would he have walked when he reached home; his feet were very painful; his strong heavy boots but ill adapted for those hot days. The heavy road over which Ben had driven his bullock, burnt through the Roper's boots;—it was a weary, weary way. The sun set as he passed through Newton, deepening the dry red sand with its fading crimson, as the last glory died along the western sky. He reached Torksey in the dusky twilight,—there were lights in many a cottage window; he caught a glimpse of two lovers "sidling" along a footpath overhung with sheeted-hawthorn. A dog barked as he passed the gate of a farm-yard; a pleasure-party drove by in a light cart, laughing and hurrying past at a brisk canter. He heard the lowing of cattle in the distant marshes, and the swing of a gate sounded across the river;

then came the "babble" of the Trent, and the whispering of the old familiar willows, which grew on its banks. Those were home-sounds,—there was something in the dash of the water, and low whispering of the leaves, that sent a strange hush through the Roper's heart. They seemed like voices which he had heard all his life, and yet they sounded nowhere but around his home. There was a resemblance of tones in those he had heard at a distance, but he knew they were not the same. He paused a moment to look over the landscape, and he blessed it, for it was the same that his own home overlooked,—the same that his forefathers had gazed upon: in those fields they had laboured—along that footpath had they walked; on that bank held their merry-meetings; there they wooed and won, had been happy and miserable. And in the distance he saw the spire of his native village—the very spire from which their marriage and funeral bell had tolled; but the green turf covered all their cares.

> "For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
> Or busy housewife ply her evening care;
> No children run to lisp their sire's return,
> Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share."

"And such is the end of life," thought Gideon: "there rich and poor shake off their sorrows and their heartaches together; and as my fathers are, so shall I one day be:" and the poor Roper felt very sad. He turned up past the Lodge, and beside the park wall. He walked under the shadows of the huge elms; he saw his own cottage, and the door stood wide open. A broad ray of light shot across the gloom of the highway, and shone on the old grey wall. He crossed the threshold, and his first words were, "Where is Ellen?"

"Gone to Torksey for the doctor," said his wife. "She has been away nearly two hours. I fear little Billy will not live the night over."

Poor Gideon! he had reached home, and found his child dying, and Ellen absent. He threw his little bundle on the floor, and, sinking into a chair, buried his face in his hands, and sat silent as a statue.

His wife raised her eyes, which were blinded with tears, but spoke not a word, as she sat with the fevered hand of the child grasped in her own. "I will find her before I sleep," said Gideon, springing up in an instant, and grasping his strong walking-stick;—for the

thought that his daughter might be in danger, overcame all feelings of weariness. He stooped down and kissed the burning lips of his child, pressed the pale cheek of his wife, and again retraced his steps beside the park wall, and along the banks of the river.

"If I had but called at Torksey," said Gideon, "I should have met with Ellen;—but the doctor may be out, and she waiting until he returns." He hurried on with furious speed;—he listened for the sound of wheels along the high-road, making sure that the doctor would, at that late hour, drive over in his gig, and bring Ellen with him.

But neither the rumbling of wheels nor sound of human footstep fell upon his ear. He heard the church clock strike eleven; and clear, deep, and loud did every stroke sound across the river. The dash of the waters and the waving of the trees were lost to his ear. The very landscape he had just before stood to admire, seemed long, low, and wearisome, for he had no thought but for the safety of Ellen, and he rushed onward with a frightful speed. Woe unto the man who that night had stood in the Roper's path, for his fingers seemed imbedded in his heavy cudgel,—he grasped it, with clenched teeth.

He entered Torksey, leaving the osier-holt to his right hand. He passed the low thatched cottages which now stood in the twilight, without either sound or sign of life. He hurried along the grating and gravelly street; his footsteps echoing through the porch and passage of the old farm-house on his left, and startling the white cat as it lay half asleep in the shadow of the doorway. He reached the doctor's door, and gave two loud knocks, which sounded through the still and solitary village, and was answered by the barking of dogs from every homestead, as farm after farm took up the echo, which rung loud and deep through the still night.

CHAPTER XV.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GIPSY-ENCAMPMENT—BELLWOOD'S INTERVIEW WITH BLACK BOSWELL—JAEL PLAYS THE "EAVES-DROPPER," AND THE READER BECOMES ACQUAINTED WITH ALL SHE OVERHEARD, BY PATIENTLY WADING THROUGH THE CHAPTER.

Our story now carries us back to Squire Bellwood, who, having left his horse to the care of Mr. Banes, struck through a narrow footpath in the wood, and made for the spot where Black Boswell and his tribe of gipsies were encamped. The wild slip of land which these swarthy wanderers had chosen for their halting-place belonged to Bellwood's father, and although the surly old magistrate would have whipped them off his grounds, had he found them thereon, yet the young Squire winked at their little depredations, and so managed matters that their "whereabout" never reached the old man's ear. He therefore supposed himself to be a great favourite with the gipsies, and had even ventured to take some liberties with one of old Boswell's dark-eyed daughters, which might have gone to greater lengths, had not a stalwart tinker of the tribe crossed his path one dark night, and threatened what he would do if he met him again at the camp. Mr. Bellwood soon found that the capture of a gipsy-girl was no easy matter; and those who know anything of the habits of these wild people, are aware that if she is under the protection of her tribe, or gang, a score of jealous eyes are ever watching her motions. Let her cross some solitary stile, and ten to one a huge muscular fellow lies lounging behind the hedge. Accost her in some lonely lane, and the same figure passes with a scowling brow. But sit beside their camp-fire—make yourself at home, and be not too inquisitive,—and you are safe. The benighted wanderer who seeks for shelter in their tents is never molested. He who has shared their woodland home, and eaten of their loaf, is as safe as if he partook of the "bread and salt" of the Arabs. Many a merry hour has the writer of these pages passed amongst them, when, like Gideon, he went on "tramp;" let not the reader, therefore, fancy that this is altogether an imaginary sketch.

Bellwood crossed the wood, and came out on the opposite side,

which opened upon a wild dell, or valley, and sloping down with a southern aspect, was entirely sheltered from the bleak northern and easterly winds. The ridge of the valley was crowned with tall furze and hawthorn bushes, and looked over a wild waste of heath and morass, mingled with pools of water, beds of rushes, and in some places carpeted with the richest green moss. It is a spot but seldom traversed even at this hour, for the boldest hunter has been seen to draw in his rein when the fox stole through "Bellwood Scroggs."

At the bottom of the valley stood their tents, covered over with stout blankets, and having the appearance of the roofs of stage-wagons, each built on a similar principle, with hoops of bowed ash, which could be unroofed in a few minutes, and packed up either in their carts, or on their donkeys, just as they were provided. Over these, in the winter season, they threw oil-cloths, which rendered them proof against the rain. Their beds were formed of loose straw, covered with blankets: the former they either begged or stole, according to the locality of the "stack-yard." On one side was a screen, formed of upright posts and wicker-work, and covered with rushes: this was erected to shade them from the sun. Three or four stout fellows lay smoking on the greensward without the camp; their huge dogs lay basking beside them. Old Boswell stood leaning over the fence, and conversing with the women, who were busied with the children, or counting over their gains. A pile of broken victuals told that their days "maundering" was done. Still there were one or two wanderers wanting, and they were waiting their arrival, before commencing the evening meal. Seats of turf and bundles of straw were placed around the camp-fire, over which simmered a huge iron pot, which hung from three strong stakes, by a chain and iron hook. The countenances of the men were wild and forbidding, for their long black hair and unshaven beards gave them a more ferocious look than what they wear when seen in our streets. They had been lying "fallow" for some time, and had paid but little regard to appearances, as they only shewed themselves now and then at some distant roadside alehouse, or a few of the straggling farm-houses. One young woman, however, was remarkable for her beauty. It was that fine Egyptian cast of countenance which the Old Masters are so fond of in their paintings of the love-sick Cleopatra. This was Jael, old Boswell's favourite daughter, who had had an offer of marriage from a wealthy young farmer, but declined giving up the wild life of her forefathers. Her ears were ornamented with pen-

dents of the purest gold, of costly and antique workmanship. Her great grandmother Magdalen had worn them, before they came into her possession, above a century and a half ago. They were a heirloom of the Boswell family.

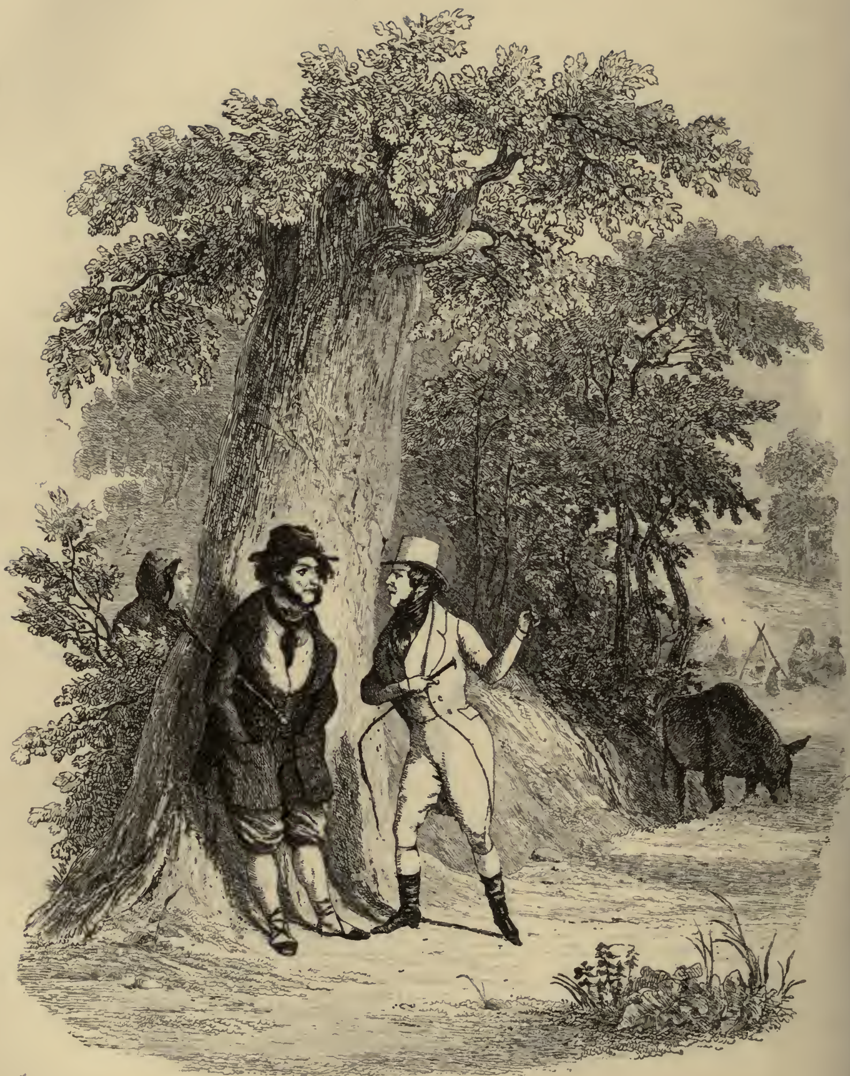
But the most striking figure in the group was Black Boswell, a tall athletic man, long past middle life, and with features which almost approached to blackness. He looked a likely man to accomplish any daring deed that might chance to suit his fancy, for his hard muscular frame told that years had not much impaired his strength, but only knit firmer his bones and sinews. He might have been a handsome man in his younger days, but strong passions and a struggle for supremacy over a hardened and bold race had settled down his features into a morose and forbidding sternness, and when Bellwood approached, his only salutation was, "Well, Squire, and what's your will?"

"I wish to speak with you apart on a matter of importance," said Bellwood. "Ah, my pretty Jael, and how are you this sweet summer-time?"

"I am well, Squire," answered the gipsy, displaying such a row of pearly teeth as even made Bellwood's look dingy beside them. "And how's the bonny lady at the Hall? Has my prophecy come true yet?" There was a deep meaning in Jael's piercing eye as she put this question, and a close observer might have seen her put back her olive hand and touch an old gipsy who sat beside her as she waited for a reply.

"Not true yet," answered Bellwood, with deep emotion; "but the tall young man has made his appearance, even as my dark oracle foretold."

"Let me look at your hand again," said Jael, rising, and tracing the mysterious lines in the open palm, while she shook her sable ringlets, and the golden pendents swung to and fro in her small beautiful ears, as she raised her piercing eyes to his face without speaking. At length, she added, "There are crooked lines in the plain of Mars, and every day they seem to be stronger marked. You have some plot in hand, and will fail in accomplishing it. There is also a deep cross in the mount of Venus. You have played some woman false." The Squire attempted to smile, but his colour heightened. "There is a star on the mount of Saturn," added she, looking as if she would pierce through his very soul. "Beware, Squire Bellwood, you meditate MURDER!"



Squire Bellwood's interview with Black [illegible]

The beautiful sibyl added the last sentence in a low whisper, then let go his hand with a jerk, and resumed her seat in silence.

Bellwood answered not a word, but with downcast look and hesitating step followed the stern summons of Black Boswell, as he exclaimed, "This way, Squire, if you have aught to say to me that is too dangerous to be overheard;" and folding his hands behind him he led the way along the valley, and up by the wood-side, to where a huge tree marked the beginning of a wild footpath.

Jael watched their motions, and pressing her finger on her lips, as a sign for her companions to be secret, shot across the valley, unperceived by either the Squire or her father; and leaping with all the lightness of a doe, over a gap, stole along under cover of the hedge with noiseless steps, until she came within hearing, and stood only a step from the tree, while a mass of foliage shut her out from their view.

"Now to business," said Boswell; "what devil's gale is brewing that brings you here, Squire? Somebody to knock o' th' head, and you ready to come down with the red gold, I warrant you."

"Nay, friend Boswell," answered Bellwood, "only a bit of a love affair: a jade with a pair of laughing eyes has ran away with my heart, and I want you to carry her to a snug corner I will tell you of, where I can recover it with interest."

"A woman, then," said the gipsy. "I am too old a dog to run after that game now; better speak with some of my young ones. A scuffle and a few sturdy blows are more in my way, Squire. I would sooner my ears rung all night with a stroke that would bring down a bullock, than have them pierced with the screams of a woman. I have had enough of that in my day."

"Well, then," replied Bellwood, "set on some of the younger hands if you will: to tell you the truth, it is not for myself I want her, but for the Baronet, and I care not if the devil carries her into his clutches. It is the Roper's daughter; but you have heard of this odd love affair before."

"It is old news," answered the gipsy, "and I wish it was some other girl;" then raising his deep sunk eyes, he added, "Now for the rest of your errand—you have not yet done. The carrying off a woman only did not bring you down here."

"That is the chief business at present," said Bellwood, hesitating whether or not to proceed further; "and as I tell you, is solely to oblige a friend. True, there is an upstart of a fellow down at yonder rectory, who I wish was twenty fathoms under the Trent."

"I have seen him," said the gipsy; "he was walking up the wood-side yesterday with the Baronet's daughter. I suppose it's to be a match between them; they seemed as loving as two wood-pigeons."

"I would sooner see his throat cut," said Bellwood, speaking with all the bitter hatred of a fiend in his looks; then, taking out his purse, he added, "Rid me of that fellow, Boswell, and it shall be the best day's work you ever did."

"It can be done," answered the gipsy, leaning his back against the tree, and pausing for several moments before he spoke. "But what will you stand, Squire, if we get him clear away. Remember, it will be a hanging matter if we are found out, and you must come down handsomely, for our tribe never blab, let what will happen."

"You will not harm him?" said Bellwood, looking round to see that there was no listener, while Jael drew further back.

"That will be as it happens," answered Boswell. "We will remove him out of your road, some way or other. If he proves a rusty customer, we shall know how to deal with him, and will take care that he tells no tales. If he goes with us quietly, why he will awaken with fewer holes in his head the next morning. And I think a hundred pounds will not be too much for doing his business clean and clear for you. What say you, Squire?"

"I agree," answered Bellwood, without hesitation;—"but, remember, whatever happens, I am to know nothing of the affair."

"Agreed again," said Black Boswell, holding out his hand, "and now it's a bargain. I never yet deceived you, though we had to brush quick about that affair at Saxilby; but the man recovered, did he not?"

"He did," said Bellwood, "and has never troubled me since." Then, as if wishing to get rid of a subject that was painful to him, he said, "I will now give you twenty pounds as earnest, the rest you shall have when the business is done. But, remember, I seek not his life."

"I am to get rid of him," said the gipsy impatiently, "and he looks like a man that will not be taken without a struggle,—blow for blow, you know, is fair play. If his brains are knocked out as I said before, it will be his own fault. You seem more merciful than you were;—I reckon it's that narrow escape we had on the heath,—is it not? Well, he's at peace now, and it's no use of thinking about it;" and he dropped the twenty sovereigns loose into his huge pocket, with

no more care than if they had been so much copper. Then added, "about this girl you spoke of, the Roper's daughter. Where do you want her removing to? We may afford to throw a little matter like this into the bargain. I reckon it's only to be a bit of a rough love affair,—a scream or two,—and then pension her off. What became of that Mary what's-her-name, we helped you to?"

"She is all right," answered Bellwood, "and now lives with Banes the keeper, at the old Grange just by here. That's where I would have you take the girl if you can but lay hold of her. It will but be a whisk over the hills, you know. By the way, it would not be a bad place to take this Mr. Northcot to at first. I will speak with Banes about it."

"If you think she will be safe, why the affair's as good as settled," said the gipsy. "Let me know, and we will set about it at once. We might have picked him up yesterday, when he got into the wood to gather some wild-flowers for the young lady. As to the girl,—leave that to me,—and now, good bye."

Black Boswell stuck his hands in his huge pockets, and strode away with as much apparent indifference as if he had been bargaining for a donkey, while Bellwood crossed the stile, and again threaded his way through the wild wood-path. Jael had concealed herself among the thick underwood, drawing the hood closely around her head, and while Bellwood was yet within hearing, she raised her voice and exclaimed, "Beware!" The Squire turned round and looked in every direction,—his lip quivered, and his cheeks were pale as death, when, taking a loaded pistol from his side-pocket, he pursued his course with the weapon ready cocked in his hand.

"I will mar his plot," said Jael to herself, arising from her hiding-place, and making a circuit round the wood, so that she might come out at some distance from the tent. She gathered an armful of firewood as she neared the camp, that her true errand might not be suspected by her father. "And he thinks to win yonder bonny lady by his treachery," said she, "and to get rid of the sweet gentleman that spoke so kindly to me at the park-gate, and dropped me the broad silver crown. But I will seek him out, and he shall hear his fortune from me yet: though he despises my gipsy-lore, I can tell him good truth now. And my father," added she, with a sigh,—"I would that there was no gold in the world, to tempt men to commit evil. And, poor Ellen Giles! that came to the camp every day while I was ill, and sat with me when I was

alone, beside the doley wood. I will make a return for her kindness; I will tell Ishmael all I have heard,—he loves me, and saving my father, has the most influence over our tribe."

She stood against a tree for a few moments, and sighed heavily, then added, " I long feared that some deed sat heavy on my father's heart. His lonely wanderings on the heath at midnight have long tortured me. Why should he wander round and round that blasted oak, waving his arms, and raving to himself. Alas! I fear to know —he talks of blood! of human blood! I fear me some evil deed hath been done, and this Bellwood has been at the bottom of it! But why should I seek to know that which would render me more wretched than I am? Oh, my father!" she exclaimed aloud, " I fear me my suspicions are too true."

" Jael!" said a voice from behind the hedge, " have you forgot yourself? remember the flowers have eyes, and the leaves ears, and that an echo lingers in the long grass. Trust not yourself with these thoughts, nor pry too closely into your father's matters. Remember the fate of your mother!"

" I do! I will!" said the girl, the sunny brown of her cheeks sinking into a pale deadly olive. " Ishmael, are you alone?" and she looked over the hedge as she spoke, while the rich red of her hood and her fine countenance seemed set in a frame of foliage, as the scented hawthorn drooped around her.

" Alone," said Ishmael, " from our own people, but there may be listeners in the thicket."

" There are not within hearing," answered Jael, raising her head, and throwing back her hood to listen. But saving the rustling of the leaves, and the songs of the wild wood-birds, all was silent. " Ishmael," continued she, " there is mischief afloat, and such as if accomplished, will drive us from this neighbourhood for ever. I fear me the life of Walter Northcot is in danger; he I mean whom the lady Amy loves. Bellwood has been bargaining with my father to have him removed, and I need not tell you how such an affair will end if the young man withstands him."

" I have crossed your father more than once, Jael," replied Ishmael; " and had you not have come in time and seized his uplifted arm you know how the struggle must have ended. I have sworn to you never to raise hand against him more, because he is your father. We may be of help to the young man when he is once in our possession, but it will be dangerous to oppose his capture; warn him, an

you will, but do no more. But why should you take an interest in him, Jael?" inquired the gipsy, fixing his dark and searching eyes on her as he spoke.

"Ask yourself why," answered Jael. "Why did you take part with the feeble old man at Blyton feast, and strike the ruffian to the earth who molested him? Why rush into the crowd and fight on the part of young Engledew?—Because the number was against him Ishmael, this is why I am interested in Walter Northcot. Villany, and low cunning, and mean malice, are arrayed against him,—not the clear open noon-day quarrel, where man grapples with man, and no unfair advantage is sought,—but gold is paid down to work his overthrow, and the stealthy step comes muffled in the dark, and the hand is raised unseen to strike unaware. Why have I selected you from out our whole tribe, and made you my confidant, Ishmael, and given you all that woman has to give—my whole heart? Because I found in you a hater of oppression; because I saw you stand up for the weak, and only wage war with the proud and strong,—and for that I loved you. Ask me not, then, why I seek to overthrow those dark plots, which bring ruin upon our race, and make us pointed at as the outcasts of mankind." A tear dimmed the dark eye of Jael when she ceased speaking,—she dashed it from her cheek in an instant, and then stood as composed and dignified as if she had felt no excitement.

"You were ever wiser than I," said her lover, "and I do wrong to mistrust you even in thought,—what there is good in my nature, Jael, I have gathered from you. I will do your bidding, though I awaken the anger of your father. I have long been acquainted with the villanies of this Bellwood, and his associate Banes; it is such men as these that make your father what he is. But we must be cautious, Jael, to work out the plans which your clearer judgment may hit upon. Have you more to say?—I see the faces of Japhet and Israel looking this way, and that is the signal that your father is becoming impatient."

"I have many things to communicate," answered Jael, parting the boughs as she spoke, and stepping upon the edge of the heath; "but we had better approach the camp together. There is a plan laid for carrying off Ellen Giles, the daughter of the poor Roper, she who watched over me like a sister when I lay burning with the fever. Sir Edward Lee, who is otherwise a kind gentleman, hath fallen madly in love with her, and with such accomplices as the

gamekeeper and the Squire, will, I fear me, work her ruin, unless we can save her; and I have hopes,—for even the stern nature of my father was softened by her kindness to me. If I cannot dissuade him from it, we must get possession of her ourselves,—with us she will be safe."

"They are striking the tents," said Ishmael, "let us not delay. We know where they will next be pitched. Your father is serious."

"No matter," answered Jael, "the Dark Dell has its advantages, for the gloomy thicket and pathless underwood may stand us in better stead than the open heath. Let our watchword be the low 'hiss' of the snake. Such a sound is common in the wild wood, and may escape observation."

They walked on together to the camp, and were soon busied in the removal of the tents, and packing up the few articles in their possession, for the contemplated movements of Black Boswell required more secresy than the heath afforded, and they made for the old and gloomy wood of Lea, in the centre of which stands a wild wooded valley, supposed to have been a fish-pond in the olden times, and which is still called the Dark Dell.

CHAPTER XVI.

GIDEON GILES RESCUES HIS DAUGHTER FROM THE GAMEKEEPER, AND LEAVES HIM SENSELESS ON THE HEATH—BANES IS ROBBED, AND ACCUSES THE ROPER—GIDEON SETS THE CONSTABLES AT DEFIANCE.

GIDEON GILES knocked several times at the doctor's door before he received any answer: at last a red-headed lad, not half awake, threw up the casement, and after having rubbed his eyes and yawned several times, he said, "I was tired, and forgot to bring it, but yow ah! yo—O! I'm very sleepy."

"Has my daughter, Ellen Giles, been here?" said Gideon. "Where is Doctor Parnell? have they gone to Burton Woodhouse?"

"Young woman came and knocked," said the drowsy lad, "but yow, ah, oh! don't know what she said, I was so sleepy; tell him Burton Woodhouse called when he comes, and all so on;" and he opened his wide mouth once more, and dropped his head on the

window-sill, and would soon have fallen asleep again, had not Gideon fetched him a smart rap on the head with his cudgel, for the window was low.

"Answer me quick," said Gideon, "or I will drive the door from its hinges, and come in and bray you as small as the bits in your mortar. Has my daughter been here to-night?"

"She has," answered the lad, now perfectly awake, "and has gone round by Burton Heath to find the doctor. He was called to attend a labour at Farmer Lowfield's; you 'll find them there if you make haste." Then dropping the casement, he bundled once more into his truckle-bed, muttering to himself, "I wish I were tenting cows again in the lanes, instead of running about with physic. A bucket-full have I bottled off to-day;—sich stuff! Lord! if the folks knew, they would never be ill. Our measter takes good care to swallow none of it himself."

Gideon struck up the green lane that led to the hills and wild heath, walking at a furious pace, and dashing the dew from the long grass at every stride he took. At times the moon was overclouded, and the dense foliage of the high hedges cast a shadow so deep that the narrow footpath in the lane was scarcely discernible; then again she threw her broad silver light over the wide landscape, revealing field, and wood, and tree, and the herds of cattle that lay ruminant in the luxuriant meadows. The Roper reached the farm-house, and in answer to his inquiries, was informed that Ellen had but just gone, that she scarcely could have had time to cross the heath, and if he made haste he would overtake her before she reached the lane which led down to Burton Woodhouse. The doctor had promised to follow as speedily as possible.

"She must pass near the end of Banes's house," said Gideon; and tired as he was, he set off at full run, for Ben Brust had told him of the danger which awaited her.

That night Mr. Banes had stayed very late at the White Swan, and had had a long interview with a confidential servant of Squire Bellwood's, for the gamekeeper was from home when the Squire called; he was therefore acquainted with all that had transpired between Black Boswell and Bellwood, and he thought the plot most excellent. Nay, he had gone so far as to drink four shillings' worth of bad brandy to its success, and was consequently in a state of intoxication, and he went home singing the following old English ditty:—

Poor Kit hath lost her key, her key,
Good Kit hath lost her key:
She is so sorry for the cause,
The tears run trickling down her nose.
Poor Kit hath lost her key.
Good Kit she wept, I asked why so,
That she made all this moan;
She said, alas! I am so woe,
My key is lost and gone.
Poor Kit hath lost her key, her key,
Good Kit hath lost her key.
Poor Kit, why did you lose your key?
Forsooth you were to blame.
Now every man to you will say,
" Kit Lose-Key is your name."
Poor Kit hath lost her key, etc.

Nanny and Betty, the two old washerwomen, were bending over the hearth, smoking their short black pipes, when the drunken game-keeper past the row of ruinous cottages at the end of the lane so often mentioned, and were startled in the midst of their gossiping by the sound of his voice.

"I wish he may lose his tongue before he gets home," said Nanny, "that I do, a drunken roystering brute. My word, if our chaps meet we' him—they are on the look out to-night in the woods—they'll make him sing to some other tune, I warrant 'em."

"Sarve him right," said Betty: "I 'm sure if they hear him—and they will, if he screeches out at that rate—they'll fall bones on him. I heard our Jack say he was swaggering and shewing a lot of sovereigns in the public-house this morning, and said he knew how to grow gold; I wouldn't wonder if they don't get a few of his seeds to set to night, if they meet we' him."

"Nobody would be sorry if they was," answered Nanny; "and I shouldn't mind 'em having a month's imprisonment, just for giving him a downright good whacking,—but robbery 's transportation; remember that, Betty."

"Not wehout they are fun out," replied the gossip; "and for my own part I don't believe there 's any harm in thieving from sich a villain as this Banes is: it's only taking back what he's thieved from others."

"Well, we mun live somehow," said Nanny; "and if they can't get work, they mun get someat else, that's all, were wangs must be kept a-yanging, we mun eat."

Meanwhile the gamekeeper went merrily on his way home, now singing a stave of "Poor Kit," then whistling by way of variation, or hiccuping, as if to give greater change, until he came to the corner of the heath, just beside the high wooded hedge, the angle of which he turned at the same moment as Ellen Giles; and they met in the moonlight face to face.

"Ah, my sweet little turtle-dove," said the drunken keeper, encircling her in his arms in an instant, "so you 've come to see me at last, and I out—fie on my ill manners. But it 's lucky we met so near home; come, my pretty bird, your little nest has been ready this three days past, and I have got some gold for you, and the devil knows what beside."

Hitherto Ellen Giles seemed speechless, so unexpected was the assault, and for a moment or two she stood as if bereft of all power; she then became conscious of her situation, and struggling to release herself, said, "Seek not to detain me here, Mr. Banes, my brother is dying, and my mother is sitting up for me. Unhand me, sir;" and she struggled with all her might, but the ruffian kept his hold. "I would to heaven that my father was here," said she, raising her voice aloud for help.

"You must call a little louder, my pretty nightingale," said Banes, before your father can hear you. Come, it's my turn now. Sir Edward has had a deal of patience. That's right, shout away; if the owl or the plover can help you, why you'll not leave one asleep either on the heath or in the wood." And he dragged her as he spoke in the direction of the Grange.

"Let me go," said Ellen, "for mercy's sake let me go this time. Not now, Mr. Banes, some other day I will see you. Let me alone now,—consider my poor mother,—my little brother who is dying. Oh, if you are a man have mercy on me! O God, look down and help me! Let me go home, and I will never utter a word of this. Oh, my father!—Villain! let me alone." She made another strong effort, and by that almost superhuman power which danger alone can call forth, she succeeded in releasing one hand, but still Banes was drawing her nearer to the Grange.

"It's of no use," said he, "you may as well come to-night as to-morrow, and all the devils in hell shall not turn me from my purpose."

He paused a moment, but without releasing his hold, for he heard the sound of footsteps approaching: another instant, and Gideon Giles was in sight: he seemed to come up with the speed of a grey-

hound; he spoke but one word, and that was "Villain!" then raising his arm and clenching his teeth, he struck the keeper senseless to the earth. The blow seemed to come from the arm of a giant, so sure and quick, and with such force did it fall, that Banes dropped down like a man dead.

It was but a momentary glance that Ellen caught, in the half-shadowy moonlight, of those stern features, but she knew the face, and fainted in his arms as she faintly exclaimed, "O, my father!" Gideon cast but one savage look at the prostrate gamekeeper; it was one of those looks which a man can only wear for an instant, and he raised his foot as if he hesitated whether or not to crush him into the earth. Then he averted his head, and lifting his daughter up with as much ease as he would a child, he struck down the lane in the direction of home. Ellen was senseless for several minutes.

Gideon had scarcely got out of sight before two men came running up. One held a parcel of twisted wire snares in his hand, leaving no doubt of his being a poacher. They were followed by two dogs.

"The sound came from somewhere here about, Tom," said the one who held the snares. "It was a woman's voice I'll be sworn."

"Then where the devil can she have hidden herself?" replied the other, hutching up the two hares on his shoulder as he spoke, and which had but just been 'snickled.' "Hilloa! what hev we here?" added he, pointing to the prostrate form of Banes.

"The cursed keeper, by heaven!" said Jack; "and dead enough seemingly. He's got his whack at last, and the devil his own precious bargain, and not a soul will be sorry."

"He's none dead," said Tom, stooping down and raising his arm, "only a little stunned, and will come round again I'll a-warrant it in a short time. What say you to making a grab, and paying were selves for the time this thief caused us to lose in prison? You saw him shewing off his sovereigns this morning."

"Speak low then," said the other, "and do it. The right hand pocket, all right. I'll hold his arm aside; he begins to breathe; we must bolt."

"Somebody's served him out at last," said Tom. "I thought he would catch it some of these times. Now who the devil can it be! I heard a woman's voice, as plain as ever I heard ought in my life; but he moves."

They then drew off, and sharing the ten sovereigns, struck down the same lane that Gideon had entered with his daughter.

Gideon Giles rescues his daughter.

Banes lay writhing like a wounded snake upon the heath, his eyes dimmed, and his senses stupified with the blow; and when he began to recover, he gave vent to his feelings in a volley of oaths and curses. He knew it was the Roper who had struck him senseless, and he ground his teeth at the thought, for he feared that all his villany would now be discovered. He arose, and supported himself on the bole of a tree, and wiped off the blood that still trickled down his forehead. He felt in his pocket and missed the gold. "He has robbed me," said Banes; "they will not take his daughter's oath. I will have a warrant for him before morning. And yet he would not do this;—no matter, I shall be revenged. I will swear he waylaid me on the heath, robbed me, and attempted my life." And he uttered one of his deepest oaths to confirm the resolution.

He went back again to Burton Woodhouse, and knocked up the constable; a lazy lounging rascal, who had rendered his name a very terror to poor vagrants, and had in his day taken hundreds to prison.

"Who's there?" said the constable, thrusting his head and red nightcap through the window at the same time. "It is I; Banes the gamekeeper. I have been knocked down and robbed by Gideon Giles on the heath. Get up this instant; I've no doubt we shall find him at home."

"Just go down the street and knock up Lawson, my deputy, while I dress me," said the constable; "we'll have him in the round-house before another hour, if we can but lay hold of him."

Banes obeyed, and the whole party were soon in motion, and on their way to the cottage of the Roper.

"He's soon begun to take up a new trade," said the constable. "I thought we should nap him some of these days."

"I allos said he'd the look of a thief," said the deputy, "and told him that one day or other he would have to sail across the herring-pond; but if he gets off now without hanging, he'll be lucky. I should like to see him swing in one of his own ropes."

Banes made no reply, for he felt conscious that he had not been robbed by the Roper.

"He is a dangerous man to meddle with," said the constable, producing a pair of handcuffs, "and the first thing we do, must be to slip these bracelets nicely on his wrists; but we needn't fear, there are three of us. Lawson, have you brought your biggest staff?"

The deputy replied by producing a heavy bludgeon from beneath his coat, and brandishing it in the moonlight.

"I shall have no occasion to go into the house, shall I?" inquired Banes.

"You must," answered the constable, "to swear to him, as I have no warrant; for that's the law, and I never go against the law: and if he asks to see the warrant, I am not bound to shew it. For he might tear it from me, and throw it into the fire, as Ben Brust once did, when I went to take him up for knocking me down; but that wasn't according to law, and Justice Bellwood wouldn't grant me a second warrant. Yes, you must go in, as we mightn't be able to take him ourselves." And clapping his hand on his shoulder, he repeated some ceremony; then added, "Now I have sworn you in as my assistant in the king's name, and can fine you if you refuse to act." Then tearing up a hedge-stake, he said, "This is your staff, and if you break his head with it, it will be according to the act of *ex-officio*."

They paused at the front of the Roper's cottage, and saw a light gleaming through the chinks of the doorway. "Better enter all abreast," whispered the constable, "and seize him at once; he is a powerful man."

"Best plan would be to knock him down before we teck him up," said the deputy, looking very pale. "Once get the handcuffs on him, then we can do as we like. I'll come behind ready to hit him, if you miss."

All being arranged, the door was suddenly thrown open, and in rushed constable and deputy to seize poor Gideon, and each in an instant had secured an arm; but great was their astonishment when they saw the Roper himself take up the poker and brandish it over their heads, and found that they had taken prisoner the doctor, who had stood with his back towards the door.

"This is strange," said the doctor, shaking off the deputy, and uplifting his long muscular arm, he laid him prostrate on the floor. "What want you here?" Banes stood in the doorway.

"We have come to take up Gideon Giles for robbery and attempt of murder," said the constable, holding up his staff, "and there stands the gentleman on whom the assault was committed, and whose life has been saved by a miracle."

Gideon stood for a few moments like a man who has suddenly been struck dumb; and Banes shrunk from his gaze, while the Roper looked fixedly upon him, and exclaimed, "False villain! I regret that I have left you power to crawl hither."

"You hear that," said the constable; "seize him, Lawson. He's sorry he didn't kill the keeper: that's evidence enough to hang him."

"Lift up a hand against me, an' you dare," said Gideon, "and I will shew you what respect I have for such scoundrels. Whatever I have done, I will answer for it on the morrow. If rescuing my daughter from the clutches of that villain is a crime, why then I am guilty. As to robbing him, he dare not say I did it, although he is villain enough for anything."

"I know you struck me down and left me senseless," said Banes, "and only for larking a bit with your daughter. And I can swear that when I got up, I missed ten sovereigns."

"Will you stand searching?" said the constable. "If you havn't robbed him, you can have no objection to that, any how. As to your daughter, that will require a separate action."

"I have ten sovereigns in my possession," said Gideon, producing them from his watch-pocket, "and when the time comes, will prove that I came by them honestly. Begone this instant, or I will clear the house of you all."

The constable looked at the deputy, and giving a long "oh, oh!" said, "So you've ten sovereigns, have you?" then added, "I shall not forget that you put me in bodily fear by taking up a large poker, when I came in the execution of my duty. And I shall leave Lawson as a guard at your door until I return with a sufficient force in the morning. Mr. Banes, you can swear that you have seen the ten sovereigns."

"You'll not leave me by myself," said the affrighted deputy. "Remember, he has also put me in bodily fear, and I can swear my life against him, and that's quite enough without staying here all night."

"And remember," said the doctor, "that you seized me unlawfully, and even while I was attending to my professional duty, and counting the pulsation of a sickly child; and also, that if the child dies, it must in some measure be attributed to the rude shock I received from your unlawfully seizing me, and that its death will be laid at your door."

The tables were turned in an instant.——"I kill the child!" said the chief.—"Me the cause of its death!" exclaimed the deputy. "Laws, sir, you don't mean to swear that?"

"I do indeed," said the doctor, enjoying the dilemma into which the two constables were thrown. "And more, I will answer for

the appearance of Mr. Giles before the magistrate to-morrow; and shall also remember the illegal manner in which you entered his house, and the assault you committed upon myself. As to you, Mr. Banes," added he, "I shall require some information respecting a young woman you have detained at your house."

"I shall be ready to answer any question you ask," answered the keeper sullenly. "But I will be satisfied about those ten sovereigns to-morrow."

"Begone, villain," said Gideon, his brow darkening; "lest I be tempted to repeat my blow." And with many growls and threats they departed.

Ellen Giles had gone to bed, but his wife was up; and when she heard her husband charged with the robbery, she uplifted her hands and eyes, and exclaimed, "Laws-a-massy, did you ever!—ten sovereigns!—just to think.—Why he hasn't ten shillings in the world!" But when Gideon threw the gold on the table, she changed colour, and uttered not another word.

When the party had gone, Gideon briefly explained how the sum came into his possession, and the purpose it was lent him for by the host.

"We must have the landlord over," said the doctor. "I will mount my boy, and send him off to-night. That Banes is a dangerous fellow."

He again looked at the child, and found the fever abated; and gave orders that another powder should be administered in the morning. Ellen Giles had overheard the whole of the conversation, and stood, half-dressed, ready to rush down the ladder, in case her father was seized. But no sooner was the house cleared, than she returned to her couch, and sighing heavily, shed many a tear on her pillow. The sound of wheels was heard as the doctor drove away, and the little cottage was soon wrapt in the silence and solitude of sleep.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. BROWN, THE MASTER ROPER'S WIFE, AND MRS. LAWSON, "DITTO" TO THE DEPUTY CONSTABLE, HAVE A LITTLE GOSSIP ABOUT GIDEON GILES — BEN BRUST RETURNS FROM NEWARK — MEETS COUSIN WILLIAM, AND TREATS HIM TO A SHILLING DINNER, AND "THE BITER GETS BIT."

Next morning it was rumoured through Burton-Woodhouse that Gideon Giles had robbed the gamekeeper of ten sovereigns, and left him for dead on the heath—that the money had been found on the Roper, and he "had driven out of his cottage five strong men who had attempted to take him."

Mrs. Lawson, the deputy's wife, had heard the full and particular account from her husband, and, before breakfast, she hurried out to tell Mrs. Brown, the wife of the master-roper.

Mrs. Lawson was a fat, pursy woman, with a red face, and rumour said she "took her Daffy's," and that even Mrs. Brown was very queer at times, and more than once had been seen all her length upon the floor. Rumour said she was drunk—Mrs. Brown, that she was "subject to fits." Be this as it may, next morning the deputy's wife hurried down the village street, and, rushing into Mrs. Brown's, threw herself into a chair, as if ready to faint.

"Whativer is the matter, Mrs. Lawson?" said the roper's wife. "Deary me, you look the very picture of death!"——If she did, death had a very crimson visage.

"I feel as if I should sink into the earth," said Mrs. Lawson. "For heaven's sake give me a few drops of your cordial, just to revive me. Only to think of your late man, Gideon Giles, committing robbery and murder last night!"

"Laws-a-massy!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, filling a good sized wine-glass with raw brandy, which the deputy's wife drank off without making a wry face; when Mrs. Brown also took one, adding, "I don't wonder at such news making you feel low—I'm ready to drop myself. And whoiver has the villain murdered? — it's Sir Edward Lee, I'll warrant it."

"No, it isn't," said Mrs. Deputy. "The fact is, he hasn't quite

killed the man, though he left him for dead. It's Mr. Banes, the keeper, he knocked almost o' th' head, and robbed."

"Laws, what a wicked village we live in!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, uplifting her hands as she spoke. "Mr. Banes, is it?—sich a sweet man as he is!—and got back Sir Edward's work for my husband,—and never seems happy only when he's doing a neighbour a good turn. The villain!—I hope they'll hang him wehout either judge or jury."

"That they will," said Mrs. Lawson, "for he put my husband in bodily fear, and Mr. Oram, the chief constable; and you know, Mam, they are like the king, and act for his Majesty; and to mislest them, is to attack the crown—and it's treason. And I declare to you, that a woman who marries a constable never knows when she can call her husband her own for an hour together. Here comes a knock, to take up this thief, and that rogue,—or somebody's been banging his wife, and out he must go—hey, if it's the coldest night in winter; coss, you see, he's like the king, and must get up when he's called to do his country's duty. And his life's never safe for a minute; and I often blame my dear Lawson for been so courageous; for, between you and I, he's always forced to act, and it's a shame he isn't made chief instead of being a deputy. But some folks hev the devil's luck and their own to boot."

"They hev indeed," said Mrs. Brown. "But about this attempt to murder and rob dear Mr. Banes.—When do you think they'll hang him? I'll go to Lincoln to see him hung, if Mrs. Lang can get my new dress ready in time. One would like to shew a little respect for an old neighbour, bad as he is."

"Happen he may lay till the 'Sizes," answered the deputy's wife; "but I don't know, though—as they found the money on him, and he put the king's officers in fear and joppery (jeopardy). But I'll let you know, and go we' you, if I've time to get my tuscan bonnet cleaned."

"Well then, it's agreed," said Mrs. Brown; "and I'll get our Jack to give the light-cart a bit of paint, and we'll hev a day on it for once, if we never hev again. I reckon they'll gibbet him. I do so long to see somebody gibbeted;—hanging's nothing of a treat to that."

"I'll go see 'em teck him to be tried, however," said the deputy's wife. "I dare say he'll be handcuffed to my dear Lawson, for Oram's only very timid."

"I'll go we' you," said Mrs. Brown, putting on her bonnet and shawl, and adding to the crowd which already stood without the Roper's cottage.

"What's it all about, Bill," said a chubby-faced lad to a boy in a white pinafore. "They're going to hang Gideon Giles," answered the urchin. "O! shan't we see some sport soon, when he comes out we' a black cap on!"

Tidings soon reached the hall of Burton Woodhouse, of what had befallen Gideon, and Sir Edward Lee dispatched a messenger for Banes instantly. Amy Lee spoke not a word, but set out for the Roper's cottage; she met with Walter Northcot in the park, took his arm, and they walked together to the village.

But leaving, for a short space, the village to its uproar, and the poor Roper to his feelings of misery—for the crowd without was a torture to him, innocent as he was,—we must now return to Ben Brust, who was driving his sheep from Newark. Ben had a fine leg of Northamptonshire mutton slung over his shoulder; and ever as he drove his sheep along, and got them nicely together, he turned to admire the joint, and by a jerk of his arm brought it at the front. "Hev it boiled," said Ben, "sup of prime broth, but broth fills one so soon. It's prime baked over a lot of nice mealy tatoes, it gives the tatoes sich a flavour. Roasted's better—but laws it mecks me so hungry while turning it, and I half fill me we' sops in the pan. I hope Gideon ell dine we' me. I'll call an ax him how he likes it done,—I wish th' old landlord was coming to dine too. Laws, I should be happy! But four on us would meck a foul hole in it. Let me see, I could teck about two pounds or so, Gideon ain't so good a hand at it, and the landlord, he's but so and so, and my wife ain't much. It's a sweet pretty leg, and I dare say there would be plenty." And he again examined it, took hold of the shank and felt its weight, then threw it once more over his shoulder. The fat almost frizzled in the sun, for the morning was unusually hot. "Mind and not go to sleep this time," said Ben, passing the bank where the Tinker stole his boots: "catch 'em doing me out of my mutton, if they can. How nice it will but eat! prime red gravy! England's a glorious country! there's no sich legs of mutton in the world beside, there isn't a leg like this in foreign parts abroad. It's a blessed country. But I begin to want my lunch. Or should I stay and make a good dinner at Besthorpe? I think I will, he gives capital shilling dinners. He says he loses two shillings by me every

time. I dare say he don't get much. But laws, everybody don't eat alike! and I dare say what we' one and another, it pays very well indeed. Who the devil's yon coming? Why I declare it's my wife's cousin. Dash him, if he sees this mutton he'll want to fall bones on it. He's sich a fellow for fresh meat."

"Sweet leg of mutton there, Ben," said cousin William, glutting his gaze upon it, as if he would have eaten it with his eyes. "What a nice relish a slice round would but give a pint of ale. I made but a poor breakfast: they were soon tired on me at Fenton; I reckoned on staying a week we 'em."

"You ha'nt surely eaten 'em up in a day?" said Ben. "Why they killed a pig about a month back! I never thought you would leave 'em while there was a bit of bacon left."

"They hadn't begun to cut on it yet,—they thought it was too new," said cousin William; "and I promised to call as I came back, but they never pressed me. I'm going as far as Winthorpe, to see an old friend as I lived in service we'. He killed two pigs in March, so I hope to be able to stay a fortnight we' him.—But we mun hey a bite and a sup afore we part. I never saw a prettier leg than that, Ben."

"It's a real good un," answered Ben, hutching it further back, "and I mean to hev it done for Sunday's dinner."

"I don't mind going back wi' you," said the hungry-looking cousin. "I can as well go to Winthorpe on Monday. I should enjoy a bit of that mutton on Sunday, Ben, that I should."

"It would be all the better for been hung up a day or two longer," said Ben, who had seen cousin William eat once. "And if I should change my mind, and not hev it cooked on Sunday, it would be a great disappointment to you."

"Why for that matter," answered the persevering cousin, "I could stay as long as it would keep good.—But I don't want to press on you, though I think you ought to stand a good dinner, for that trick you played me we' the mutton."

"It was all owing to the clock," replied Ben, with a laugh.—"But I'll tell you what I'll do: if you'll pay for th' ale, I'll stand a dinner for you at Besthorpe. They'll credit me a shilling I know; —and if you eat a stone of meat, they charge no more. Butcher Hyde pays for me."

"It's almost too soon," said cousin William, pulling out an old-fashioned watch. "But we can wait an hour or two, and hev a pint and a pipe while dinner-time."

"That we can," replied Ben; "it 'ill do my sheep good to let 'em wind a-bit, for they begin to pant. And you'll see how I 'll teck the landlord in, and get a quart of ale for a penny. I learnt a trick yesterday of old Nock, the nailmaker. He's often grumbled at giving me a dinner for a shilling; — but we 'll sarve him out to-day. Are you in good trim?"

"Capital," said cousin William; "I could eat a jackass and a pair of panniers. I'm good for half-a-crown's worth, anyhow. I 'll punish his joint to your heart's content, Ben."

"Then we'll do him, by Jove," said Ben, rubbing his hands with delight, "for I'm in beautiful order. He shall hev someat to grumble about this time. I think you and I, cousin, can put as much under our jackets as any two men in England?"

"That we can," said cousin William, "if it only be bread and cheese. Put your sheep on a bit faster, Ben, and let's give 'em time to cook plenty for dinner. It's not quite eleven o'clock yet, and we're nearly there. Shall I carry the mutton?"

"No thank you," said Ben, giving cousin William a peculiar look, "it isn't very heavy.

They soon arrived at Besthorpe, and put up at the old Black Bell, the very house where Ben recovered his boots, and pummeled the tinker. The sheep were put into a neighbouring paddock, and Ben began to inquire after dinner.

"It's only just down," said the landlord, looking very hard at cousin William's long jaws, for the host had some skill in the physiognomy of a good trencherman, and he wished his guests had travelled a little farther. "It'll be an hour-and-a-half before it's ready; hadn't you better gou on to Newton? you'll about get there in time."

"No thank you," said Ben, winking at his cousin, "we can wait till dinner's ready; the sheep want a bit of a rest." Then calling to the servant-girl, he said, "Here, Mary, just hang this leg of mutton up in a cool place until I go."

The girl obeyed; and as the landlord threw his sharp eye upon it, he said, "It's a prime leg that, Ben; but I think we shall have as good a one to-day."

"Roasted?" said Ben.

"Yes; I'll just see how they're getting on with it," answered the landlord, and he went into the back kitchen.

"Roast leg of mutton," said Ben, nudging the cousin with his

elbow; "my eyes, William, won't we see the bone before we've done we' it; we'll teck him in."

"We will," answered cousin William, his mouth already watering. "I'll astonish you to-day, Ben."

"We'll make him gape," said Ben, "and eat such a meal as he'll niver forget. Only a shilling, my boy! I'm good for three pounds."

"So am I," answered William, "besides bread and potatoes. I wish it was but ready. Laws! this 'ill be as good as if I'd staid to dine we' you on Sunday."

"A deal better," said Ben, "coss he can afford it; but we'll hev a quart of ale and a pipe, just to put us in better 'fettle.' What a blessed dinner will I but make!"

The landlord came in and brought a quart of ale, and Ben offered to bet him a penny that he drank half-a-pint out of it, as Nock the nail-maker had done; but the landlord placed the thumb of his left hand against his nose, and spreading out, and moving his four fingers said, "Hookey, Ben, ain't to be done."

"He's down as a hammer," said Ben, winking at cousin William, as if to say, "won't we drop on him at dinner."

It seemed a long while to wait; but after the first half hour there came such a rich smell of roast mutton from the back-kitchen, that even Ben and the cousin sat patiently to inhale it, and snuffed up the fragrance with delight, until their appetites rose to "hunger heat."

"Should just like one sop," said Ben. "Laws, what a delicious smell!"

"It would spoil your enjoying the last pound," answered William. "I like to start with a clear course. I think I can eat half of it. Just throw the window up, Ben; if I hev this smell much longer, I shall be rushing into the kitchen and fetching it off the hook."

Ben threw up the window, for cousin William's look grew ravenous, and he kept moving his jaws and licking his lips, as if the mutton was already before him. "He'll beat me," thought Ben to himself. "It makes me hungry to look at him. I wish it was but ready."

Time passes away unaffected either by our cares or our watchings. The child crying until its nurse returns with the promised sugar-plum, and the sobbing mourner who bends over the bier of the dead, check not a flap of his wings. The din, and roll, and tumult of the world, are but low hummings on his ear. Shriek, and yell, and death-groan are old familiar sounds; he has no sympathy for man-

BEN BRUST'S RETURN FROM NEWARK.

kind. The stir, and bustle, and preparation, for either the dinner or the death of an emperor, arc of no import to Time; he but keeps his reckoning by the ruin of nations, and leaves Eternity to sum up the total. He adds figure to figure, as he records new desolations, until the number outgrows his calculation. He took just the same interest in the dinner which Ben and his cousin were about to devour, as he did in the last earthquake that swallowed up a huge city at a meal, and when ——

"Dinner's ready," said the landlord, and Ben and the cousin had well nigh tumbled over each other, in their hurry to reach the parlour; they had not time to think of Time.

It was really a fine leg of mutton, and the dish of new potatoes looked beautiful—the landlord had dug them out of his own garden. They would have been sufficient for half-a-dozen ordinary people. A new brown loaf stood in the bread-basket. "Don't you dine with us, landlord?" said Ben, making a hole in the middle of the leg at the first cut, such as two men, with a fair appetite, might be supposed to leave after they have dined.

"Not to-day, Ben," said the host. "It's almost too early for me,—you have it all to yourselves;" and he left the room.

"I'm glad of that," said cousin William, cutting off a piece above an inch thick, and weighing at least a pound; then helping himself

to an additional slice of fat, and again adding, "I'm rare and glad at that, Ben, ain't you?"

Ben tried to answer "Yes," but his mouth was too full to speak; so he nodded, and eat away. Cousin William devoured the largest mouthfuls, but Ben seemed to make the best progress—to take it easier somehow. He cut his meat in smaller pieces, and eat two to his cousin's one. Ben had excellent teeth: a potato vanished at every mouthful—not one was cut—they seemed to go down whole. "Don't spare it," said Ben, having finished his first huge plateful. "Just the same to pay, my boy, if we eat it all!—Beautiful, isn't it?"

"Ah! quite heavenly," answered the cousin, casting a loving glance at the joint, then helping himself to another tremendous slice, and adding, "Eating's hard work, Ben;" and he took off his neckcloth and smock-frock and threw them on the floor. Ben eat on, and seemed not to put himself the least out of the way. He was like a man who, being perfectly master of his trade, feels no doubt of finishing his task in a first-rate style, and goes on easily and leisurely; while the cousin, scarcely so perfect a hand, seemed to make a labour of it.

"It looks very queer now," said Ben, laying down his knife and fork, and taking a close survey of the joint, which looked like a bottle with the belly gone and only the bottom and neck left. "He'll not save a fortune out of us, I think."

"Not by this daylight," replied the cousin, thrusting the whole "pope's eye" into his mouth at once. "I think we can polish the bone, if we try, yet."

"I'm afraid not," said Ben, now grazing the bone, and cutting much smaller pieces—for the bulk of the meat was devoured. "Laws, I wish we could!—but he'll remember our shilling-dinner the longest day he has to live:" and Ben glanced again at the remainder of the leg, and smiled—the sight of it pleased him, for it looked almost all bone. "It weighs six pounds lighter than it did," said Ben, "I'll warrant it;" and his fat sides shook with delight; then he laughed outright as he thought how they had taken the host in.

"Eating takes away one's appetite after we've swallowed the first two pounds," said William.

"It does," answered Ben. "I think a man, according to his size, eats the least of anything. Look what a truss of hay a horse can get through. Now I think we ought to eat as much accordingly; then a leg of mutton for one man would be a fair meal. Laws,

cousin!—lay down four or five pounds of meat beside me—then look at my size,—why it seems like nowt!"

"Nor more it don't," replied the cousin. "I once saw a pelican, Ben, and I envied that chap; he seemed to take it so easy, as he swallowed the fish whole: now I think champing one's victuals is a complete loss of time."

"But it's very nice amusement," said Ben; "and when you aint in a hurry, you catch all the flavour so deliciously. It seems as if someat was playing we your palate, like. There's nought like it in the world, cousin. I think eating and sleeping are the greatest blessings a mon can hev; cos, you see, he's reason, and feels thankful for hem; while a dumb animal can't feel so, cause he hasn't human knowledge."

"You was alloss over book-larned for me, Ben," answered the cousin. "But I feel too full to talk much. I've heard say sleep is a fine thing for to meck your meat digest."

"It's a capital thing at any time," said Ben, taking up the last bit that was left on his plate; when, looking at it, he sighed heavily, and laid it down again. Benjamin could eat no more, and he leant back in his chair and said, "If brusting wouldn't hurt one, I shouldn't mind it a bit, just to hev the pleasure of eating again. If I was a rich man I would keep a doctor and a stomach-pump, and hev a dinner every hour in the day."

"Then I wouldn't," answered the cousin; "I would only dine every three hours;" and he took up the last potatoe, and cut it in two. It was the first one that had been halved. He dipped it in salt and gravy, and had difficulty to swallow it. He was full to the very throat. They had eaten like famished wolves.

"I think if I was to cut off this bit of a knuckle, and teck it we me," said cousin William, "it would be a nice snack to a can of ale on the road."

"Eat all, if you can, but pocket none," said Ben, who had his own peculiar notions of honour. "A dinner's only a dinner, though we've nearly eaten the whole leg. But he's not bound to supply us we another meal; I think he's suffered quite enough by us for one day. The next man that dines off it, must bring a good sharp knife to make his dinner."

"Well, then, we'll be jogging on the road," replied William; "and I'll pull the bell, to see what's to pay. The two shillings for dinner you're to stand, Ben. I'll pay for the ale."

"All right," answered Ben, and the landlord entered the room. They both cast down their eyes, for (to do them justice) they felt half-ashamed of looking either at the landlord or the mangled skeleton that lay on the dish.

"I'm glad to see you've made sich a famous dinner," said the landlord, smiling.

"We've done very fairly indeed," replied Ben, now looking up under such encouragement. "What's to pay?—the two dinners go down to me: he settles for the drink," said Ben, pointing to his cousin.

"There's nothing to pay, Ben," answered the host; "potatoes, bread, ale, and cooking you're very welcome to—and I'm glad to get off so cheap. The leg of mutton was your own, Ben, and I hope it was done to your liking!"

"What!" said Ben, not fully comprehending the host's meaning; "you don't mean to say that we've been eating that leg of mutton I brought?"

"The very same," answered the host, laughing. "I put it down to roast myself."

Ben stared at the landlord in silence; and after a long pause, he said, "why it cost me six shillings. It's a regular swindle," continued Ben, "and I'll hev an action-at-law against you. Here you pretend to give a man a dinner for a shilling, and set before him his own joint that cost six shillings, which he eats up an' loses five by it; I'll never use your house again. What do I care about your few potatoes, your bit of bread, and drop of ale. I'll hev my leg of mutton, if I get it out of your bones."

Cousin William could scarcely keep his seat for laughing, he shook from head to foot, as he exclaimed,—"So I've dined off that prime leg after all, wehout waiting till Sunday. Ben, your done this time. It's come home by you for eating that two pounds seven ounces."

"And so this is all that's left of my prime leg," said Ben, looking at the fragments; "but don't you mean to give me something for letting cousin William go wacks we me?"

"I'll stan a pot of ale," said the landlord, "we pleasure, for I do think you've saved me half-a-crown through treating him."

"I niver was so tecken in before in my life," said Ben; "next time I dine anywhere, and hev a joint we me, I'll keep it tied round my shoulder all the while I eat. Dash your wig, landlord, you've done me this time, but I'll be even we you." The joke had by this time got wind in the tap-room, and rare laughter did it create,

when they found Ben and the cousin had nearly eaten up the whole of his own leg of mutton. And one wag after another dropped in, to ask Ben how he'd enjoyed his dinner. William was well nigh suffocated with laughter, so heartily did he relish the joke. "Wife ell be tecken in as well," said the mischievous cousin; "I think I'll on to Winthorpe now. Ben, I never thought this morning I should help to eat that sweet pretty joint so soon, ah! ah! ah! I've dined we you at last Ben."

"I'll tell you what it is cousin," said Ben, unable to bear the burst of laughter which rang through every room of the house; but the taunts of the cousin least of all. "You've hed a good belly-full, and very cheap, now be satisfied, or else you'll maybe hev to pay dear for it, though you are my wife's cousin. You 've hed a meat-offering, and a drink-offering, and if you don't behave I'll give you a eve-offering, for I'll heave you clean out at th' door."

Cousin William chuntered something to himself, but said no more to Ben. Another quart of ale, however, restored Ben to his usual good-temper, and he joined in the joke against himself, and laughed as heartily as the merriest in the group. It was not in Ben's nature to be angry long. He gave the fragments of the joint to a poor pauper, whose occupation was to break stones on the high road, for which he received one shilling and twopence a day, and out of that was compelled to support a sickly wife and three children. "There'll be a nice bit of picking for the bairns," said the poor man, and he made his dinner of the crust of brown bread and morsel of leather-skinned cheese, washing it down with the drop of small beer which the host allowed him daily. One thing contributed to the recovery of Ben's good humour; he took an old farmer in with the bet about drinking only half-a-pint from a full quart, the trick which he had learnt of Nock the nailmaker.

The mirth was, however, suddenly broken by a loud "hilloa" at the door. It was the worthy host of the Fallow Deer, from Newark, on his way to Burton Woodhouse, to render what assistance he could to the poor Roper. The doctor's boy had dropped asleep in his saddle, fallen off, and lost the horse, which had set off home again at full speed, so that the lad was compelled to go the best half of his journey on foot, which accounted for the late arrival of the honest landlord. He called for a small glass of brandy, and seeing Ben Brust, exclaimed, "You here Ben! I thought you'd been well nigh home by this time, come jump into my gig this instant, no

time to lose. Gideon Giles is in trouble, and you will be useful as a witness; I will give one of these men half-a-crown to drive your sheep home."

The pauper got the job, and Ben and the host were soon out of sight, for they drove along at a furious speed, in spite of the heaviness of the road. Cousin William lingered behind until the ale was drank, and amused the company by telling them how shabby Ben behaved, when he eat up all the mutton: and all the company were very merry at the joke, but the host's laugh was the loudest, for he chuckled again when he thought of the trick he had played Ben Brust.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GIDEON GILES APPEARS BEFORE JUSTICE BELLWOOD—BEN BRUST AND THE HOST MAKE THEIR APPEARANCE—THE ROPER IS ACQUITTED, AND THE GAMEKEEPER REMANDED UNTIL HE FINDS BAIL.

Banes was from home when the Baronet's messenger arrived at the Grange, having set off at an early hour to meet Squire Bellwood, not doubting but that by his influence he might obtain the first hearing before the justice, and prejudice his mind against Gideon Giles. Old justice Bellwood, however, refused to hear a word of the matter until all the parties were assembled, for he was not ignorant of the gamekeeper's character, and as the doctor had managed to get a note into his hand explaining the whole truth of the business, the worthy magistrate even refused to grant a warrant for the apprehension of the honest Roper—but sent down an old and faithful servant to request his attendance at the hall in the course of the afternoon. Both the chief constable and deputy were confounded at such proceedings; Oram said it was against all law, and that such conduct ought to be laid before the twelve judges, and that there was no such thing on record in his favourite act of *ex officia*. Mrs. Lawson declared it infamous, to send for a man charged with a highway robbery, as if he was to come on a friendly visit. Mrs. Brown uplifted her hands, and wondered whativer this wicked world would come to at last, while sich a sweet man as Mr. Banes was mislested, and could not even get a warrant; for her part she should persuade Mr. Brown to hammergrate [emigrate] to Mericer [America]. But

saving these two worthies, and one or two others who had their private pique against Gideon, there were very few in Burton Woodhouse who for a moment believed him guilty of the crime laid to his charge. It was in the afternoon, and a crowd still lingered in the village street, when Gideon came forth from his cottage with Walter Northcot hanging on his arm; and one long, loud huzza greeted his approach; and such a shaking of hands took place as made the heart of the poor Roper beat lighter than it had before done for many a day. Amy Lee stayed in the cottage, and throwing off her bonnet and shawl, sat down to nurse the sickly child, and listen to the complaints of Mrs. Giles, while Ellen followed her father. The two constables lagged behind, and made their way slowly towards the hall, with an apparent reluctance; Oram, meantime, laying down to Lawson the consternation that justice Bellwood's conduct would create in the House of Lords, and speaking as if London was about to be visited by a mighty earthquake.

But leaving them on their way to the magistrate, we must now introduce that worthy personage to our readers. Justice Bellwood was a fine specimen of a class of characters which are now fast fading away—the true old English gentleman. He was of course a Tory, a stanch unbending Tory of the old school: one who respected the laws, venerated the church, honoured the king, and would have reverenced the evil-one himself, had he either sat on the throne, worn the mitre, or occupied the woolsack; for he believed that none unless honourable and virtuous, nay, almost infallible, could ever attain the high eminence of office. He was a Tory because he loved his country, worshipped its constitution, and reverenced those laws which he believed had made England what she is. If the system was bad, he saw it not; he believed the constitution of England sound to the very heart's-core; he would have staked the salvation of his soul upon the integrity of her rulers, for he never dreamed that ambitious and evil men aspired to office; men who, with all the brutal grandeur of the Roman conqueror, seek only to overthrow and subdue, that they may fetter together all that is virtuous and noble, and be dragged in triumph over the ruins they would make. But there was a depth and breadth about the character of the old justice, which men of all grades of politics admired; he was a hater of oppression, and if there was a loop-hole in the law through which he could allow the weak and injured party to escape, he did it. He would have done the same, had he been England's king, for wealth

and title were never known to make him swerve from justice, and such as he himself was did he believe all to be who stood high in the wide realm of Britain. Would to God they had all been like justice Bellwood! England would then be a glorious country. A score such men in office as the worthy old magistrate; such lovers of their country, such haters of oppression, so upright, honest, noble, and devoid of all selfishness, venerating even the worst part of our laws, only because they are old, and holding them sacred through a fear that if they were altered, the whole grand and ancient pile would crumble into ruins. O! who would not bear with such men,—who would not love them for themselves alone, and pardon their honest prejudices, well knowing that if the yoke was heavy, they would be the greatest bearers of the burthen, nor would they do aught, but what would better the condition of mankind. Let our rulers but possess the people's love, and they will trust life and soul in their hands.

Justice Bellwood was no contemner of the "common herd," but looked upon every honest and virtuous man as a brother, believing all men of ability and integrity as worthy of holding a high and honourable station in the land, as any whom the king has made—

"A belted knight, a marquis, duke, and a' that."

He despised those hollow champions of liberty; those big drums that thunder and thump, and mislead the multitude, and when the hour of danger comes are the first either to inform against, or desert them. He had more respect for a band of robbers who stood true to each other, than such cowardly agitators as these, and it was this firmness that caused him to remain a Tory. He was a strong compound of all that is thoroughly English—brimful of fiery passion and kind-heartedness, and stuffed with prejudices to the very throat, but they were his own dear hobbies, and never indulged in for a moment if they injured a worthy man. How such a fine old fellow should rear up such a rascally son as the young squire, puzzled many a wise head; but it was owing to his indulgence, in letting him have things all his own way; and such indulgence as ruins only one man, might, if carried out far enough, ruin a whole nation. But it is time we reach the worthy old magistrate's mansion, known far and wide as "Bellwood Hall."

Justice Bellwood felt an unusual interest in the business which was about to be brought before him, for he well knew the position in which Gideon Giles stood with the Baronet; and had been instru-

Gideon Giles before the Justice

mental in bringing the cause of the poor Roper through the court, when Sir Edward Lee laid claim to his cottage and garden by the road-side; not with any intention, either to take it from him, or to raise his "pepper-corn" rent, which amounted only to five shillings a year, but only to prove that he was MASTER. How many thousands of pounds have been wasted in this weakest of all follies, that one man may shew he has the power to do what another has not! But the Baronet lost the cause, and felt but little regret.

The justice was seated in his large easy chair, ruminating over various matters; now puzzled at the connexion which existed between his son and the gamekeeper, then endeavouring to find out some excuse for the folly of the Baronet, or recalling all he remembered of the honesty and integrity of the Roper, when the door was thrown open, and Gideon himself entered with Walter Northcot, and was followed by his daughter. Shortly after came the two constables and the gamekeeper, none of whom the magistrate seemed to recognise, while he invited Ellen Giles to take a seat, shook hands with Walter, whose father he had known in days gone by, and exchanged a nod and a glance with Gideon. He seemed rather taken aback by the abrupt entrance of Banes and the constables, followed by his own son, and looked at the attendant whose duty it was to have announced them, but as the worthy old servant was mending his pen, and preparing himself to act as clerk, he stopped short, and giving a loud "Hem!" said,—"Now, Mr. Banes, I will listen to your complaint. John," added he, calling to his old serving man, "administer the oath; I will not swerve one jot from the law with you, sir. You bear a bad name, and I, as magistrate, sit here to tell you of it, before we proceed further."

As the gamekeeper kissed the book, and repeated the oath in the usual form, his eye caught the fixed glance of Gideon, and his colour rose. However, he told a tolerable straightforward tale, admitting that he had tried to steal a kiss from Ellen Giles, but intended her no harm; that he was struck senseless to the earth by her father, and when he came to himself again, discovered his loss of the ten sovereigns, which sum was found upon the Roper when they entered his cottage. The two constables swore that they saw the money in Gideon's possession, and were about to proceed with a long account of his conduct, the whole of which our readers are already acquainted with, when they were interrupted by the magistrate, who had hitherto listened in silence, nor had either Gideon or his daughter offered any interruption.

"Are you sure the ten sovereigns were in your possession at the time you made the wanton and unmanly assault upon this young woman," inquired the magistrate; "or were you not in some company more likely to rob you of it than this worthy person, before you received the blow you so justly merited?"

"I am sure they were in my pocket at the time," answered the keeper, "because ——" he made a pause.

"I do remember," said Ellen Giles, now rising, "that when I struggled with him, as he attempted to force me to his house, he made mention of gold, and struck his pocket as he spoke, and although I had forgotten it until this moment, I heard the sound of money distinctly. But I am sure my father never touched him after he had once rescued me."

The honest old magistrate looked confounded at this reply; it was a confirmation that he needed not, and he was puzzled at the moment how to proceed, when Gideon Giles broke the silence by saying,— "Bad as I know this man to be, and evil as his intentions are towards my daughter, still I believe that he may have been robbed of the money after the blow I struck him, as I remember hearing the sound of voices after I left him, and while resting a few moments with Ellen, who was senseless, in the lane. The ten sovereigns I have here," added he, placing them on the table, "were lent to me by Mr. Bent, landlord of the Fallow Deer, at Newark. Ben Brust was witness at the time; and the purpose for which the sum was lent me, was, that I might begin in a small way of business for myself, as Mr. Brown has discharged me from the ropery, and I have endeavoured in vain to obtain work elsewhere. I doubt not but that Ben and the landlord will be here before long, to confirm the truth of what I have stated. As to that villain there," added he, pointing to Banes, "he has known me too long, even to believe for a moment that I am guilty of the robbery laid to my charge; wicked as he is, he dare not swear it."

Banes hung down his head and remained silent for several moments, while his brow darkened and his whole countenance shewed signs of guilty consciousness to the truth of what Gideon uttered; but with this consciousness there was mingled a feeling of deep hatred towards the Roper, for he felt the full power of good over evil, and shrunk from it, and dipping again into his black and inventive brain, said, "This may be all a tale about the sound of voices heard after he left me. How will he prove that those are the

ten sovereigns lent him by the landlord, he has named, instead of those I was robbed of? I have heard that it is difficult to swear to money, and you are all witness that Miss Giles heard the sound of it before her father came up; and when I recovered, I can swear upon my oath, that I had not a single coin in my possession."

Oram touched Lawson with his elbow, and whispered something which no one heard distinctly, but which signified that the last question was a poser. The magistrate caught the sign and just heard the whisper, and being at a loss what to advance in the Roper's favour, of whose innocence he felt certain, he began to abuse the two constables, and said, "Let me have no whispering or underhanded work here, or I will commit you both to Kirton House of Correction for a month, a place you have more right to than hundreds of the unfortunate wretches you have taken there. Were you half as honest as the Roper you would pick up a more honourable living than you do now by hunting after vagrants, and compelling such men as me to put into force laws that would be better employed against lazy vagabonds like yourselves. You would like to take him to prison, I doubt not; but we will see." Then turning to Banes, he added, "How came those ten sovereigns in your possession, sir? of whom did you receive them?"

"Of Sir Edward Lee," answered the keeper; "you can inquire of the Baronet himself if you please."

"Should you wish to defer further inquiry," said Walter Northcot, now rising, "until the arrival of the landlord and Ben Brust, I will hold myself as bail for the appearance of Gideon Giles, whom I should here advise to take out a warrant for the assault committed upon his daughter, for I hold it shame that a young woman cannot move abroad without being subject to the assaults of every ruffian—"

Banes scowled at him, as he spoke, a look of black and bitter hatred, and as the justice was about to reply, Ben Brust rushed into the room, and was followed by the host.

Ben's first action was to seize Gideon by the hand, and without regarding either the magistrate or any one present, he began to vent his English indignation, by turning round and pointing to Banes as he said, "An' that thief of a keeper there says you've robbed him, does he? D—— him, I wish I'd only been by and heard him, I would have smashed him to powder. You, rob a man, my boy! God bless you, you would sooner give the bit out of your mouth to a poor body as wanted it. I should as soon think of robbing a

pauper of his breakfast (and God knows that would be a sin now), since they hardly let 'em live. I'll tell you what, your worshipful justice, I'm d——d if he's capable of sich a mean trick; it aint in him, it niver was; I would as soon think of you doing it yoursen', and then I couldn't believe it if I saw you, but I should say it was the devil that came in your shape. As to that thief there," continued he, pointing to Banes, "he would do any mander of thing; there's nowt either too hot or too heavy for him; and if you'll only commit me to prison for a single month, I'll just break every bone in his skin, and then go willingly; he's a bad fellow. Gideon my lad, he's the biggest liar, and the greatest thief and scoundrel as ever lived. O, how I could ——" and he clenched his fist at Banes and remained silent.

"I believe you're right, I'm afraid he is, Ben," exclaimed the justice, quite forgetful of his magisterial dignity, while carried away by the rough current of his straightforward feelings. Then remembering himself, he gave two or three mysterious "hems!" and proceeded with the business with all the gravity of a practised judge. The host was shaking hands with Walter Northcot when he was summoned to take his oath respecting the money, and he put an end to the business in a few words, by saying, "I've no objection to take an oath on a matter of life and death, because then I think it's necessary when the life of a fellow-creature's depending on it. But as to the doubt about the ten sovereigns I lent Gideon, and which I would make fifty if he wanted it, why you'll find two little dots under the chin on the head side of every one of them. I never took a sovereign in my life without marking it as I've said, for I used to say, in case I was ever robbed, I should have some just grounds to go upon."

Every one of the sovereigns bore the marks the host had named. Ben Brust was as eager as the foremost to examine them, and when he had thrown down the last, he said, "Now ain't this Banes a cursed thief and a rogue."

"This part of the business is now at an end," said the justice. Banes was about to leave the Hall. "Stop," said he, and pointing to the constables, he exclaimed, "On your peril let not that man escape." Ben Brust seized him in an instant, and the two constables also laid hold of him; but their help was needless, for he was as secure in Ben's manly grasp, as if his arms had been screwed up in a vice. "The assault you have committed, according to your own

shewing, upon Ellen Giles, renders it necessary that I should compel you to find two sureties, each in fifty pounds, and yourself in fifty also, to be forfeited, if within twelve months you attempt to molest her either by word or deed; and in case of your not finding two sufficient bondsmen, whom I approve of, before to-morrow at noon, it will be my duty to commit you to prison for three calendar months. I am no stranger to your character; Lawson and Oram shall go in quest of any persons you may name as bail."

"Sir Edward Lee will himself be bound for a thousand pounds if it is needed," replied Banes sternly and briefly; then added, "should you insist upon two bondsmen, I have but to name your own son, Squire Bellwood, for the second, which will shew that he holds me in different estimation to his father." The Squire spoke not.

Banes stood with his brows bent, and his eyes fixed upon the floor, and maintained a savage silence, for the working of his countenance, and the way in which he bit his lips, even until the blood oozed forth, shewed that although beaten and caught beyond all chance of escape for the present, he was still a tiger in the net, and as ready to leap at the throats of his capturers as when he was free.

"My son's bail I shall refuse to take," said the magistrate, "and ground my objections on such facts as, if they are needed, will reflect but little credit even on himself, so bethink you of some other." He was resolute, and ordered the gamekeeper to be locked up in a safe room until bail was found, and Oram and Lawson were soon again in his "good graces," when he saw with what alacrity they obeyed the command.

When Banes left the room, the justice addressed a few kind words to Gideon, and in the gentlest terms, told him that he had done wrong in offering any resistance to the constables, but that from a knowledge of his previous character, and a conviction of his innocence, he had deviated from the usual form of the law in not granting a warrant for his apprehension; and concluded by stating that he trusted his confidence would lead to a good example on the part of other of his neighbours, and convince them that honesty and industry were not unnoticed even by a magistrate. He then ordered refreshments for the whole of the company, reserving a separate invitation for Walter to dine with him, which was accepted for the next day, as he had left Amy Lee at Gideon's cottage. Ellen Giles returned home with Walter Northcot, nor was he ashamed of offering his arm, and walking through the village with the beautiful, though lowly, daughter of the Roper.

Ben, the host, and Gideon, stayed behind to partake of the justice's good cheer, and the worthy old magistrate entered into the room where they were assembled, to see that every thing was arranged to their satisfaction. Nor did he forget Gideon, but promised him his custom, and that of all the friends he could influence. He also gave the two constables strict orders to look out, and endeavour to discover the robbers.

Ben was so happy that he gave a full account of the dinner at Besthorpe, and laughed heartily at the trick the landlord had played him, and he ate so much, and drank so deeply of the justice's strong old ale, that Gideon was compelled to see him home. The host slept at the Blue Bell that night.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH, AS USUAL, MORE IS SAID THAN BELONGS TO THE STORY, AND THE BARONET HAS SOME CONVERSATION WITH WALTER NORTHCOT RESPECTING HIS DAUGHTER.

THERE is a strange assimilation between the changes in human life and those of nature; our greatest poets have been the closest observers of these things, and some of the finest passages, both in the Scriptures and in their own writings, fully illustrate the truth of these remarks. The transition from a morning of sunshine to a noon or night of sudden storm or blinding rain, is common to our climate. Prosperity or adversity come almost as quick,—the leap from life to death, sometimes more sudden. An unexpected drenching to the skin makes us remember our cloaks, the sun shines and they are again forgotten, in spite of former warnings. And we are all made up more or less of this mingled caution and negligence; we but prepare for the morrow, whilst that morrow is uppermost in the mind, or we fit ourselves for it, as if it were an eternity. And even then, with all our over-care, there arises some confusion of tongues, some sweeping hurricane, that shivers our mighty Babel into ruins,—something that convinces us we are mere motes in the sunshine of this mysterious world; who play away their little hour, then give place to others as insignificant. Even mighty fame, and earth's immortality, affect not the greatest of our extinguished atoms. And this is neither truth in its purest shape, nor vaunted philosophy in its solid form, but the

vagrant musing of a midnight hour, which sprung from the moonlight becoming suddenly darkened while looking out upon the still scene, and thinking how happy Amy Lee and Walter Northcot were, as they walked together through the beautiful park of Burton Woodhouse, when they left the cottage of the Roper.

And they were happy: for the sun shone brightly in the western sky, the birds sang sweetly in the neighbouring coverts, lambs bleated on the green uplands, and the spotted heifer lowed from the rich pastures beside the Trent, while the broad green and wooded park lay around them like another Eden. And they were full of "high-resolves" of what they would do for the poor Roper; how when they were married Ellen Giles should live with them, Gideon attend to their garden, and Ben Brust do what he liked,—they were for making happy everybody about them, and they smiled and talked low and lovingly to each other, and Walter took Amy's hand in his own, and she leant heavier upon him, and looked more tenderly into his face, and stepped more nymph-like over the tender greensward, for she had forgotten, for the moment, the cares which surrounded her mother, the troubles which her father had called down upon himself, Squire Bellwood, and every thing else, saving her lover; and she thought of nothing but what an angel might think of, of sunshine and happiness, and all sweet things, and——. She saw her father standing at the end of the avenue before her, his eyes fixed upon them. Had she known he stood there, she would not even have smiled, his very countenance would have made her serious, but she was happy, and forgot every thing but happiness for the moment. This is a strange world, filled with wires, and gins, and solemn springs, that jerk us back into a state of starchness, and make us what we would fain not be, in an instant. It acts upon all alike. We heard, from one (who utters only the truth, and yet lives in the very world that we do now) who from his window, which overlooks the garden of a palace, has often seen a fair young queen, who then walked in

"Maiden meditation fancy free,"

and would sometimes lean on the arm of one of her own age, one of her own sympathies—if, indeed, ought so regal is akin to humanity, and God forbid that it should not! And this young queen would walk, and smile, and look happy, and perhaps talk of times gone-by, and companions dead, or merry hours that can never be recalled (and who could not love her better in that state, than in her tiara of gold,

and in her bright coldness of gems!) for she seemed too fair and happy to have to do with the cares of state. Until warned that there were many uninvited lookers-on, when, as if touched by the sudden spell of a mighty magician, she became "every inch a queen." So stood Amy Lee, before her father, her colour heightened, and her form more dignified, and all her loveliness looking more austere—a poet would have said, she stood as if Juno, deeming herself alone, had in a playful moment assumed the place of Hebe, and presented the golden cup to the Thunderer, when suddenly the gods peeped through the impregnated cloud of flowers, and she blushed herself once more into the dignity of the queen of heaven,—so Amy Lee again felt herself the daughter of the haughty Baronet.

Amy Lee was neither ashamed of her love or of her lover, but she felt that in opposing the wishes of her father, she was in some measure doing wrong, although she knew that in his heart he had a strong pleader for her disobedience. It is with some such feeling that a kind general regards the brave officer he sends to head a forlorn hope, conscious that he will be the first to front the breach, and be shot dead for his courage; so the Baronet deemed that the heart of Amy might break, if she was united to Bellwood, but the sacrifice would be made for his sake—that she would obey him, because it was her duty. This is almost unnatural reasoning, yet it occurs every day in the world, and will continue to do so, until more wholesome feelings are implanted in place of that shameful selfishness which is everywhere taking root. To be rich, to live in luxury, and to make a figure in this world, has become of more consideration of late than happiness; as for contentment, it is a term only associated with clowns and cottagers, and too many write for, instead of against, this false and fashionable misery.

The Baronet approached with a forced smile upon his countenance; he looked kindly at Amy, and said, "I am sorry, my dear, to part such pleasant company, but I have a few words to say to Mr. Northcot, and — they must be said to him alone."

Amy's colour heightened, but she made no reply as she withdrew her arm from Walter's, and struck up the avenue alone, in the direction of the Hall.

The Baronet kept his eye fixed on the beautiful form of his daughter until the last glimpse of her drapery was lost amid the foliage of the hazels, which overhung a turning of the road, and shut her out from his sight, and he sighed heavily as she disappeared, and

stood motionless without uttering a word, and Walter was the first to break the silence by saying, "You wished to speak with me, Sir Edward, in private—we are now alone."

"Walter," said the Baronet in the kindest tone, "the subject is painful to enter upon, and weighs heavily on the hearts of us both. Amy is affianced to Squire Bellwood, for as such I hold my promise to his father. You love her, and are more worthy of her love in return; but I never yet broke my word, and she cannot now be your wife."

There was so much frankness and real kindness in the manner in which the Baronet spoke, that Walter Northcot was unable to reply for several moments, for he felt his honour appealed to, and that was next to, if not stronger than, his love. The difference between the two passions—for honour, or a just pride, is a passion—may require a finer line of distinction than we are able to draw. But in a young man of a proud spirit like Walter, he felt it a duty to master an attachment to which clung anything that had even the semblance of dishonour. But he knew not his own heart.

"I respect your feelings, Sir Edward," replied he, with great emotion, for his proud chest heaved as he spoke, and love and honour were the opposing powers that contended for mastery in his bosom. "I respect them too much to allow you for a moment to do anything derogatory to your honour, but it must be from Miss Lee's own lips that I receive my discharge. Her objections to the marriage you would bring about, are no secret; her duty to yourself I well know, and if she but expresses the slightest wish to fulfil it, I will never seek an interview with her again, you will soon hear her answer. If on the other hand she is resolved never to marry with Bellwood—and I believe you to be too kind a father ever to compel her—I shall still live in hope—the last solace of the wretched." He turned aside to conceal his emotion, for a tear stood in his eye,—he scarcely knew what he had said.

As for the Baronet, he stood like a man whom every passion and feeling affects, but who has no will of his own to impel him to action. He seemed like a lake that reflects cloud and sunshine—is moved with the wind, and again tranquil when it sleeps, and mirrors back just the same sky that before hung over its depths. His face assumed a softness as Walter spoke of the respect he had for his feelings; his brow darkened as the spirit of the young man kindled, and he refused to take his discharge from any other than Amy's own

lips; and he raised his head as if about to burst forth into a towering passion, when he alluded to his forcing her to a marriage with Bellwood; but as Walter's voice subsided, and he spoke of hope as the only solace of the wretched, he remembered Ellen Giles, and his head sank, and he stood with his eyes riveted on the grass, passionless, subdued, and silent.

"I scorn to take any advantage over your daughter's feelings in my favour," proceeded Walter, "backed as I am by the friendship of Lady Lee, for I am unworthy of her. I love her too well, Sir Edward, to deprive her of the comforts with which she is now surrounded—to wish her to become the wife of a soldier, and especially of one like myself, entirely without that patronage which is so essential to a man's advancement in the army at the present day, when wealth outsteps either merit or servitude. Yet, poor and unfriended as I am, I would sooner marry her to-morrow, if she consented to share my privations, than see her the wife of such an unprincipled villain as Bellwood."

The spirit of the young man was at last kindled, and he stood erect, with his cheeks flushed and his eyes on fire, like a man resolved to attempt some daring deed, though a score of swords are pointed at his heart, and death is sure to be the end of his rash enterprise.

"And this is your resolve?" said the Baronet, now starting from his apparent stupor, as if he had been suddenly pierced with the point of a spear.

"It is," answered Walter, "until I hear from her own lips, that she has consented to become the wife of Squire Bellwood, and that of her own free-will."

"Then from her own lips you shall hear it, sir," replied the Baronet, now becoming excited in his turn. "Think not because your early acquaintance with my family, as a boy, made us bear with your high and unbecoming notions, that the same leniency is to be extended now, any more than the doll and the rocking-horse would be tolerated in a drawing-room, did my daughters still shew a predilection for such foolish things at their present age. Marriage, sir, is to me a business; and though I might make a present of my best hunter to one of my companions of the chase, yet I should be more cautious, if I transferred to him my estate."

"I regret that my knowledge of the world compels me to subscribe to the truth of what you have just uttered," said Walter, stung

to the quick; "marriage is indeed a business now—and so carried on that a pedlar would blush to dispose of his wares on such principles. You know Bellwood, are not ignorant of his vices, are aware of the misery he has brought upon many a happy family, nay, are confident that but for the money he has wrung from his father, he would ere this have been either transported, or hung. Is such a man a fit companion for your daughter?"

"We have all our faults" replied the Baronet, his colour deepening as he spoke, for he thought of Ellen Giles. "But it is something to know, Mr. Northcot, that whatever failings we may have, our home is still surrounded by plenty, and that the few crosses love may encounter are amply balanced by more substantial comforts." The Baronet cast his eyes on the ground when he had uttered this splendid sophism, for he well knew how utterly hollow it was. But he was vexed, and it was the best argument he could produce at the moment to answer two purposes, the one to excuse his own evil passion for the Roper's daughter, and the other to reflect on Walter's poverty. But remember, our very laws allow a man to make the best of a bad cause, and that even a honest judge will warn the culprit not to tell too much of the truth, so let us not blame him. "I understand your meaning, Sir Edward," answered Walter, "and poor as I am, would blush to form an alliance with your daughter if I believed her for an instant capable of entertaining such sentiments." They are worthy of Bellwood and his confederate Banes (*par nobile fratrum*), and from them we could expect no other doctrine. Whatever my career in life may be I know not, but if wealth only is necessary for an alliance, marriage demands no more qualities than a man who advertises for a partner in business, and simply specifies the required sum. Your daughter will require a more worthy recommendation than this, unless she alters. But why should I talk thus, who have nothing but a true heart to offer her." That heart seemed to swell, as if it would have choked his utterance as he spoke, for he was deeply hurt at the apparent levity of the Baronet's remarks, and had he been any other than the father of Amy Lee, he would have listened to them less patiently.

"I will do you justice," answered Sir Edward, who was by nature a man of a kind heart. A proud man he was, and seldom nerved himself against his weaker passions, but he was not naturally bad; his worst qualities, like bad grain, had floated uppermost; the good sunk, and the bottom was sound and healthy, ay, even in his

love for Ellen Giles, for even wise and great men in the present day shew by some folly or other how little they are; and however great a man may be in some things, nature has preserved one little spot on which to write "fool," as if only to shew that he is human; but these remarks may be taken up by some future author, and a work written, to be entitled 'The Follies of Great Men of all Ages.' "I will do you justice," continued the Baronet, "so far as regards your feelings in this matter, and only wish that Bellwood could be made to take the same view as yourself; but this is impossible, and I have gone too far to retract the pledge I have given to his father." He sighed unconsciously as he spoke; then again proceeded, although the effort seemed a painful one, and he averted his face as he spoke, like a man who closes his eyes when he is about to do some desperate deed.

"I will admit that you are more worthy of Amy, but this admission comes too late to be of any avail; I will deal plainly with you Walter. Justice Bellwood holds a heavy mortgage over my estate, and the fact is only known to ourselves and a confidential lawyer, with yourself I know it will be kept secret. This is to be again delivered to me at her marriage, and only becomes Squire Bellwood's after my death; even Lady Lee is ignorant of such a transaction. I have now thrown myself upon your mercy, and trust to your honour for the result; I have sacrificed my child to my folly. Walter, I am a villain!"

The proud man covered his face with his hands, and leaning against a tree, wept like a child,—the whole secret of his sorrow was revealed, he had been a gambler and all but ruined himself. Lady Lee had looked coldly on his conduct, although she knew not the extent of misery he had brought upon his family. When he could gamble no longer, he drank; then he became enamoured of Ellen Giles, and he had broken off every evil course but the latter. He was still in love and in debt, and no man can make himself a less "hell upon earth," who at all plunges into misery.

"Dear Amy! she is then lost," was the exclamation of Walter, "and I cannot save her from her fate," speaking as if the sentence would choke him.

"Lost! for ever lost!" echoed the Baronet, "neither can I save her now, without sinking into my grave dishonoured."

It was a painful sight to behold the father and the lover, standing as they then did—and with all his faults, the Baronet, at that moment, deserved to be pitied, for he had confessed all, had owned his appa-

rent dislike to Walter was only called forth by the biting remembrance of what was past and beyond his own power of recal; and he stood like a man so thoroughly steeped in wretchedness, that had the Evil-one himself looked on, he would have forborne at the time to have added another pang to his misery.

How stood the lover—pale and speechless with silent agony; his hand clasping his fine forehead, his eye glancing like grief earthward—a noble statue of manly sorrow. He wept not, for he had no tears—a feeling like death seemed stealing over him—a keen piercing winter that sets in, in an instant, and seems to freeze the very heart's blood—a cold, low despondency, such as may be supposed to come over a man who has lost his way in a bleak December day, on a wide forlorn moor, and is overtaken at night by a storm of freezing hail, where he struggles a few steps through the blinding sleet, mutters a curse, and falls down to die. So did Walter stand for a few moments, then staggered, and would have fallen had not the Baronet caught him. Walter Northcot never felt until that moment, how madly, how devotedly he loved Amy Lee. He would have met death in any shape like a brave man, but to be separated from her was a pang worse than any death, for his was a love, almost freed from the grosser passions; he had loved her with more than a brother's love when he was but a boy, and now she had again burst upon him, as simple and as virtuous as ever, and armed with all that is graceful and lovely in woman, and he knew how rich a jewel was the heart, which that costly casket contained. He felt like Romeo, that—

> " Heaven was
> Where Amy lived; and every cat and dog,
> And little mouse, every unworthy thing,
> Lived there in heaven—and might look on her."

" This is a strange world, Walter," said the Baronet, still retaining the young man's hand, after he had recovered himself; " we are but the playthings of some greater power, that laughs to scorn all our puny efforts, and when we have struggled and all but extricated ourselves from its claws, draws us back again and holds us more secure in its grasp. I have been all my life a slave to myself, have broken all my good resolves, as soon as they were made; I have looked for happiness in empty pleasures, believing it could only be found through others, without once dreaming that it must spring from ourselves alone. I am ashamed to think of my own weakness, I would fly from

myself, if I had the power; I am tortured with the monster which I have myself created. Well! well!" continued he, "it pains me to see you pity me. I loved your father Walter—he was an honourable man. It was his wish in the hour of death, that if you lived, you should be united with Amy; I know not how he came to entertain such a wish—but a dying man, catches strange glimpses of the future—I know not what to do. I am not my own master, I am in the hands of another; but a better man never lived than Justice Bellwood;—as a friend I now warn you to be aware of his son. I have heard that, within these few hours, which makes me tremble when I think of the man to whom my daughter is bartered. I am weary of the world Walter, and would the wreck of my estate but furnish us with a home and food, in some distant land, for a few brief years, I would leave the dishonoured escutcheon of my fathers, and their ancient hearth, to the stranger, and we would retire and live together, where we were unknown, and where all my crimes and my follies would be remembered by none but myself. But I am a beggar; the very sod I stand upon is no longer my own, unless I give up my child and fulfil my pledge, so solemnly and honourably given. Squire Bellwood, however, knows not how strong is the chain that binds me thus reluctantly to him,—suffice it, he is your enemy."

Walter spoke long and eloquently, in reply to the Baronet, and if he had never respected him before, he did then—strange that misery should have such strong claims on our sympathy. They were hard-hearted men who refused to succour Napoleon when he threw himself upon the mercy of England; the devil himself could but have offered him hell, or a grave,—and he fared no better.

Walter and the Baronet entered the hall arm in arm——and now we will have a pipe of tobacco in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil. For human life is but smoke; fame a valued meershaum that gets rank through long use. The big world a huge pipe, in which every man has his "whiff," until the tobacco is reduced to ashes; it is then emptied, filled again, and other smokers succeed. Time is our stock of the "weed;" death the host, that comes and warns us when it is time to leave this common tap-room, the world. Eternity the secluded room, thrown open at last to all, where smoke-haters, and smoke-lovers, will at length meet; and He who can alone see through the "cloud and vapour," which surrounded us while here below, will extend His mercy to the most inveterate consumer of smoke. For smokers considered alone, as sinners against etiquette,

come under the head of a harmless kind of evil-doers; their pipes are the blackest part, their crimes consist more of an evil scent, than ought of word or deed,—your beer-drinking, short-pipe, street-walking smoker is another man,—we write for that class who love to smoke alone, to sit and dream to themselves in the still night; who have no shop-boy pride, and parade, in the solemn business of smoking, but love it—because it makes them love everybody, when they smoke, "and forgive the trespasses of those who have trespassed against them." Let those condemn us who please, but we never seem to enjoy the sacred volume unless we have our pipe. It seems somehow to soothe our spirits,—a great man once confessed the same, and we may be pardoned after such a weakness has been owned by Robert Hall. We wish we had for our readers, all good men who smoke. And now our "pipe is out," and we have reached the end of another chapter, which like the works of many a better man, ends in "smoke."

CHAPTER XX.

BANES IS VISITED BY HIS FRIENDS, AND FINALLY LIBERATED—GIDEON GILES PREPARES HIS NEW ROPE-WALK, AND IS ASSISTED BY HIS NEIGHBOURS—HOW BEN BRUST WENT TO SEE HIS WIFE'S AUNT, AND LOST A FORTUNE—A BRIEF COURTSHIP.

Night fell once more upon the village of Burton Woodhouse, and all around rested so green and tranquil, a stranger would have fancied that neither care nor sorrow had ever visited so sweet a spot. Yet there lay the living image of the huge world, with all its pains and heart-aches, spread over a few acres of earth, each unit standing for its million, and the same passions and feelings multiplied, making up cities and kingdoms, all rolling round, and falling at last into one common grave.

All around the mansion of Justice Bellwood was silent, but within there was a sound of hurried footsteps—the impatient pacing to and fro of one who is restless, like the quick angry tread of a chafed lion in his den. That sound was the footstep of Banes, who was yet a prisoner in the strong room, to which he had been committed, until such time as he could find bail. Sir Edward Lee had sent down, offered to become security, and was accepted; but still the old magistrate was resolved to "have his bond," and would not release

the gamekeeper until another came forth as bail, nor would he accept of his own son, and none other as yet had appeared.

For the first hour the keeper sat down in sullen silence, as if he considered himself an ill-used man; but when the constables returned, from time to time, and delivered the same answers (through the little wicket in the door), telling him that all their attempts to find a second bondsman had failed, then he began to feel his own worthlessness. As a serpent, that seems to lie in a state of stupor, uncoils itself when its prey approaches or the sound of danger draws near, so did Banes spring up from his sullen reverie, and lash himself into a towering passion, by cursing all those who had refused to become his bondsmen. He paced up and down the apartment with his hands and teeth clenched, uttering internally the most horrid imprecations. Daylight died away, and every object in the room became less distinct as the dusky twilight fell, but still he seemed unconscious of the change, for his soul was ablaze with vengeance; the awful fire of his passion shewed up the figures of those he cursed, and he regarded not the fading away of the light of heaven. By-and-by the sounds from without seemed to subside as his rage abated, and when he stood still for a moment, the very ticking of his watch was audible. He listened! he heard the sound of a peasant's voice singing as he was returning home; there was freedom in that very sound—a kind of mockery that seemed to taunt the prisoner, and he turned away to drown the voice in the heavy tramp of his own footsteps. It died away; then came the dreamy rustling of the trees—that slumberous sound which seems to tell that night and peace are settling down upon the world, and usurping the throne where busy care has been all day seated. To a good man, the subdued murmuring of night brings feelings of calm and quietude—a kind of holy tranquillity scarcely allied to earth—a hovering, as it were, upon the skirts of another world—a dim, dreamy glimpse of the peace of the grave, streaked with a spirit-light that seems to burst from beyond it. To an evil man, that silence is hell; a dull void broken up, by swimming and hideous forms, and voices that gibber and ring on the ear, with stifled shrieks and hisses of derision; the low buzzing of fiends, that dare not call out aloud until their full time has come to triumph.

Banes felt that frightful silence,—for his conscience was like the low knocking of the death-watch, that drums on throughout the night, and ever repeats the same measured blows, whether we sleep or are awake,—and his thoughts rose before him like a legion of

Banes, visited by his friends.

fiends, and it was beyond his power to quell them; but with these thoughts there mingled no repentance for the past—there was no resolve to do better for the future; he only determined that he would move more guardedly—that he would shape his plans with greater caution, and make his revenge more certain—that he would become worse upon a better principle—that he would take home "other spirits more evil than himself," and in future act in unison with Squire Bellwood and Black Boswell. He felt that he had now a greater work of vengeance than he could get through with his own hands.

While he sat with his head resting on his hand, revolving over what evil he should first set about when he was again at liberty, he was startled by a sound from without, which seemed as if it came from under the window of that dark apartment. He rose from his seat, and threw open the casement—his prison was on the ground-floor. Presently he heard a low whine—then a clear glad bark,—he thrust his arm through the iron bars of the casement, it was his own dog, that had lingered about the grounds, which now recognised him. The faithful animal reared up before the window and licked his hand,—it was the only living thing that seemed to have any affection for him, and the feelings of the human brute were overpowered by the fondness of his dumb companion; he felt himself for a moment unworthy of the kindness of a dog; he seemed to feel all at once how much he was shunned and hated by his fellow men. It was as if the last good spirit (that is supposed to keep equal watch over mankind with the evil) had waved for a moment the torch before which he revealed himself, then extinguished it in the damp darkness of the night, and flown away, leaving him to the full consciousness of how forlorn and utterly destitute he was. He stood still, with his hand resting upon the head of the dog, conscious that he was every inch a villain, and he did wish for an instant that he had his life to live over again. It was a thought that came and went, sudden as the lightning; it was a feeling awakened by the kindness of a dog. Other thoughts might have come, like the fire of heaven, from the skirts of the same dark cloud, until the sultry air around that hot and unhealthy heart had been purified; but another blaze shot upon the sinner—it was the sudden light from a dark lantern, that revealed the forms of Squire Bellwood and Black Boswell.

The dog growled, and would have sprung upon them, had not Banes kept a firm gripe on his neck.

"Hilloa, my fine fellow!" said the gipsy, holding the light so that it flashed full upon the window, and revealed the countenance of the keeper between the bars, his hand still retaining its hold of the dog. "You've found a new preserve for your game at last. The devil draw my teeth," added he, taking a closer survey of the bars, "if I would not have found my way out of such a trap before this time of night." He seized one of the stanchions as he spoke, and being a powerful man, tore it through the wood-work, and cast it on the ground.

"That's of no use," said Bellwood. "Boswell, you must be his bail, as we have agreed. The old man will require the money down, and you have it. Knock him up; I must not be seen in this business; I could have liberated him myself, by throwing open the door, but it would not have been safe for him to have remained in this neighbourhood after. Pay the cursed money, and he will be all right again. I heard from Oram that not one of your acquaintance would come forward," continued he, addressing Banes; "I did not like to ask them myself, so have provided both the man and the gold."

"No; curse them all to the lowest pit of hell," said the keeper. "But I'll yet cry quits. Every devil of them shall live to repent of it. There's old Brown the roper, he could not be bail for me, no; he had taken an oath that he never would be bond again for anybody, since he had been forced to pay ten pounds for his own brother. Not another thread shall he spin for the Baronet. I would sooner see Gideon Giles master of his rope-walk again, and I hate him as I hate the smell of brimstone. Then old farmer Hayes, whom I've allowed to shoot through the woods whenever he liked. He wasn't at home; though Oram swears he saw him as he passed the window. Not another feather shall he ruffle in those preserves again, unless I was sure that the gun would burst and shoot him dead at the first shot. His land shall be measured before the world's a week older, and paid for to the utmost farthing. And there's that other thief, the landlord—a fellow that I've paid scores of pounds to in my time——"

"Well, well!" exclaimed the gipsy impatiently; "pack 'em all off to the devil together an' you will. It's no use chaffing here. I hear a window up at the front, and every dog about the house is giving mouth as if the foul fiend was at the door. I'll go round and give the old one a salute, since the Squire here says we must settle this

business in the regular way. Though, for my part, I think it all nonsense, when a man can just throw his leg over the window-sill, and step upon good solid ground without any trouble."

"The old boy must have it all his own way a little longer," said the affectionate son, "and if he catches a thundering cold through getting up, why he may thank his own stupidity for refusing to take my bail. Yoicks, yoicks! I hear he's in scent. His wind's good yet; those old hounds wear too well."

"I'll run into his teeth," said the gipsy, and with the lantern in his hand, he turned the corner of the building, and stood full in front of the hall.

"Hilloa, master!" were his first words, as he beheld the old justice, with his night-capped head thrust through the window, and a gun in his hand; "you'll just be getting a precious cold I'm thinking, if you don't dress yourself and come down, and put this fifty pounds into your pocket, that I've brought you to bail out the gamekeeper, for I reckon you'll sooner take a gipsy's money than his word."

"I'll take neither to-night," answered the old magistrate. "Be off, or by heaven I'll shoot you," and the old man set the gun on full cock as he spoke, but the clicking of the lock affected not Black Boswell a jot.

"Just fire away and be d——d," said the gipsy, taking out a pistol from his side-pocket. "I never travel in a night without a bullet and a bit of powder, 'cause you see it aint safe. Do you give everybody such a receipt as comes to pay you money? You want bail for a man, and here it is, the king's image itself, in good red gold; have you no more respect for his majesty when he comes to visit you, than to point a gun at him? Come, come, now, don't turn fool in your old age. Here's the money, let's have the law; I reckon you've a license to sell it. Come down, or I shall be off, and have an action against you. The money's the money, if the devil himself brought it."

"D—— the money, and you too," said the justice, drawing in the gun as he spoke, and sneezing as if a hundred colds were rushing into his head. "You're that thief of a gipsy, Black Boswell. There are a dozen warrants out against you. I'll come down and take your bail, and you too. I will by ——," and he threw down the window, and jumped into bed again.

The servants were now astir, and the gipsy found that he must decamp, for the whole house seemed up and in motion. Squire Bell-

wood, however, entered the hall, and, calling for lights and the spirit decanters, went into the room where Banes was confined, ordering the servant (who was in the secret of many of his villanies) to admit the gipsy. The whole trio sat drinking until daybreak, and towards noon of the next day, Banes was liberated, though not without many objections on the part of the magistrate against such bail. The plans they that night laid, and the manner in which they set about putting them into execution, is matter for our future pages. The young Squire well knew that it would be better to liberate Banes, on bail, than set him free in opposition to the law,—as the business he wished to have his co-operation in, would often require his attendance at the village, where he might, at any moment his father chose, be made prisoner. So affairs again stood at Burton Woodhouse.

That day Gideon Giles, assisted by Ben Brust, began to prepare his little rope-walk in the garden. The shed was cleared out, posts driven in, and beams, with pegs to support and divide the twine he spun, were soon erected. Ben perspired, and hammered, and sawed away like a first-rate workman, while the business was overlooked by all the idlers and loungers of the village. And a deal of good feeling was displayed among those numerous superintendents;—if they chanced to see a piece of wood that was too short, or did not appear to be altogether fitted for the purpose, they began to "cast about," and thought they'd a piece at home just the marrow of that which seemed to fit so well; and one kind old soul after another trudged off and brought his mite. And if one had a better piece of wood to give, another had a sharper saw to lend, or a pair of old hinges, that had been tossing about—if they could but find them; together with a few nails just the right length, and a gimblet to match. Then one would go and give the hatchet a taste of the grindstone; while another fetched the beer, or stopped to point a post, dig a hole, or straighten a nail; and they were all merry, and worked willingly—for there was no neighbour better respected than Gideon Giles. Then Ellen was very handy, and could hold the iron behind the palings, to turn the point of the nail which her father drove, and pour out the beer in a clean white mug, and smile at their harmless jokes. Mrs. Giles also had full employment to scold the children, as one walked off with the nail-box, or another ran away with the hammer just at the moment it was wanted. And the larger boys of the village came and peeped in—for they thought they had as much right to be busy as other people; and one sawed into a nail and took

off the edge of the saw, or broke a tooth or two; a second cut himself with a chisel, and Mrs. Giles had to put some of her lotion on the wound, and tie it up. Then there was a hunt all over for a gimblet, and one little urchin was found boring a hole through the sole of his boot, while his companion was busy planing away all the carved work from an old-fashioned chair. Then there were merry bursts of laughter at some joke or other of Ben Brust's, and everybody said it was excellent; while Ben wiped the perspiration from his brown forehead, and had a drop more ale; and old farmer Kitchen came and stood a quart,—and John the shepherd bet a pint of ale that one post stood six inches out of the level line,—then it was measured, and he owned he had lost—for it was only five inches out of place. Then they had the bet in; and Ellen set out the table in the garden, and spread a clean white cloth over it, and brought out a beautiful sweet loaf of her own baking, and a splendid cheese—and there were fine young onions at hand, and a bit of cold bacon; so they all ate and drank, and worked, and no one looked for pay; and before night there was a comfortable rope-walk made, the trees transplanted to make room; and though it was not so large as Mr. Brown's, still, as farmer Kitchen said. "What with 'rembling,' (removing) the currant-trees, and one thing and another, it had a very tidy look, and he'd seen one where there were two men at work, the very moral of it, and he thought it long enough for either a large wagon-rope or a well-rope; but if Gideon didn't find room enough, why he might just run a gap through the hedge, and take in twenty or thirty yards of his five-acre field behind;—what bit of grass he trampled down, wouldn't be much loss." And Gideon thanked the old farmer kindly, and doubted not but that, with God's blessing, he should now do very well. Then farmer Kitchen said he would stand a gallon of ale, just to drink success to Gideon's new walk, if Ben would tell them how he went on with his wife's aunt, when he met her at church.

"Well, I will," said Ben. "You may as well hev a laugh at me, as at a better man;——but I did it all to please my old Betty."

Farmer Kitchen sent for the ale, and they made themselves seats of the logs of wood, and Ellen brought out what chairs they had, and Gideon his well-filled tobacco-lead; and the boy who went for the ale had orders to beg a pipe or two,—for, since the rope-walk was finished, they were now determined to spend an hour or so in comfort. They were soon all ready, and the old farmer, nudging his neighbour

who sat beside him, said, "This is a better joke than that about the mutton."

Ben was offered the first 'tot' of ale by the Farmer, but he said "after you sir, it can't be in better hands." He had the next, and laughing outright as a prelude, for Ben had as good a relish as the best of them, for his own joke, he thus commenced:—

"You see my wife Betty has an old aunt, that's got a little money, and as my wife's her nearest relation, why she thought it would'nt be amiss for me to go over and see her, as you see I had not been near her of some time. And my wife says in her quiet way, 'You no' Ben, if we niver seem to think of her, why she niver will of us, and as I was christened after her, there's no knowing what she may do for me before she dies. I'm afraid Ben, as she thinks you're not over steady like, and might be frightened at leaving me ought, for fear you should spend it in ale. And as she's a bit seriously inclined, I'd hev you go to see her, and be sure to go th' church before you call on her, and get in a pew, so that she may see you, then she'll maybe think better of you like, and as I'm called after her, why there's no knowing what she may do.' Well, you see this was on Saturday night, and I thought there was some sense in what my wife said, so I got sixpence of her and went down to the Blue Bell, to hev a pint or two of ale, while she set a button or two on my coat, and tittyvated my waistcoat up a bit, to meck me look decant; so I slipped on my old smockfrock, and away I went. Well, somehow I happened to stay rather later than common, and get a little sup more drink then I ought, and that was bad, as I had to start by daylight next morning, for you see it was fourteen miles as I had to walk. Well, off I set, my wife gave me a shilling, but as the morning was hot, I spent it all before I got there, for I'd five pints of ale on the road. However, I got there just as the bell's were ringing for church, and I stood behind a tree and saw the old aunt go in, all right, before I entered. Just as the singing was beginning, I went in, for I thought she might turn her head happen, if I came a minute or two too late, and gave the pew door a good slam to; and so I did, and she saw me, and smiled. All right thinks I, she's sure to leave us someat handsome. Well, I managed capital through the psalms and prayers, but when it came to the sarment (sermon), I couldn't for the world keep wacken (waken). I stood up, but it was of no use, I rocked about like a fellow drunk, and hit my nose twice against a pillar, and some lads burst out laughing at me.

Well, I sat me down, but what with the drop of drink overnight, and what I'd had in the morning, and I dare say the long walk, and getting up early, all helped, why I fell as fast asleep as a milestone, and I dare say I began to snore at a most precious rate, for you see I'd got my head back against this pillar, and set we my nose cocking up. Well, after a bit there came a kind of a beadle-fellow, we a cocked hat, and some bright stuff like a crown sticking on a long stick, and he layed hold of me and shaked me nationly till I was wacken, and he whispered and said, 'You snore so loud, everybody's looking at you, and they can't hear a word of what the parson says.' So I rubbed my eyes, and tried all I could to keep wacken. I began to count one, two, and so on, but before I'd got to a hundred, I dropped off asleep. The beadleman came again, and shaked me harder than ever, but it was no use, I slept and snored again, in less nor a minute. Next time the fellow came (for I heard as the parson stopped in the middle of his sarment, and telled him to teck me out), so he came and laid hold of me, and pulled me right out o' th' church, while all the folks were staring at me. I could hev knocked the fellow head-over-heels, if I'd liked, but I thought it would look so, to fight before my aunt, and all the congregation, so I went quietly. Well you no, I waited till all the folks left, on purpose to see my aunt, and do you no when the old —— came out, and I went up to speak to her, and shake hands in a friendly way like, she turned round, and said I'd come there on purpose to disgrace her, and that if I didn't get off, she would call the constable and the beadles, and the devil knows what besides. So I set off home, and got nowt, and a day or two after she sent my wife sich a letter, I couldn't think anybody could be so vixenish on a sheet of paper. It was as bad as two fellows falling out in a tap-room, only there was no swearing, but she almost made it appear that 'black was the white of my eye.' And I should hev hed no dinner that day, if it hedn't been for a farmer as took me home, that I'd often fetched cattle from for butcher Hyde. An' he made me tell his wife and family all about what I'd come for, and they laughed fit to split their sides over dinner. The farmer was at church, and he said my snoring was as loud as if his old black bull had been bellowing. So you see we're niver likely to get a penny of fortune frae her, all becoss I went to sleep, and snored, when I couldn't help it."

The whole party laughed heartily at Ben's story, nor could he refrain from joining the merriment, and when he had done, he again

took up the ale 'tot,' and philosopher like, said "Well, may we niver meet we no worse misfortunes then that in this world. Gideon, my lad, here's success to your new rope-walk, we all my heart, and may you never want for a job, nor money to carry on we."

They had more ale, and more tobacco, and the sun had long gone down before they had separated, and many an incident after that day was marked as having happened about the time that they helped Gideon Giles to make his new rope-walk.

The next morning Ellen Giles arose, and like Rebecca of old, proceeded at an early hour to the village-well to fill her pitcher. It was a pleasing sight to behold that beautiful girl threading her way over the dewy-grass, now pausing to pull awild-rose from the hedge, or stooping down to gather a full-blown cowslip, forgetful of either Banes or the Baronet, for she only thought of the bright days which were now in store for her father, and of that comfort which was again dawning upon their humble cottage. She approached the spring, and bent her fine form to fill the water-jug, and when she again raised her eyes, she beheld Black Boswell, gazing fixedly at her, from behind the hedge. The deep dark eyes of the gipsy seemed to glow as he stood unmoved, and looking at her, and when he perceived that she returned his glance with a look of alarm, he said, "Be not afraid my bonny lass, I was just thinking I would be married again to morrow, if I could find a partner as handsome as you. What say you to bein' a gipsy's wife, eh Ellen! You need neither fear the Baronet, nor Banes, nor Beelzebub himself then. Is it to be a match," added he laughing. "Nay, you are too old," answered Ellen, her alarm vanishing, "else I know not what I might say to you. Only to think of me, becoming a step-mother to pretty Jael. How she would but laugh, when she called me mother." And the innocent and unsuspecting girl laughed outright at the thought.

"You are a great favourite with her already, Ellen," said the gipsy, "and she would sooner call you mother than any one I know. I am serious," added he, looking as if he meant what he said, "and will give your father an hundred pounds down to-day, if he will but give his consent. Answer me yes, or no, will you have me for your husband? I am rather old; but what of that, I may outlive many who are younger than me, and if I die soon, why then you will sooner become the wife of another. Will you have me? I like your looks."

"Ah! you're in a merry mood this morning," answered Ellen,

ELLEN GILES AT THE FOUNTAIN.

never dreaming for a moment that her swarthy wooer was in earnest. "Were I to say Yes, you would soon repent of your offer."

"The devil fly away with me, if I should," said Black Boswell; "only say the word, and I'll marry you to-day, and before the sun is an oak-tree higher purchase the license—I am serious, girl!" and he pulled out a well-filled purse as he spoke, and chinked the sovereigns in her ear.

"Nay then, if you are serious," replied Ellen, her colour now changing, "I will also be the same, and say No. And now I must begone, and have the kettle boiled for breakfast. If your courtship is as brief with all you meet," added she, raising her pitcher to depart, "you will have time to woo a score before sunset."

"Stay," said the gipsy, making an attempt to cross the hedge, as he spoke. But Ellen set off at a brisk walk, spilling the water from the jug at every step she took, for there was that in the looks of the gipsy which at last made her afraid. "Stay," continued he, raising his voice, then adding, "the girl is a fool! But I will speak with her father. She had better take my offer than fare worse. Hang the wench, she has haunted me these three days past; I must have her, and I will — she will fare far better with me than with that fool Banes. The Baronet has a wife, and a bonny woman too. What a fine neck and ankle the jade displayed! I never thought of

marrying again until this last day or two; I'll behave handsomely to the poor Roper, for I like the girl much." And with this soliloquy the gipsy departed, as deeply in love as he had ever before been with any one of his four previous wives.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH WE SAY A GOOD DEAL, BUT DO NOTHING, AND THEN END THE CHAPTER IN A "REGULAR BLOWING-UP."

The next day found Walter Northcot by the side of Amy Lee, and every hour he appeared to rise higher in the estimation of her father. The hall of Burton Woodhouse seemed to look as cheerful as it did in former days, and a smile once more sat upon the still beautiful, though care-marked countenance of Lady Lee. The evening was so fine, Lavinia proposed that they should take tea on the lawn, and the table and chairs were soon set out on the delicious greensward.

Had an artist looked on, he would have sketched that little tea-party, for a perfect picture of domestic happiness; and such it really looked, for no external sign seemed to indicate that any heart there had a care, or that any brain beat with other thoughts than such as dwelt upon what awakened the last smile, or again prepared to kindle the bright and merry train of happiness. True, a close observer might have marked the occasional silence; but then there was something in those evening sounds, which seemed to linger and float everywhere around, that one wished to listen to, and drink in for a few moments without interruption. And if eyes were observed occasionally to wander over that beautiful landscape, bathed in the richest hues of sunset, there was so much to look at that was new, such effects of light and shade to admire, that it was no marvel their gaze turned towards the scene.

It was a rich picture: that front of the old hall, grey with the footsteps of many years, with its bay-windows and heavy mullions, picturesque gables, twisted chimneys, and massy buttresses, which now caught the full glow of that softly mellowed light, and seemed as if rising out of a river of splendour—so bright and beautiful did the yellow rays float around, and gleam upon the green slope, making a misty sunshine, a waving rain of gold. Far around, the huge elms upheaved their lofty heads like ancient foresters, standing in their

tall green liveries, tufted and skirted with gold, while the winding avenues run like gloomy lines of dark braid, or shadowy folds, which seemed to throw further out the bright colours of the fanciful costume. The blackbird opened his golden bill, and trilled forth a sweet evening-song, which was answered by a hundred choristers from hill and valley, while the mournful ring-dove was heard at intervals filling up the pauses with her melancholy music. The rooks came sailing home, one after another, and their harsh cawing seemed softened amid the mingled sounds of evening, as they alighted with grave and knowing looks upon their old ancestral trees. The creaking wagon, and the jingling bells of the heavy horses, were heard afar off, as they moved slowly along the heavy sand-road beyond the wall of the park. Then came the song of the milkmaid, ringing from the bosom of a deep green valley, where the white kine had wandered for a change of pasture; she ceased when she ascended the slope and saw the group on the lawn, and returned blushing and abashed to the dairy—wondering whether they were pleased or angry at her song. The shepherd went whistling across a distant upland, followed by his dog. He became silent while the hall was in view, but the notes were again audible as soon as the next valley shut him from the sight. A dog barking in the distance, seemed neither harsh nor out of place amid the great anthem which nature raised; nor was the subdued rustling of the trees too low to be unheard; even the very motion of the grass seemed to convey a sound which softened the deep hum of the beetle, and the sharp low chithering of the grasshopper; for the conversation had ceased, and all were now silent, as if "communing with their own hearts."

And the same peaceful scene furnished matter for contemplation to every mind there present; for its beauty and tranquillity sank into every heart;—but, O how different the emotions it awakened! The Baronet looked over the lovely landscape, and felt as if it was no longer his own. He knew that he had gathered the forbidden fruit, and bartered his paradise for pleasures which end in misery, and he sat with his head resting on his hand, silent, thoughtful, and sad.

Walter Northcot gazed upon the same scene, and with similar feelings; for there seemed a resemblance between the beauty of the sunset and that of the landscape, and the former was just fading away as the shadows of evening lengthened around them.

And what were Amy's thoughts! She had had an interview with

her father; had owned her love for Walter; wept, and being clasped in the Baronet's arms, for he could not frame his tongue to tell her all his misery, her mind was then tranquil and lovely, as the landscape which her own gentle eyes at that moment overlooked. The morrow might rise in storm and cloud; she knew not, dreamed not, of that morrow; for her lover was beside her, high in favour with her father, and she felt happy. Poor dear Amy! she saw not the dark gulf which lay between her and happiness; that ruin which hung over the hall of her father, and which none but herself could turn away. She deemed not her fair form was the price that must be paid down to save her family from want and wretchedness.

Who would rest satisfied with the future, if he could look into it, and see all that he is doomed to undergo? The past is but the same picture clearly made out; and how few are satisfied with it. The very evils, which, if we could we should seek to avoid, are but the gross earth from which the good seed has sprung—reflection, repentance, and experience, the valued fruit it has produced—our amendment springs from evil—to grow better we must have been worse. Let us then keep on "mending:" speak of the past with more reverence, and all will be well.

And was Sir Edward Lee sorry for the past? he was, and resolved within himself that he would be better for the future. And good resolutions, if kept, seldom come too late; though he who trusts only to the "eleventh hour" acts not wisely.

That evening, Squire Bellwood had ridden over to the next village, and on his return he left his horse at the Blue Bell, entered the postern in the park-wall, and walked up to the front of the hall as the party we have described were seated on the lawn. Form and fashion are mighty, but meaningless, things; and if there was aught in the whole party arising from their seats, then sitting down again almost instantly—why, Squire Bellwood was welcome. Among those with whom we move, a man so disliked would have had the "cut direct;" but these things are managed differently in high society; whether the results in the end are better or not, with us remains a doubt. To tell a man of his faults, and then forgive him if he mends, is noble; but to talk about them behind his back, yet before his face to be all smiles and welcome, is deceitful and wrong; and to play thus false is the last thing we would forgive. Censure, reproof, unkindness, in any other shape, may be overlooked; but deceit is of

all things the most unpardonable. We would sooner shake hands with the man who, in his passion, struck us into the kennel.

Mr. Bellwood soon found that he was no welcome guest. He seized the hand of the Baronet, but the pressure was not returned. He took off his hat to Amy Lee; she said something, and turned away her head. He approached Lady Lee; and although she was not rude, there was a chilling frost in her civility. Of Walter Northcot he took no more notice than if he had been a dog. Lavinia only seemed as if she bore him no ill-will.

A chair was brought, and the Squire began to talk. Your persevering man always does so when he meets with a cold reception. A right-minded man either sits in injured silence, or takes up his hat and walks. What little we have seen of the world has been with wide-open eyes!

"Fine weather for the hay, Sir Edward!" began the Squire, who, on a former occasion left the care of crops to clowns; but he, good man, knew not what else to say. "The marshes promise well this summer; the hill-crops appear somewhat thinner, but I suppose that is owing to a want of rain."

"We have not had much rain of late," answered the Baronet coldly.

Mr. Bellwood gave a loud "hem," and again proceeded; for he felt one thing, which but few people can avoid feeling under such circumstances, and that was devilish uncomfortable.

"You smile," proceeded he, turning to Lavinia; "but when a man thinks about changing his situation, a many things strike him that he never before took note of, and even such despised matters as hay, corn, and trees, become a consideration to one who has them." He looked towards Walter Northcot. "But I'm afraid I shall not be in this mood long."

"Until partridge-shooting comes in, perhaps," said Lavinia, laughing, "but no, I forgot, there are two or three races between. Are you fond of flowers?"

"Like to see them very well," answered the Squire, "but am at a loss to know of what use they are. The same with many birds which are reckoned sweet singers, and make but a sorry pudding; we might do without them."

"That's very true," answered the light-hearted girl; "but here is one coming who could teach you a different doctrine."

It was Jael, the beautiful gipsy-girl. There was a free footpath across, what was called, the Park.

"The good-evening to you, fair ladies, and bonny gentlemen!" said Jael, dropping a curtsy; "and may you never have more sorrow than now."

"You read like the world, by appearances," answered Lady Lee, to whom the gipsy was no stranger; "and you one day said that sorrow was not for the eye, but the heart. I have often thought of your saying, Jael!"

"You are kind, lady, to bear me in memory," replied the handsome gipsy; "but you were ever so."

"No one can forget you my pretty queen of the greenwood," said the Squire, who was not insensible to Jael's beauty; "for my part, I dream of you."

"I did ever think you had other thoughts than your prayers," answered Jael. "Mr. Northcot, I have cast your planet since I saw you last, and can now tell you your fortune."

"Ay, can you so?" replied Walter, smiling, "but remember, Jael, I am no believer in your gipsy lore, and shall set but little store by your predictions."

"Nay, first hearken to her," said Amy. "You will pardon him, if he does not believe all you say, Jael, men are more suspicious than women. Come, you shall tell me my fortune after," added she, skipping like a fawn across the green, and fetching her little silk bag, from which she took out half-a-crown and gave it to the gipsy.

"I will tell him that which his own heart shall feel to be true," answered the gipsy; "but it must be in his own hearing alone that I utter my secrets. Walter, follow me!"

The colour of the young man deepened, for there was that in the countenance of Jael which told at once that her business was serious, and shame alone prevented him from following her. "Some other time will do," answered he, "not now, Jael."

"You refuse to hear me, then," said the gipsy, her beautiful eyes flashing angrily upon him; "I have walked from the camp to meet with you."

"Come," said Amy, rising, and seizing Walter's arm, "you must accompany her, or I will go and learn all your secrets."

"We will drag him before his oracle," exclaimed Lavinia, springing up with her face all smiles; "only point out in what dark grove thou wilt utter thy prophecy," added she, turning to Jael, "and we will force him there whether he will or not."

"Anywhere beyond the hearing of Bellwood," whispered the

gipsy; and, pressing her finger on her lip, she looked at Walter, then added, when she had drawn him a few paces forward, "I would be thy friend, follow me!"

The young man obeyed, while Amy stood leaning upon her sister's arm, pale as death. Lady Lee had by this time entered the hall, and the Baronet and Bellwood were left together.

"Have you thought over the conversation we had a few days ago respecting yonder fellow?" said Bellwood, pointing with his whip towards Walter Northcot.

"I have thought that while he conducts himself with propriety," answered the Baronet, "I neither can nor will close my doors against him. I have told you, sir, that Colonel Northcot was one of my oldest friends; his son is a favourite with my family, and, I must add, with myself; and, whilst he is here, he will receive the kindest treatment. I believe he dined with your father to-day!"

"He did, curse him for it," replied the Squire; "and when he had gone I had to sit down and listen to a long lecture—to be told that Mr. Northcot was this and that, and how I ought to copy him in this thing and the other, as if a man born with a fortune ought to strive to make himself as agreeable as a pennyless beggar, who has no chance of getting through the world, but by making himself most particularly amiable. I think if he was to come a few more times, the old man would make him his heir. But I will stop his career," added he in a deep voice. "I hate the fellow; he is carrying away all the good opinions of the neighbourhood; wherever I go, my ears are dinned with his name. By-the-by, when do you propose this marriage between myself and Miss Lee to come off? I am weary of this delay, and have been in scent so long, that it is time either to run down the game or give up the chase."

"There was no particular time specified," said the Baronet, "and until you have made further progress in my daughter's favour, it must still be postponed; I will deal plainly with you, you seem to look upon her as a merchant does a bale of goods which he has put his mark on, and leaves in the warehouse until it suits his own convenience to fetch it, neither thinking nor caring what becomes of it until that time. You have taken no pains to please her."

"Whew! has it come to this?" said the Squire, giving a long whistle. "The fact is, I seemed going on all right until Northcot came, with his poetry and his soft voice, and his clothes made as if they were stitched on him. While he's here I've no chance, that I

see plainly, and I think you act unfairly towards me in countenancing him."

"Enough of this," answered Sir Edward, rising impatiently. "I cannot be dictated to, sir, and told who shall and who shall not be my guests." He arose and ascended the hall steps without bidding the Squire good night.

"It shall be done, by heaven!" said Bellwood; "they had better trifle with the horned devil than with me. They shall find that they have crossed the track of a tiger." He struck the top of his boot with his whip as he walked away, and amused himself with a swearing *solo* all the way home.

Walter Northcot returned from his interview with Jael with a knit brow, and a look of stern determination. He had the appearance of a man who is prepared to meet any danger without shrinking. But the cloud left his forehead after supper, and at the request of the Baronet he sat down to the harp and sung the following verses.

SONG.

On a sweet flowery island the god of sleep lies,
Till the blue-mantled twilight drops down from the skies;
Then, laden with visions, he steals from above,
He hastes silently on to the chambers of love,
And singing to fancy a dreamy-toned tune,
On the eyelids of beauty drops roses of June.

From the lips breathing honey when tender words steal,
How he smiles at the thoughts those soft accents reveal;
As they tremble at kisses where lip never clung,
Nor aught breathed but sweet words loth to leave such a tongue:
Why young cheeks blushed by daylight he hears those lips tell,
And why heaved those sighs from the heart he knows well.

O'er the dew-mantled hills when first rises the sun,
Until love-breathing twilight his watchings are done;
To his sweet flowery isle he then hurries away,
Where silver-arched streams to their own murmurs play;
And stretched out on roses, and mantled with light,
Dreams over those dreams which he steals in the night.

Gideon purchased his little stock of hemp, and got to work in his garden, and no chance seemed to offer for either Banes or Boswell to put their plans into operation against his daughter. The village of Burton Woodhouse seemed to have sunk into its former tranquillity, until one morning Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Giles (now both wives of master-ropers) chanced to meet together at the pump. They

The Quarrel at the pump.

had never any particular love for each other, and since Gideon Giles had started in opposition to Mr. Brown, the breach had widened between their wives.

Mrs. Brown had half filled a large earthen jug, and, in emptying, or rinsing it, she, either purposely or by accident, filled Mrs. Giles's shoes, while the latter was standing by waiting to fill her pail.

"What do you mean by wetting my feet?" said Mrs. Giles, looking as fierce as a fury. "I would thank you to keep your dirty water to yourself another time, or I'll throw a pailful over you, that I will."

"You dare to threaten me—a poor stuck-up journeyman's wife, like you!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, planting her hands in her fat sides, and looking like a red sunset in a fog. "It would look better of you to go home and mend your rags, or go out a hay-making and help your husband to pay off that money he's borrowed to begin we', you low-bred, inedicated nuisance. I feel I'm degrading mysen to speak to you."

"My rags, you wretch!" said Mrs. Giles, with difficulty keeping her hands from her neighbour's cheeks. "My rags are paid for, and that's more than your fine fal-the-rals are. How many Mondays have you gone out into the fields, and locked your door, when you knew the draper would call for his weekly shilling for the last two gowns you had, you stuck-up, proud madam, you! Your husband's father worked journeywork with my husband's father many a year, when your mother was receiving pay from the parish, and mine was living lady's-maid in a family of quality—you good-for-nowt, bad woman, you!"

"Oh, you scandalising, wretched woman!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, uplifting her hands, and appealing to the crowd (which had by this time assembled), as if she was shocked at such language. "Me pay a shilling a week for my gowns! Why, I only took a piece or two to oblige the young man, and not becoss I wanted 'em—I've got four gowns at home now, that I've never hed on my back, and that's more than all your family could muster, and your fine daughter to boot; although we know well enough who bought her that purple moreen as she had on at the feast. As to my mother receiving relief, why, she paid eighteen-pence a-year poor-rates, and helped to keep such vermin as you, she did!"

"Call me vermin again, at your apparel," said Mrs. Giles, leaving loose of the pump-handle before she had filled her pail; "and I'll give you such a drenching as you've never hed for many a year.

You fairly stink of pride, that you do. The very day you got your bed-curtains up, you had all the neighbours in to look at 'em, and you told 'em they'd cost the Lord knows how much, when you knew you bought them second-hand at Gainsbro' for two-and-sixpence; and your fine mahogany chairs, as you call 'em, are only stained; the man offered our Gideon half-a-dozen, a good deal better than yours, for eighteen shillings."

"Well now, did you ever hear the like?" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, turning all ways for a look of sympathy. "Why, we had James the joiner in to look at those very chairs, and he declared they was the exact colour of real mahogany. Oh! you story-telling, bad-designing woman! I shall be forced to swear my life against you. Your husband 'll go to rack and ruin in a few weeks. Then you'll come and eat humble pie, and beg and pray for my Mester to take him on again as journeyman; but only darken my doors, if you dare, and I'll send you out with a flea in your ear."

"I should be sorry to put my nose inside your house," said Mrs. Giles. "It smells, for all the world, like a pigsty; one might set potatoes on the floor; and Miss Lee herself said the other day that our house was as clean as a new pin, and I took her up stairs, and shewed her my beds and every thing. I don't go flaunting out we' fine flounces, and tuckers and puckers, and fly-be-sky caps on my head, like a Tom-o'-Bedlam, and cause everybody to make their remarks on me. I stay at home and keep my house clean, and myself clean, and my husband clean. Even your husband's admired the colour of my husband's shirt, when he's gone to work on a Monday morning, and said he was fairly ashamed of sich washing as yours."

"I'm only leting mysen down to talk to you," said Mrs. Brown, taking up her jug of water and departing, amid the laughter of the crowd, for she was rather noted for being very dirty in her household affairs, although she dressed "rather smart;" while Mrs. Giles was talked of far and wide for being remarkably clean, and her cottage, on that account, had often been compared to a palace. So terminated this outbreak at the village-pump; and everybody said Mrs. Giles had the best of it, though there were two or three invited to tea at Mrs. Brown's that day, and they said she could talk the other into fits. Ben Brust was a looker-on, but he said nothing.

CHAPTER XXII.

SQUIRE BELLWOOD AND BLACK BOSWELL AT LAST DECIDE UPON A PLAN FOR THE REMOVAL OF WALTER NORTHCOT—A SPECIMEN OF THE MINERVA SCHOOL OF WRITING—ON LITTLE CHILDREN.

It is a difficult matter to kidnap one of her Majesty's subjects in the present day, and so Squire Bellwood found it, for in spite of all his plans Walter Northcot still wandered over hill and valley as free and fearless as ever, and the Squire began at last to have his doubts whether or not Black Boswell was making an ass of him. His suspicion was first awakened by Jael calling his rival aside; and while these thoughts were uppermost in his mind, he met Black Boswell near his father's, and questioned him respecting her being in the secret—the gipsy knit his brows and said "No;" then, assuming one of his sternest looks, added, "If she was, and I found out that she had betrayed us, although she is my own child, she should n't live another hour."

"I have thought over your proposition," said Bellwood, "and as you say one part of the world is as good as another to you, I care not if you remove till the storm blows over, only keep him safe while I marry the girl. I shall be heir one of these days, and must try my luck again amongst some of these money-lending scoundrels, the old man cannot live much longer. Will you carry him off to-night? I have no chance while he is about, and beside my fine lady."

"A day or two can't make much difference," said the gipsy, "and I would sooner wait until I heard from a part of our tribe who are in the far north. You know, Squire, I must have a sure shelter in case I should have to fly. But we 've got another move in case we shouldn't succeed in getting clear off with this Walter, or whatever you call him, not that I want to shirk from my bargain mind you, devil a bit. It was Banes that first hit upon the scheme I 'm about to propose."

"What is it," inquired the Squire, "anything that will remove him from the side of Miss Lee? no matter what it is, we will do it."

"It will do more than that," answered Black Boswell, "and keep

him safe within four stone walls, until the next assizes at all events. You have a good deal of power over that woman up yonder at Banes's house, have you not?"

"I believe the silly jade has a liking for me," replied Bellwood, "though to tell the truth, I but treated her so and so. But she must have had more sense from the first than to think that I could ever marry her, however, I was the first in her favour, and she'll never forget it; I dare say a few silly words after the old fashion might go a good way with her. What do you purpose?"

"Why we were thinking that as this rival of yours often walks by the wood-side," said the gipsy, "it wouldn't be a bad place to let the woman meet him, get into a chat, and so on, then get her to sing out as if the devil had jumped upon her back. We could be ready you know and swear what we liked, anything to get him out of the road."

"It's a bold plan, but will never answer," said Bellwood, shaking his head and musing for several moments; "fallen as she is, the woman has some tolerable correct notions about what is right, and they took a good deal of undermining. No, she would never be persuaded to that I'm afraid; I dare not propose it to her."

"Stop a bit," replied the gipsy, "there's more ways than one to kill a dog. Watch your time when this young fellow walks that way, then let Banes send her out, so that they may meet by the wood-side. Some of us plant ourselves behind the hedge, just make a motion to catch her eye, then point a pistol at her: if that won't make her scream why the devil's in it. Twenty to one she drops, then carry her off, and pounce on my gentleman, and swear murder, robbery, rape, or what you like against him."

"But you forget the woman must swear all this herself," said Bellwood, "and my old father's too cunning a dog not to smell a rat, especially when this cursed fellow's such a favourite with him."

"Woman's too ill to appear," answered the gipsy readily, "any poor fellow dressed as a doctor will swear that for a ten-pound note without seeing her. And there are other justices besides your father; there's what's his name that you hunt with, and as to the constables they'll do whatever you wish them, only hint that you'll remember them some day, they don't look like men too particular."

"Well, we can but try," said Bellwood, "though I've no hope of getting any help from the woman on such a matter, and as to Banes, I believe she hates him. It's a bold plan Boswell," added the

Squire, again musing, "and if it could be carried through would beat the other, it would blast his character with the family of the Baronet."

"Never fear but we'll manage it somehow," continued Black Boswell; "I'll kiss the book ten oaths deep if that will be of any use. I've lived too long to be afraid of calf-skin; and now make yourself easy until to-morrow, but remember you must be in it, just to make the law part of the business look respectable like."

"Don't fear me," answered Bellwood, "yonder girl is a prize that I would risk soul and body for, though I believe she cares not a straw for me—as for him, I hate him as a thief does the gallows."

"A thief likes the gallows well enough at a distance," said Boswell, "he's sooner afraid of it than aught else. But you'll be up at the Grange to-morrow. I'll be bound Master Walter will be somewhere about moping, with a book in his hand."

"I'll not fail you," replied Bellwood, and they separated.

This conversation took place beside the fir-plantation that skirted the orchard of the worthy old Justice, and on the same day that the gipsy offered himself to Ellen Giles. Not that he was in love with the girl, but he thought her very pretty, and knowing that she was poor, concluded there could be no harm in trying; for he remembered that but a few years before, one of his own tribe had succeeded in marrying the daughter of a clergyman,* but he forgot that his brother gipsy was a fine, tall, handsome young fellow. "This Squire is a coward," thought the gipsy to himself, as he walked towards his camp in the distant wood; "a man with any pluck in him would pick a quarrel with the other chap, and have a pop at him with a pistol. Something of that sort would make the young lady think about him. Women like to see a man with a dash of the dare-devil about him. I've seen the time when I've fought half-a-dozen battles in a week about a girl. But he's like a king, he bounces the blunt, and saves his own bones; and it's a safe plan after all, a man may go to bed and leave others to fight for him, and get up next morning and either pay the doctor's or the undertaker's bill, just as the've settled it."

That day Ellen Giles walked in the park of Burton Woodhouse with her little brother, there was a footpath through the enclosure,

* This is a fact well-known in the neighbourhood where the scene of our story is placed, and after a time the gipsy-husband settled down to business, in Leicester. Of late they have frequently married out of their tribe.

which was free to all. The fresh air seemed to revive the child, and it smiled when Ellen placed a wild-flower in its thin, pale hand. Poor Ellen! she herself was somewhat paler through having watched it throughout a long illness, for she had often sat up until nearly sunrise, rocking it in the very chair in which she had been nursed by her mother, her rocking motion had many a night been as incessant as the ticking of the clock, only varying because it was slower, and only broken when she paused at regular intervals to give the child its medicine. Then she stilled its feeble cries by again rocking it in the old ricketty chair. Sometimes she had chanted a low sweet air to soothe it to sleep, a plaintive song of love and sorrow, which she sung with a low voice, saddened by the remembrance of her own and her father's troubles. The long ghastly rushlight was the only witness of her beauty and her unhappiness. She loved the child with all but a mother's love, it seemed to rest more tranquil on her own innocent bosom than in its mother's; she loved it so, that in the still night she had often kissed its fevered lips, and wished it was her own. She loved to feel its little breath warm on her cheek, and she shed many a tear when there was no eye but its own uplifted to her sweet countenance, and when she feared that it might die. Oh, what a well of love and kindness is the heart of a woman, a depth sleeping too purely to reflect aught less sinless than an angel's smile!

Are there any amongst our readers (which though now numerous we know not who they are), are there any amongst them who dearly love little children? We believe there are many; to such if they were beside us now, we would draw our chair nearer, and taking hold of their hands, talk to them; we would forget our story and talk to them in a low voice; we would call them friends, for, even if they were men, a man can feel at times, ay, when the tear hangs like the pearls of heaven on a woman's cheek, and his own is hot, pale, and dry.

We love little children, those whose fair hair the gentle breeze uplifts, when they run out in the sunshine; whose little voices come like a gush of music through the house, and draw back the mind when it is carried away by some stormy and imaginative passion, making us think of home and tender thoughts—creating feelings sweet, yet sorrowful, glimpses of heaven seen through the grave.

We love to see them asleep or awake; asleep when their gentle breath upheaves some drooping lock of silky hair, and their rounded

cheeks sink like setting marble into the yielding whiteness of the pillow; when their little forms, coveting no more covering than a bird, nestle down like wearied cherubims who have come with gentle tidings from heaven, words of peace and good-will, but are wearied through soliciting money-loving men to listen. We love to enfold them in our arms and sleep, like guilt covering itself with the folds of innocence, "for we are sinners all." To clasp them, and think that neither care, nor ambition, nor sin, in word or deed, has approached those little shrines; that they would stand before the King of Heaven without a blush, and meet the searching glance of ranged angels unabashed, "for of such are the kingdom of heaven." Such lips are fit for the spotless dawn of a new day to break upon; to give back the sinless smile of light,—they stain not the unsullied mirror of heaven. A few more years, and either the worm or the world—reader! shall we drop this maudlin sentiment, and set out in the next chapter laughing at ourselves? No, we will play the fool once more; censure or praise may bump down the scale, each in its turn; they are the elements of existence, fortune's representatives here below—the green leaves, the killing frost, the summer and winter of the world. To-day, we sit on the throne, with sceptre or diadem; to-morrow, our dignity is in pawn, and with a low bow we offer the new-comer our ticket; for reputation is but a beggarly pledge—fame the interest, and time the redeemer, who sometimes comes from the grave just as the pen is filled and the ink about to drop, that blots out all remembrance for ever,—but breaks not the rest of the sleeper.

Come and sit beside us,—we will tell our tale hereafter—it is an English meadow, knee deep in grass, a rich mantle of itself, yet garnished with the pearl and braid of a thousand flowers. The sun shines, the birds sing, and the voices of little children come laughing up between; sunbeams that twine around us; living summers, that shine and gladden our winter hearth. We once shone as bright, and looked as happy, but we are setting now, like Hyperion stretched among the forlorn Titans.

But see, that dear little fellow has come to throw down his flowers at our feet; his cheek is hectic, a flush that outburns the summer's brown; there is a cloud in the beautiful blue of his eye; the sky is lowering, let us hasten home. Hush! the scene is changed; the laughter, the sunlight, and the flowers, are now a still room, the curtains down, and no sound but muffled feet pressing the

thick carpets, broken only by a short quick breathing. Death sits beside us, hand in hand; we are friends, and he forbears to strike; he listens and he watches with us; his emissaries may be at work, we know not; he is with us only; we are reconciled to him; he is no longer hideous. Death is a fair child; the big fleshless monster looks lovely while he sleeps; he lives, he breathes; oh! how quick; no, he is no longer hideous—flowers, and a little green grave; twilight and the stars, and gentle thoughts; grief rocking him, with her hair loose, her ringlets neglected, and her lips sealed with mournful love, smothering him with sighs and fond melancholy; the heart mad, but the brain clear; for so is death loved; we will think of him often, if he will not die now. And that is a child we love; a little thing that 'hovers between two worlds;' a 'pickaxe and a spade,' and where is our love? 'gone, for ever gone!' And can it be that we shall still live, and never more hear those little feet come paddling up stairs, nor feel our heart bound when that tiny hand tries in vain to open the door; never more feel that little cheek warm upon our knee, nor burying our fingers in that soft hair; look at those blue eyes, and feel that we are men, men who can struggle and endure, and battle with, and rend our way through the granite of the hard world. Hard stems, burnt with the sun, and blackened by the wind; living on through the ice and sleet that is scattered around us, keeping a tenacious hold of the 'earth earthy;' and looking up to the tender buds that we nourish, the green living things that the world would nip off and trample upon, and refuse to support, unless we fed them with our own blood. How hard life looks left to itself. Let night drop her black curtain and leave the tender plant to the gentle and unseen dews; let the warm sun beat thereon while we sleep. Our palette is covered with gloomy colours; we are painting in the dark; grim Dante and solemn Milton were with us until nearly midnight; the fallen angels and hell have thrown their shadows over Beatrice and heaven!"

And Ellen Giles wandered, amid those beautiful scenes, ever attentive to the child, now setting it down to walk, where the green-sward was smooth, and again taking it in her arms, whenever the ground was rough or hilly.

Ellen looked paler than usual—the robust glow of health which mantled her cheek was toned down into a pearly flush; the warm hue of the rose, delicate yet beautiful. She had thought much of late, and her eyes seemed to have become more solemn, larger,

and brighter; they wandered not after every bird or bee that flew past. She looked more staid; all that was girlish in her when she was a servant to the Baronet, seemed as if it had gone; and she moved in that repose and beauty which marks the imposing loveliness of woman. She had never before looked as she then did; those who saw her would have pitied the Baronet, and half forgiven him for loving a being so beautiful; she was like that fair one which an old poet has so happily portrayed:

> "Her cheeks so rare a white was on
> No daisy makes comparison,
> Who sees them is undone.
> For streaks of red were mingled there,
> Such as are on a Katharine pear,
> The side that's next the sun.
>
> "Her lips were red, and one was thin
> Compared to that was next her chin.
> Some bee had stung it newly.
> But O her eyes so guard her face,
> You durst no more upon them gaze
> Than on the sun in July.
>
> "Her mouth's so small, when she does speak,
> Thou'dst swear her teeth her words did break,
> That they might passage get."
>
> *Sir John Suckling's "Ballad upon a Wedding."*

She wandered on, thinking of many things; of the kindness of the worthy host, the attentiveness of Amy Lee, and how noble it was of Walter Northcot to take her poor father's part: then she sighed heavily; she knew that she had thought too much about Walter of late; she tried to forget him, but it was useless. She recalled all he had said to her as they walked home together from Justice Bellwood's; no one had ever spoken so kindly to her before; she wished he was something akin to her, a brother, or any thing. Everybody liked Walter Northcot; and if she was ever married—but she thought she never should—yet, if she was, she should like just such a husband as himself.

As these thoughts gathered upon her, she struck deeper into the wooded solitudes of the park, until at length she came to the very spot where her father had so boldly confronted Sir Edward Lee. There was a rural seat opposite to the old fountain; she approached it, and

sat down; and the child fell asleep on her knee. There was something strangely in unison with Ellen's feeling in the melancholy falling of the water: she felt that it was just the spot to sit down in, and look over the secrets which were locked in her own heart. She wished Walter was with her, and talking as kindly, in his rich mellow voice, as he did to her when they walked home together: she had never heard a voice like his. Then the image of Amy Lee rose before her, the kind, the beautiful young lady; she who had been so attentive to their wants. She felt her cheek burn, and she was glad that no eye was then looking upon her; that no one could see the thoughts which she felt imprinted on her countenance. She raised her large lustrous eyes to look around—and beheld Sir Edward Lee standing beside the blasted oak, and gazing upon her in silence. The Baronet spoke not, when he saw that he was discovered, but, sighing deeply, struck up the gloomy avenue to his left, and departed. Ellen Giles hastened home, for the first time in her life, with a feeling of pity, and even kindness, for Sir Edward Lee; for she thought that all who loved ought to be pitied; but she never had such thoughts until that hour when she first hung on the arm of Walter Northcot.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN WHICH WE AGAIN VISIT THE RESIDENCE OF THE GAMEKEEPER—DESCRIBE A MAD LOVE SCENE, AND AN ATTACK ON WALTER NORTHCOT—WHAT BEN BRUST DID; AND HOW HE GOT A SOVEREIGN, AND DECIDED UPON HAVING A PARTY, AND GIVING A GENTEEL DINNER.

SHIFTING our scene once more to the residence of the gamekeeper, we must now take a glance at the position of affairs in that establishment. There had been fewer quarrels of late between Banes and the unfortunate woman who resided with him: if he spoke to her, or made any inquiries about the business of the house, she replied in brief answers, uttering not a word more than was necessary: if he had no inquiries to make, she opened not her lips. Sometimes a whole day passed and she spoke not a word, but went about her household affairs in deep and sullen silence, for she had long ago ceased to reply to any of his ill-natured remarks; to all appearance she now conducted herself in every way like a common servant,

doing whatever she thought was necessary, and attending to all his commands, as a wooden figure answers to the strings or screws of its mover. She had long hated the keeper; and although her course of escape had for days been free, she now seemed careless about it—a great and fearful change had taken place in her. When her work was done she walked out upon the heath, or spent her leisure time in lonely wanderings through the wood, where she would sometimes seat herself at the foot of a tree, and fixing her eyes on the green moss, remain in that position for hours. A low melancholy had crept over the woman, and would have eaten into her heart and soon destroyed her—for she moaned inwardly for her lost child—had not this desponding feeling been counteracted by thoughts of cherished vengeance, fits of bitter hatred, and the anticipated hour of triumph, which at times made her laugh aloud to herself in those gloomy solitudes; then folding her hands together, she would again sway herself to and fro, and sink into her former state of stupor. Her mind wandered at times she knew not where; the past and the present seemed ever before her, and she lost sight of the landmarks that divided them. Banes and Bellwood, and her child, seemed to move about the home of her fathers; there was no part in which they seemed not to have partaken: if she looked down into the golden cup from which she had drank her draughts of pleasure, she saw their images at the bottom. In her hatred only did she seem unchanged; the deep channel which her passions had worn and wasted, seemed ever the same—dark, direct, and awful. She had often lain awake for hours in the night, hesitating whether or not she should get up and murder Banes: her's was a moody, silent kind of insanity, broken only by those lucid intervals when she called up the image of her child, or laid dark schemes for the overthrow of Banes and Bellwood; she seemed only sane when she meditated the deepest mischief. She had often passed Walter Northcot by the wood-side, and among the wild paths that wound through the jagged furze of the heath, where he loved to saunter in a morning with a book in his hand, sometimes perusing a page, then pausing to look over the wide, rude solitude, which seemed to bear traces of no fostering care, saving the rugged hand of nature. Walter had turned to look after the poor woman many a time,—had smiled when he met her, and bade her "good morning" in such kind tones as had fallen upon her ear in former years, and she had also replied to him, but it seemed as if she only talked to herself; so they had passed each other many

times without stopping. She was indeed strangely altered since the night she attempted to escape. Ben Brust had often met her, and entered into conversation with her, but latterly he had gone away with a conviction that—to use his own words—"She was mad as a March hare."

"She goes moping about," said Ben, speaking of her to Gideon Giles one morning, as the Roper was at work in his little rope-walk, "moping and talking to hersen, and throwing her arms about, and then again laughing, till it's really shocking sometimes to see her. Only th' t'other day I was in the wood, getting a little agrimony and wood-betony—'cos you see I meck a few shillings in a summer wi' cutting a bundle of herbs now and then; and it's a kind of work that suits me like, 'cos when I'm tired I can throw mysen down under a tree and hev a nap, and there's nobody likely to come there to disturb one. Getting herbs and looking for bird's-nests is what I call pretty employment. Well, as I was saying, she comes up and helps me, and when she'd gotten a decent handful of agrimony, she says, 'Come here, Ben, and I'll shew you where they've buried my bairn (child).' 'Stuff,' says I, 'you aint right;' but she laid hold of my hand and pulled me so, poor thing, I thought I would humour her like, and she took me to a part of the wood where there was two or three ant-hills together, covered with wild thyme—that didn't look much unlike a babby's grave—and she pointed to it, then pressed her lips, as if to say, don't speak; and really, Gideon, it quite touched my feelings, and I couldn't find in my heart to say, 'Why, you mad fool, those are old ant-hills,' no I couldn't for the world; so I shook my head, and said nowt; then went back, and got on wi' cutting my herbs. She's mad as a March hare."

Such was the state of poor Mary Sanderson's mind at the time we again bring her before our readers.

The morning following the events which we recorded in our last chapter, saw Black Boswell at the breakfast table of Banes the keeper; if we may so call a meal which consisted of cold ham and bread, and strong ale, for the gipsy turned up his lip at the mention of tea, nor was the keeper a man who had much affection for the aforesaid beverage. Mad Mary, as Banes called her when in his best mood, set out the table for them, and replenished the ale-jug whenever it was needed. After a time Bellwood came, and all seemed ripe for business.

Until the arrival of Bellwood, the poor woman seemed to go about

her household matters as perfectly collected as if nothing was wrong with her, but he no sooner crossed the threshold, than her mind began to wander. She took away the cold ham when she was bid, but instead of placing it on the shelf, over the cellar entrance, she only removed it to the opposite table; and when she was again ordered to take the jug, she went out at the back door and filled it with water, then reached the brandy decanter from the cupboard.

"Not a bad move," said the gipsy. Banes looked at her, but spoke not.

Bellwood planted himself before a window which commanded a view of the wood-side, a portion of the heath, and the entrance of the lane which led down to the village; and after standing some time in silence, he said, "quick, now's your time." Banes looked at the woman, and pointing to the door, made a sign that he wished her to be gone; and, without replying, she took her bonnet from behind the door and left the house, muttering something that was inaudible as she passed the window. She paused at the corner of the house, as if hesitating whether or not to cross the broad heath, and stepping a yard or two in that direction, she seemed suddenly to change her mind, and walked along the rugged footpath beside the wood.

"All right," said Banes, who watched her motions with deep anxiety; "follow her, Squire; we will into the wood. Quick! you black devil," added he, addressing the gipsy, "and let us out at the back here. Yonder my gentleman comes."

"Hey, hey," said Boswell, gulping down his brandy, "I'm ready;" and he followed Banes through the back door, and over the stile which led into the wood. After a few moments Squire Bellwood went out at the front door, and struck more into the open heath, though still keeping in the same direction as that which the woman had taken. She walked along slowly, with her hands crossed before her, and her head drooping like one in deep trouble, but without once looking back.

It might be a glimpse of Walter Northcot which she caught in the distance that induced her to take the course she did—some remembrance of his kind smile and his gentle manner of accosting her; and Banes had calculated on this, for he had heard her drop words, when talking to herself, "of the handsome gentleman that was in love with her, and met her by the wood-side;" but whatever it might be, all promised fairly to turn out as they had planned it. Had she struck

into the middle of the heath, they could have done but little, unless they attacked Walter openly, and without a shadow of excuse.

The wood was of considerable length; the path beside it seldom traversed, unless by those who had some business at the keeper's house; for although, as we have before stated, it was a nearer way to Torksey, still, by striking across the heath from the corner of the lane, the dead elbow was saved, though at the risk of the traveller having his legs pierced by the thousands of armed furze bushes which hung over, and seemed to dispute every foot of the narrow pathway.

The walk beside the wood, and far beyond the gamekeeper's residence, was one of great beauty, especially in the hot summer season, when the huge over-hanging trees cast their broad cool shadows far over the footpath, and afforded a sweet shelter to the wild hedge and the rich variety of flowers that adorned the sloping bank. The hedge itself was a grand mixture of all that is wild and beautiful in so small a compass, intermixed as it was with old hawthorn and creeping woodbine, and wreathed with the deep white cups of the convolvulus, and all its rich garlandry of leaves, while the long bramble drooped in arches here and there over the bank, hanging across the fan-like leaves of the broad fern, and engirding the comby head of the teasle, which shot up above the clustering mallows, the tall betony, and many-belled foxglove. It was just such a spot as a poet would select for his morning's walk, surrounded as it was with all green and lovely things, and made merry or solemn by the sounds which filled the air—music that the heart beats to, in either sweet or sad unison, having over itself no control, but still feeling it suited to every mood of mind; for with us nature holds a strange mysterious fellowship.

Here then walked Walter Northcot, perusing that grand Miltonic-like fragment, the mighty "Hyperion" of John Keats; a fragment that stands up in these days, like the ruins of a vast temple, on the floor of which is imprinted Titanic foot-marks, traces of great gods that have passed away, "along the margin-sand," whose "old right hands lay nerveless, listless, dead,

Unsceptred, and whose realmless eyes are closed."

He had just read the following lines, where the Titans are described as

"One here, one there,
Lay vast and edgeways; like a dismal cirque

> Of Druid stones upon a forlorn moor,
> When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
> In dull November, and their chancel vault,
> The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night."

and was wondering to himself whether there was any image, in any language, that conveyed such an idea of desolate grandeur: until he had become the only traveller on that "forlorn moor," in a dull November night, and had sheltered himself beneath that dismal circle of Druid stones, listening to the wind, and shrinking from the chill rain which blinded the very sky, when he was startled by a loud scream, and saw a woman fall, as if dead, to the earth, within ten paces of where he stood. So engrossed had Walter been in the subject we have described, he had not even seen the woman approach, but had walked forward with his eyes fixed on the ground, and filled, like his mind, with the grand forlornness of the poem; while the whole scene of the silent moor, with its rugged and roofless temple of rocky pillars, half seen through the gloom of evening, and sounding hollow as it echoed the weary, weary, falling of the rain, was all that he felt, saw, or thought of. But when he raised his eyes from the ground, startled by a sound which seemed as if shrieked in his ear, and saw the woman fall suddenly upon the pathway, he sprang forth in an instant to her aid, and raising her gently, supported her in his arms, uttering such expressions of tenderness and pity, as any man, taken by surprise, and seeing a poor helpless woman in such a situation would almost unconsciously utter, to assure her that she was safe, as he endeavoured to recal her back to her former calmness.

The plot had hitherto succeeded even beyond the expectations of its planners; for so enwrapt was the young man in his study, that he never heard the crashing of the branches when the gipsy thrust his arm and a portion of his body through the hedge, and held the pistol within a yard of the woman's face; and when Walter did look, nothing was visible but the woman, in the act of falling, covering her face with her hands, as if to avoid looking upon the awful death she was about to undergo. Boswell and Banes stood silent, as two deer-stalkers when the chase is within shot. They even drew their breath with clenched teeth, as they waited a moment or two to watch the results, which, by some strange freak of the poor lunatic's, took a most unfavourable turn for Walter.

The woman no sooner found herself safe, and leaning on the young man's bosom, than she threw her arms around his neck and kissed

him, talking in her wildest manner, and saying, "I knew you would come and take me away, and marry me; they said I should never have a husband, and threatened to shoot me if I met you again; but you'll take me to church, and marry me now, will you not Walter, my own sweet Walter? I never loved Bellwood after I first saw you; we'll have a gay wedding, won't we?"

"Yes, yes," answered Walter, "whatever you like,—now do go home, my dear woman. Come, take my arm, I will walk with you to the door."

"Never! never!" answered the poor maniac. "I will never leave you again;" and she hugged him more closely in her arms.

Just at that instant the gipsy and Banes sprang over the hedge, from out the wood.

"Pretty treatment this," said the ruffianly keeper, "from a man who pretends to be a gentleman, and seems quite sober too. There was some excuse to be made for me, when I tried to snatch a kiss from the Roper's daughter, which they made so much fuss about, for I had had a little too much that night."

"I thought you was murdering her," said the gipsy; "she sang out loud enough. Only a trick of youth, I see; but the middle of the wood would have been your safest place, my young gentleman. And yet the woman needn't to have kicked up such a noise, for she seems fond enough of him now."

"Ay! what's to be done here," said the Squire, approaching—"a little rural love-making, and the woman not in the humour so soon in the morning? I thought it had been nothing less than robbery or murder, from the shriek I heard; glad to see it's no worse. A short struggle, and so on, eh?"

"Worse—what need there be worse," said Banes, "than to see a man struggling with a woman in the open day! you may fancy what would have happened had it been night. Look how I was treated; and all for a drunken lark with an old sweetheart."

As a noble mastiff stands, with his teeth clenched and his lip drawn up, confronting a tribe of barking mongrels, growling and hesitating which he should first plant his paw upon, and which he should at the same moment bite in the neck, and toss over his head, having jogged away for some distance, and taken no notice of the pack at his heels, which, emboldened by his forbearance, only press closer upon him, and make him more desperate; so stood the noble form of Walter Northcot—erect, and savage, and with the woman

The attack on Walter Northcot.

still clinging to him; when he made but one stride, and struck Banes to the earth. In another instant the hand of Black Boswell was upon his shoulder. Walter tried to shake him off; and encumbered as he was by the woman, the struggle was awful. Had he been free, he would have succeeded; but, as it was, he seemed as secure in the grasp of the gipsy as a partridge in the talons of a hawk. The slender form of Walter was no equal match against the iron frame of Black Boswell, fettered as he was by the weight of the maniac.

Just then Ben Brust, who had heard the woman scream, leaped over the hedge, with his arm full of herbs, and stood in the midst of the combatants.

Ben and the Gipsy confronted each other for a moment, "scattering battle from their eyes;" and, with his glance riveted on Boswell's, Ben threw down the load of agrimony and wood-betony, never once looking where it fell, while his good-humoured face, (smiling even in its anger, as if victory had already alighted upon it,) crimsoned as he raised his arm in the act to strike—and that arm, which had beaten many a mad bullock into subjection, fell with all its weight on the gipsy's, and made him release his hold in an instant.

"You Black thief!" were Ben's first words, "Providence sent me this morning into the wood to get herbs. I knew I shouldn't come for nowt."

Black Boswell spoke not; and although one arm fell by his side numbed, and useless with the blow, he thrust his right hand in his inside-pocket and drew forth a pistol; but, before he had time to touch the lock, Ben had seized the weapon, lifted him up like a child in his arms, and dashed him with all his might upon the earth; adding, as he fell, "I could lick three men like you, though I've heard you swagger you could beat any man in Lincolnshire. Now," said he, throwing off his coat, "if you've a mind to try, stand up, and it shall be fair play, and old England for ever!"

Walter had by this time disengaged himself, though somewhat roughly, from the embraces of the poor lunatic, and stood himself a match for more than one common man; for, although to appearance somewhat slender, his bones and sinews were well knit; and he had, moreover, the spirit of a lion, when once aroused. But Bellwood was too great a coward to strike a blow; and as to Banes, he sat on the ground, with his hand to his head, like a man who has had enough at the first encounter. The woman looked on in silence, her eyes glaring, and her arms raised as if ready to spring upon the first who attacked her.

Black Boswell had never in his life shrunk from a challenge; and villain as he was (though much of his villany was owing to the temptation of others), still he was a brave fellow, and he soon rose up and began to prepare for a fair stand-up fight with Ben Brust.

But Walter Northcot stepped between the combatants, and, in such a voice as made the blood of Bellwood run cold, he said, "Enough of this. Ben, I entreat you to desist. Villain, I will shoot you dead if you raise your arm again," added he, turning to the gipsy, for he had picked up the loaded pistol, which had fallen in the struggle. Then looking at Bellwood, he said, "As to you, Sir, you are a cowardly rascal, for saying what you did before this honest fellow came up, and without deigning to give me a hearing. It is only the respect I have for the name of your father that prevents me from striking you to the earth, as I but now did the associate so worthy of you, though a disgrace to the name you bear. I know that you seldom move about without arms; and if you have a drop of the blood of a Bellwood in you, shew it now. I will still treat you like a gentleman, although you are a disgrace to the name."

"I've got another pistol," said the gipsy, stepping up, "and plenty of powder and shot. Come, my brave Squire, don't be cowed by this young gentleman; d— me, I'll see fair play yet. He offers fair enough; let this settle the business about the lady. Come man, faint heart you know ——"

"They shant fight with pistols," said Ben, putting aside, without ceremony, the unloaded weapon which the gipsy offered to Bellwood. "It isn't English; a fair turn-up with fists, if you like, and I'll second Master Walter."

"And I'll do the same for the Squire," said Boswell.

"And if they wont have a turn we will, just for love; for I have no malice, though it was devilish cowardly of you to point your cursed pistol at me as you did," said Ben, "'cause, after all, we were only two to three."

"Coward!" said Walter, who had hitherto kept his eye fixed on Bellwood, and firing the weapon into the air, he again threw it on the ground.

The poor woman sprang back, for the pistol was fired over her head, and exclaimed, "And he means to kill me, after he promised to take me to church and marry me, and be my friend, and forgive me, and never mention a word of its death."

"This business will not terminate as you may expect, Mr. Northcot," said Bellwood; who, although a coward, was a most princely villain, lacking only the one great essential, namely, courage. "I care not for the opprobrious terms you have here, before witnesses, this morning, heaped upon me. All I know is, I heard a poor woman calling for help, and when I came to her assistance, found that you were the assailant; have her own words, that you have promised her marriage, and I know not what, and even used force with her; and when you are caught in the atrocious fact, you then offer me the satisfaction of a gentleman! How that offer may be received in a court of justice, I know not; but rest assured I shall lose no time in having you apprehended, and compel you to offer some different reasons to what you have hitherto done, for your conduct. Conduct such as I would not have credited, had not my own eyes been witnesses to the fact; and now I shall wish you good morning, Sir. Banes, you will see to that woman: I will send a proper person to write down her evidence."

"Send a keeper and a strait-jacket," said Ben, "and say nowt about what you've done to her yoursen, and she may pass off for what she is, and that's mad as the devil. If you do owt else, Mr. Squire, as great a man as you are, I may happen find somebody as may surprise you,—clever as you think yoursen, I'll find a jack for your jill."

Walter made no reply; the fire of his passion had burnt itself out, and he only felt the most sovereign contempt for Bellwood's threats. "You will go with me," said he, approaching the woman; "I will see you well attended to, and no one shall do you harm. Come, you are not well."

"Get off," exclaimed the woman, "you tried to shoot me, and I'll swear it. Ben saw you, everybody knows Ben speaks the gospel truth. I didn't deceive you, when you said you would marry me; I told you all about it, and how I sought for the child, and now its dead, dead. No gravestone, no, nothing!—I never saw the coffin—but I will, I will; I ll tear it out of its grave with my nails. Bellwood! Bellwood! God heard you say you loved me; and my little angel came, and shewed how I loved you—I shall die soon." And she sat down on the wild heath and wept aloud.

"Poor creature," said Walter, looking upon her with an eye of compassion. "Ben, can we do nothing for her? Lady Lee would see that she was looked well after, in some comfortable cottage, if we could but get her down there."

"I will home! I will home!" said the woman, springing up wildly,

and hurrying off in the direction of the Grange. "The time will come, and I shall meet with *it* again."

Banes followed her, without exchanging a word with any one, right glad that her departure offered him an excuse for retreating. Boswell took himself off in sullen silence, and never turned his head, when Walter Northcot threatened that he would summon the whole party of them, to answer for the assault they had committed. Ben and himself were now the only two persons left on the heath; and after Walter had with great difficulty forced a sovereign upon him, they walked into the village together—Ben in the highest spirits, to think, as he said, "How we hev beaten the thieves!" for said he, "you and I, Mr. Walter, could wallop a five-mile lane full of such fellows as those, any day before breakfast."

When Ben reached home, he went up to the table where Betty sat peeling the potatoes for dinner, and throwing down the sovereign with all the weight of his ponderous palm, he lifted up his hand, and said, "Look at that, wench! is that nowt? aint the sight of it good for sore eyes?"

"And is it real gowd (gold)"—answered Betty, gloating over it, but not daring to touch it, lest like a fairy-gift it should vanish—"or hev you been buying it for a penny? tell me the truth Ben, is it like them six that Mrs. Brown kept in her purse to swagger wi', that Jack Nettleby fun (found), when she said the poor lad had changed the real sovereigns when he fun her purse, and would hev gotten into a mess, if Mrs. Lawson hedn't seen her buy e'm for sixpence, at Gainsbro-market?"

"It is gowd, good gold," answered Ben, rubbing his hands with delight, "and my own too, Master Walter gave it me, for walloping that black thief Boswell; and he said to me, 'Ben,' says he, 'you shall never want a sovereign while I am worth one!' Think of that, Betty—think of that, you old——" and Ben chucked her under the chin, gave her a kiss, and flourishing his stick, danced round the room, breaking the little looking-glass which hung on the wall, in the height of his happiness. One or two of the women—his next-door neighbours—hearing him so noisy, and seeing him cut such extraordinary capers, came in—for in the country they stand to no ceremony on such matters as these.

"Hey! what now, Ben lad?" said Mrs. Cawthry, knitting away at her stocking as she spoke. "Look you there," answered Ben, pointing to the sovereign, "you don't often see one of those, I reckon."

"Well, I declare! locky-daisy me!" exclaimed Mrs. Cawthry taking up the sovereign, and turning it all ways, "and good gowd too! I'll hev a lucky rub at any rate;" and she rubbed both her eyes with the sovereign, then handed it to her gossip, who did the same, saying when she had done, "I've never rubbed my eyes before for above seven years, the last time I did was in May, and the Mart after that, I fun sixpence as I was going to Gainsbro, so you see that proves it's lucky." As this happened six months after, we must suppose the spell, or whatever it was, to have had power a long time; be this as it may, we have many a time seen a sovereign handed round a room, where of course such things are scarce, and each one in turn rub their eyes with it, believing it to be "lucky."

"I reckon thou means buying Betty a new gown out of this," said Mrs. Cawthry, "does not Ben?"

"No," answered Ben, "I never like to encourage pride; it's been the ruin of many a man and woman in this world. She's got more gowns than backs now. I never hev but one suit mysen, and whether it be day or night everybody knows me in it. I abominate pride."

"Bless you, he'll buy me nowt," said Betty, "he's never laid out but one shilling on me since we were married, and that was for a pair of stockings he bought one night when he was drunk, and they were too little for him, so I was forced to wear 'em; and he hounded me for the shilling for many a long day after. But I think he ought to buy a new coverlet for the bed."

"I'm ower hot as it is," answered Ben, "and I allos tell thee as thou can hev my coat on thy side, if thou arnt warm enough. For my part I could spare a blanket the coldest night in winter."

"If you would work a little more, and teck your fat down," said Betty, "you would want an extra blanket then, same as I often do."

"It would just amount to the same thing, thou sees," answered Ben, "I should hev to lay my addlings out to keep me warm, and what richer should I be? For my part I'm quite contented as I am."

"But she does want a bonnet, Ben," said the persevering neighbour. "I remarked last Sunday how shabby she looked at church."

"If you'd been thinking on the sarment," answered Ben, "you wouldn't hev noticed her bonnet. I never wear nowt on my head when I'm in a church. Now I think there'll be more sense in buying a good leg of mutton than all the fine things you've named, cos you see that's a thing one may eat, and feel thankful for after."

"He's allos thinking about stuffing hissen," answered Famine

tartly, "brusting and snoring's all he cares about. He's no more pride in him nor a pig."

"Why, my wench," answered Ben, "thou sees if I were to buy thee a new gown or a bonnet, thou mightn't live to wear 'em out, and what a thing that would be! and then if thou died, all the widows and single women in the village would be setting up their caps at me, and trying to meck theirsens agreeable, to get me to marry 'em, so as they might come in possession of thy new things; when if thou leaves nowt, they'll happen let me alone. No, I think a good joint, and a pudding or so, and invite a few friends, that is, hev a party like, will be the wisest thing as can be done. And then we can get drunk, and go to bed comfortable after it, and we shall hev no more to car for."

"It wouldn't be a bad thing that," said Mrs. Cawthry, "though I think us women might hev a cup of tea out of it—what say you, Mrs. Brust?"

"I should like it better than been among the men-folk," answered Betty; "will you give us a treat to oursens, Ben?"

"That I will," said Ben, "and you shall hev a bit of plum-cake, and the best cup of tea money'll buy. I'll go over to Gainsbro mysen, and meck the markets, and I'll get farmer Kitchen to give you sich a basin of cream, as a spoon'll stan' right up in; it shall be thick as butter, and yellow as this sovereign."

Ben jerked the money up with his finger and thumb as he spoke, and catching it as it fell, said, "What a many pounds of beefsteaks and quarts of ale this would buy! But we'll hev a party, and I'll send for cousin William frae Winthorpe, and we'll hev a pie, and a custard, and lots of ale—a regular genteel dinner."

Ben sallied out and shewed all the neighbours the sovereign. He had never been worth so much money for many years. He looked at a cottage that was to be sold; and the blacksmith, who saw him standing before it, went into the Blue Bell and told the company that he believed Ben had some notion of purchasing it. That day he inquired the prices of several pigs, and actually offered farmer Kitchen a pound for a fat sheep, adding, "I should just like to buy that chap, and hev him roasted whole." Then he went and had two quarts of ale on credit, for he thought the sight of the sovereign was enough to satisfy any landlord in England. He offered to treat Gideon to what he liked, but the Roper shook his head, and said he had no time to lose. Ben would have changed it, but as he said, "If any of the poor people should happen to want change for half-a-

crown it would only be a bother to me; beside, I dont like to carry every shilling there is in the village in my own pocket, it looks as if a man was proud, because he'd got more money than his neighbours."

But the sovereign made Ben uneasy. It "burnt his pocket," as they say in the country. He wanted to be eating the good things it would buy. He went and laid down under a tree, and looked at it. He put it in his mouth, then took it out again, and sighed. "Lors, what a little thing it is!" said Ben, "and yet what trouble it hez but caused folks in this world! Men's been hung and transported before now for a little chap like this—a thing as nobody can eat. What fools some men are! Now, I could pardon a hungry man for robbing a butcher of a leg of mutton, but this—what is it?" Ben threw it on the grass and looked at it. "Now, if I was to leave it here and put a bit of bread beside it, and either a dog or a bird were to come, why they would teck the piece of bread, and think no more of this than they would of a stone. But I'll be out of it; I'll ware it; I'll eat it. If I were walking in a night, and hed all this money about me, I should be frightened of been murdered. I durstn't sleep in a public house we sich a sum wehout locking my room-door. Then if a fire was to break out! many a man's been burnt to death through heving money. O, what a shocking thing it is! but I'll spend it ivery farthing to-morrow if I live. I'll be off to Gainsbro as soon as I get up. Surely nobody'll break into our house to-night, but I'll hide it when I get upstairs."

Ben went home, and, after a long consultation with Betty as to what he should buy on the morrow, he retired to rest, and for the first time in his life dreamed of highwaymen and housebreakers.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SHEWS HOW GIDEON GILES PERSEVERED IN HIS BUSINESS—HOW MR. BANES RESOLVED TOO SUDDENLY TO BECOME HONEST—WITH SUNDRY REMARKS, WHICH PROVE THAT TO "WASH A BLACK MAN WHITE" IS A DIFFICULT TASK, WHICH IS FULLY EXEMPLIFIED IN THE CHARACTER OF THE GAMEKEEPER.

Gideon Giles stuck close to his work, and both early and late was he found in his ropery, the first to give "good morning" to the old woodman, the earliest riser in the village, and the last to answer "good night" to the greeting of old John the boat-builder, who had to return three miles from his labour, and was the latest "comer home" in Burton Woodhouse. The honest Roper had resolved not to touch his little capital, saving to purchase hemp; and out of his weekly earnings he not only saved the value of the material he had worked up, but also set aside five shillings a week, towards paying off the money he had borrowed of the kind host. Working on such a system, and never allowing one week's expenses to run into another, Gideon was compelled to find a ready market for his goods, and this he did by working extra hours at night and morning, and during one or two days in the week "hawking" his wares in the neighbouring villages. By this means he not only got rid of his goods as he made them, but kept the little capital he had remaining untouched.

It was a weary life that of the poor Roper's, on the days he went round with his wares from door to door, selling what he could, and soliciting orders from those who wanted such articles as he had not by him ready made, and it was no unusual thing for him to take home a trifling order which he had executed, when the parties were in immediate want of it; for he thought that industry without kindness and attention, was not enough to succeed in business; so might he be seen, on what he termed the "days he went his rounds," at his rope-walk by four in the morning, when, working until breakfast time, he took his little load on his back, and wandered many a weary mile with the few goods he had manufactured. Sometimes he had a crust of bread and cheese and a pint of ale for his dinner, and if he reached home by tea-time, he returned to his work, and might be seen in his rope-walk until it was "blind man's holiday," as they call it, when a man can no longer see to labour.

GIDEON GILES HAWKING HIS GOODS.

And now Gideon might be seen with his balls of twine, halters, "cow-hopples," tar-marlings, clothes-lines, nets, whipcord, and other etceteras, slung over his shoulders, and threading his way through the green tranquil lanes, and over winding footpaths and picturesque meadows, as he wandered from village to village.

"Anything wanted to-day?" was his inquiry to the rosy housewife or good-humoured farmer, when he reached any hamlet. "If I haven't what you're in want of, I'll make it for you first thing, and bring it home with pleasure when it's done."

"Why we were thinking of having a new clothes-line," was sometimes the answer, "but they come so dear, and our John was saying we must make shift until another summer. What might be the price of this one, Gideon?"

Then a bargain would be struck, after a long argument, and he would travel on to the next house; sometimes selling a ball of twine or a halter, and at other times taking an armful of things home to repair, for he was a great favourite amongst the farmers, and although he never made a point of soliciting any of Mr. Brown's known customers, yet there were many of them who came to Gideon for the articles they wanted.

Many were the temptations he resisted from those who, when they had purchased what they needed, wanted to get him over to the alehouse, to treat him; but the Roper stoutly withstood all such offers.

"I have not time," he would say; "was it night, and I had done my day's work, I should have no objection. I never in my life wasted the good hours of daylight over the ale-pot." Ben Brust had often met him, and tried to get Gideon in the first road-side house; but saving taking a draught standing, while he tried to vend his ware, he was ever proof against all Ben's persuasions. "Well, he is a worthy fellow," Ben would say, "but I wish he would enjoy hissen a bit more, same as I do, but I've got no bairns to feed."

Ellen was of great use to her father, and would often take home the orders he had executed, and if the distance was not too great take one or other of the children with her. Many a young farmer sighed, as he passed the handsome daughter of the Roper, or turned round on his horse to watch her, until her graceful figure was no longer visible; for there was such a look of command and modesty about Ellen Giles, that the roughest joker "framed his speech" before her.

Sometimes the rich farmers' wives would press her to take a cup of tea with them, "she is so well-behaved," they would say, "and has such a bettermost look with her, that really if she was but differently dressed, and one didn't know her, one should take her for a lady that has had a boarding-school education."

And the young farmers who knew aught of her history, would shake their heads and say, "No wonder the Baronet lost his heart, there are not many such figures as her's in the wide county of Lincoln." The beauty of Ellen Giles could have commanded a wealthy husband any day she had pleased, but she thought too much of Walter Northcot.

And how fared Banes?—he was as madly in love with her as the Baronet; he could neither rest day nor night for thinking of her, she was in his sleeping and waking thoughts, and as he knew that to offer himself as a husband was useless, it was now his only study how to possess her. He never lost sight of her when with the Baronet, for he well knew that if he could still keep up the feeling of passion in her favour, he should always have a cloke under which to shelter himself, let the worst come that might. He had so long dealt with falsehood, that he at last came to look upon many things which he himself had invented as truth, and so far had he carried this feeling, that he seldom met Sir Edward Lee, without having something to communicate from the woman who was in Ellen Giles's confidence, and which always ended in an account of how

much the Roper's daughter was in love with him, and that but for the jealous eye of her father, according to the account he gave, she was ready at any moment to leap into Sir Edward's arms.

All this the Baronet believed to be true; and when he saw her in the park, he would have approached her, and owning his passion anew, have thanked her for the high estimation she held him in,—had not his heart been sad at the time, through the remembrance of those cares which seemed every hour to be weighing more heavily upon him.

Love is his own avenger, and the keeper was now punished for the scorn with which he had treated the tiny tyrant,—not that he was capable of so tender a passion in its purest happiness, but more like a man who feels a parching thirst in the height of a fever, than one who in a healthy state craveth a sweet drink. It would have been love which he felt, had the soil been more pure from which it sprung; as it was, it was like corn thrown into arid ground, that dwindles and becomes parched, and at the most produceth only earless-straw.

He had laughed at Ellen, when he spoke of her to others, but her image even then seemed to reproach him, and make him ashamed of what he had said,—he had called her poor and pretty, but never was a miser more haunted with visions of his gold-bags, than the gamekeeper was with the beauty of that poverty. He had said that a fine figure filled not an empty house, but there were moments when Banes felt that the form of Ellen Giles could again make his home a heaven; could make it what it had been in his mother's days, when he knelt beside her to receive her blessing ere he retired to rest, and his sleep was unbroken by hideous dreams, pangs of remorse, that seemed to pillow his head on a nest of vipers, which all night long hissed, and coiled about his couch.

There are moments when a man sees himself such as he really is; such as the world must strain its eyes for years before it discovers him; when all his failings and his vices rise before him, and stare him in the face without either shelter or flattery—when the past seems to open before him, and every action cuts itself out of the marble of his conscience, and stands ranged in a huge circle, all within sight and touch, neither veil nor cloud cast over them. Banes had caught a glimpse of this awful scene while in confinement at the Justice's, when he heard the barking of his dog, and felt that it was the voice of his only friend.

But never did his crimes seem to rise so sternly before him as on the night after the attack on Walter Northcot, when he sat beside hi own hearth, solitary, sad, and silent. He had never before felt so afraid of being alone: the very stillness was painful to him; the ticking of the clock more than once startled him; the breathing of the mastiff, which was stretched on the mat, caused him to turn his head in fear. His fancy seemed to be holding hideous holiday, to have stepped out; and was making sport on the walls; and on the roof, where the flickering flame of the candle threw a wild reflection, shadows moved which had ever before been still; faces peeped out of the knobs of the chairs; there were eyes in every nook, voices in every breath of wind; corners, which having looked into once, he dared not venture to gaze upon again; there wanted but a clear audible sound, to make him start up from his chair and shriek.

He pressed his hands before his face to shut out the light, and held his breath to listen. He heard a voice as of one complaining in sleep; it seemed broken by deep moans, and long-drawn sighs. He clenched his teeth, and, like a man who becomes suddenly desperate, rose from his seat, taking the candle in his hand, and turning slowly round to examine every corner of the room, but he saw nothing!—the sound came down the staircase, and step by step he mounted it: it was his evil conscience that tortured him.

He paused beside the door which opened upon the room where the poor maniac slept; it was ajar, and pushing it wide open he entered with the candle in his hand. The woman was asleep; and on her arm rested a little frock, rolled round as a child makes a doll of a handkerchief; a small cap was pinned on the top of it—they had been worn by her child; she had fallen asleep with them in her arms, doubtless dreaming that she again embraced her child. The sound he heard was the voice of the poor woman talking in her sleep. It was "a sorry sight," for even while he gazed on her she swayed the folded garment to and fro in her arms, and, in her sleep, chanted a low, sweet, mournful air.

If, as an old divine supposeth, the Evil-one felt pity when he saw the first man and woman weeping without the gates of Eden as the day was darkening, and wished that he had kept in hell, and left them to range the garden unmolested; if he did for a few seconds feel sorry for their sorrows, and was sincere for the moment—so did Banes while he gazed upon the woman. But as the aforesaid old divine made Satan excuse himself, on the ground that these troubles would

never have befallen our first parents but for the tree of knowledge; so did Banes console himself with the thought that she never would have fallen into that miserable state had it not been for Squire Bellwood.

Now it strikes us as being the most natural, that if the devil has an eye to his own interest, and does bestow any pains on us poor mortals, wishing to see his kingdom thrive and be popular, that he is much better employed in standing at our elbow and offering some excuse for the evils we have committed or are about to commit, than coming with saucer eyes, breath of brimstone, horn hoof, and "tail of length," and frightening us away. But this is a point which De Foe has cleared up to our satisfaction, making it as plain as the nose on our face, that the foul fiend is no fool; and when he whispered to Banes, that Bellwood was more to blame than himself, in bringing the poor maniac to such a state of misery, why he did what he ought to do, considering that he is a sworn foe to all repentance.

Banes had an elastic conscience, and when he felt within himself that he was not so much to blame as Bellwood, he took heart and returned down stairs, and taking out his favourite beverage, brandy and water, came to a strange resolution for such a man; he resolved, all at once, that he would become suddenly honest, and lead a better life. But to begin earnestly, he felt that he must first set out with Ellen Giles; and now he was determined to apprise her father of the change which had taken place in him—to confess his unworthiness of her, and offer himself as her husband.

He mixed himself a strong tumbler of brandy and water, placed his writing-desk on the table, mended his pen, spread out the paper, lit a cigar, snuffed the candle, and thought over the letter he intended sending to the Roper. He was a long time in deciding what he should say, and before he had made a mark on the paper his glass was empty. He mixed another stronger than the first—it was nearly all brandy—and before he had drank it off, he remembered how Gideon Giles had threatened to break his neck over the threshold if he ever ventured to cross it again.

Reader, thou mayest have seen a boy rear a row of bricks endways, and hast noted how careful he has been to make every one stand, never seeming for a moment to begrudge the labour, while he anticipated the delight he should in the end enjoy. The boy and the bricks were no bad emblem of Mr. Banes carefully labouring over his first glass, and studying the contents of the letter, from which he

augured so much, although he really did nothing. Thou hast also seen the above urchin, when he was weary with erecting, hurl down all his labour; hast noticed with what glee he struck the first brick, and how easily all the rest fell;—that was the state of the gamekeeper at the finish of his second glass; he threw down all that he, in his mind, had done. He touched the one brick, and down toppled the whole building.

An evil heart is an awful thing to dissect; we have to cut through so much that we feel is existing in our own corrupt nature; a perfect man ought only to be an author in heaven, and to write works for angels to read. Wisdom comes from experience; knowledge first sprung from sin. When we hear a man denounce wickedness from a pulpit, and paint the remorse that evil leaves behind—the wear and tear of heart and mind—the pangs that ever pain; we marvel whether or not he has felt these inward rebukings—whether he has sinned like ourselves. The pangs of hunger and thirst can only be well described by those who have endured them; they must have been felt by the man who, by mere narration only, trusts to make his remarks effective; so he, who shadows forth sin, must himself have been a sinner. The passions we paint are not wholly imaginary; the evil we depict, may have been destroyed before it arrived to its full growth: but believe us, such a shoot once sprung within ourselves, though blighted by our better feelings. The wickedest man was once a child: there was a time, when if he had died, he never could have felt either sorrow or remorse. We, who are now men and women, have all had parents, who at one time or other have fondled and blessed us. We were not always so evil, proud, and selfish, as we are now. Those who have painted men as villains from the cradle, and given them no good qualities, have caricatured human nature. The deceit found in the world has made many a man a rascal: he has been ashamed of his honest and good intentions, and allowed himself to be laughed into villany. How can it be otherwise in this age, when happiness is only sought through the steel-cold gates of wealth—when honesty and virtue are often shut out of the pages of fiction—when we see thousands damning themselves daily and hourly to get riches—when to call vice by its proper name is to be rude—when a known rogue is called a long-headed man, and an avowed villain is respected according to the success and amount of his robberies—when you meet with such men in the highest of society as would, in former times, have been hissed and hooted from a common English tap-room.

Is this, or is it not, a picture of the world we live in? We were censured the other day by a critic for shewing up the vices of the age—for, as he wisely said, it "is the age by which we live." He would have said the same had he lived in a cave amongst robbers. Yet we respect the devil, for owning that he belonged to the damned. But, thank God, there are thousands of honest and upright men in the world, and they keep the evil in awe.

It is said that a drunken man always speaks the truth; the inference drawn must be, that drunkenness reveals the true state of such a man's feelings: although we believe it only capable of shewing a little more of his good or evil disposition towards the parties with whom he may be in fellowship at the time, or acting upon whatever is uppermost in his mind at that period, conscious that no sensible man would go away with the conviction that he was fully acquainted with the character of another whom he had met "far gone in a third bottle."

Now this was the case with Banes,—for while sober, his better nature prevailed with him; but as he gradually became inebriated, he returned to "wallowing in the mire." He felt uneasy at the thoughts of becoming better; he thought that Bellwood would laugh at him —that he should become the butt of Black Boswell; and then he began to calculate what he should get by the change; never for a moment weighing that happy state of mind and heart "which is beyond all price," and which can only spring from true repentance, or the overthrow of some vicious inclination; for this we believe to be the true secret of a man conquering himself. It requires a brave man to sit out his own conscience, to look calmly at all his misdeeds, and then rise up a happier man; and this can only be done by a holy resolution that his crimes shall end there,—that instead of throwing himself in future in the way of temptation and sin, he will, by God's grace, for ever shun it. This can never be done if a man "drinks" himself up to this point of virtuous courage, and this was the case with Banes,—for while sober he was in the right path, when drunk the "devil entered in;" he seemed to sit grinning at the bottom of the goblet, and infusing his evil with every draught. By the time that he had drank his third glass, his evil inclinations had got the mastery over him, and he began to laugh at his good intentions—to mock those resolutions which ought only to be shaped in tears—that blowing up of the old and evil heart, which convulses the whole frame. He laughed, but it was the deep awful laugh of the drunkard —the maniac's chuckle over the downfall of reason—the triumph of

the devil over virtue—an internal tearing down, which is neither seen nor felt at the moment.

"Write, indeed; ha! ha! ha!" continued he, dashing the ink and paper on the floor. The black ink soaked through the white sheets where it fell, and a sober man might have moralized over it, and gathered images of good and evil—the stained heart—virtue and vice—innocence contaminated—good resolves dashed aside—darkness excluding the light—and much more that the drunken man would laugh at, only because he was drunk. "What devil could have put it into my head, to think of making such a fool of myself—a laughing stock for the whole village! They would say the dare-devil Banes has turned Methodist; that instead of going down to the Bell and getting creamy drunk, he will now steal to the class-meeting of the canting old currier. Ha! ha! ha! Sneak beside a narrow-bonneted sister on a Sabbath, and groan at the rate of sixty grunts a minute, telling everybody that I am most worthy of being damned. No; I would eat my heart first! Humble myself, and come cringing to Gideon Giles, telling how much I've injured him, and how sorry I am—which would be a lie! Sorry, forsooth! when he broke my head, and threatened to break my neck if I crossed his threshold again. No; I would sooner sit down on a barrel of gunpowder and go to hell ready blackened! Sorry for what? that the girl is not in my power; that I have not had my revenge on her father. Curse the girl! I cannot sleep a-nights for thinking of her. I have turned a greater fool than the Baronet. What an eye she's got! what rich pouting lips! what a banquet for a black bee to hum over till he dies. I'll have her! though I die for it. Gideon, you must go to ruin: all hell arrayed against me cannot save you this time—I have you safe! safe." And he clutched the goblet in his hand, as an illustration of how securely he felt the poor Roper in his power. "I must have you out of the road, and then I'll sully the bloom of your pretty plum. I'll cry quits with you, master Gideon, this time. I'll bring you down low enough, then pick up your daughter on my own terms. I'll make your old friend the magistrate be glad enough to commit you next time, or shake his commission for ever. Then your wife may plant your new ropery with currant-bushes again. I'll set Oram and Lawson on a right scent this time, I will, my fine fellow, if I'm hung for you." He swore a deep oath to confirm his resolution, and emptied his glass as a pledge for the fulfilment of it, then sunk back drunk in his seat.

What his plan was our readers will soon become acquainted with; and for once, we doubt not, blush for a country where such a law exists, as that on which Banes relied to work the ruin of the honest Roper.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW BANES SET ANOTHER SNARE TO ENTRAP GIDEON GILES—HAD AN INTERVIEW WITH THE BARONET IN THE PARK, AND LEFT HIM FULLY PERSUADED THAT HE WAS HIS MOST WORTHY FRIEND—AFTER WHICH THE CHAPTER ENDS IN PRAISE OF "HUMBUG."

NEXT morning the gamekeeper visited Mr. Brown at his ropery, where the following conversation took place. "We've got a new master in the village," said Banes; "opposition, eh, Mr. Brown? they say it's good for trade. I don't know how you find it, but I think Gideon's like a cat—he never falls without lighting on his legs."

"One's as much as ever 'ill get a living in this place, at any rate;" answered Mr. Brown, "and when a man goes hawking his goods like Gideon, I only reckon him a short-leg.* I would rather anybody else had opposed me than him, for he's a fellow that's rather liked, and will do my trade a deal of injury; I almost wish I hadn't turned him away, but it can't be helped now."

"It's the best thing you ever did," said the gamekeeper; "and another thing I can tell you, it lies in your power to put an end to all his trade to-morrow if you like."

"Tell me how," said Brown, throwing down the bundle of hemp he was sorting, "tell me how, and I'll do it."

"Why then, inform against him for hawking without a license," replied Banes, "and the thing will be done at once. Have you seen him sell anything?"

"I have," answered the master roper; "I saw him sell a clothes-line at Ingham for a shilling. But you forget, he manufactures his own goods."

"No matter for that," replied Banes, "he can't stand by hawking them out of his own parish, nor selling them anywhere but at fairs

* A short-leg is a master-man in a small way—a journeyman who has set up in business for himself, with next to no capital; it is a phrase well understood in different trades in the provinces.

and markets, and in particular towns. I've seen the Act; and if you remember, Birch, the basket-maker, was committed to Kirton House of Correction, for selling the goods he made himself. The law's the law, my boy, and old Justice Bellwood himself, will be compelled to commit Gideon to prison if you inform of him, and there's no appealing against it."

"It shall be done then," answered Mr. Brown; "I'd forgotten that affair of Birch's, but I'm glad you mentioned it. It's a cruel law though; for the poor fellow went a long way to seek work, and if he hadn't found a friend to lend him a little money to begin with, why there would have been nothing but the workhouse for him. But he might have gone somewhere else to have begun business for himself, without coming here to ruin me."

"So he might," said the gamekeeper, "and it's every man's duty to look at home first. As to the law, why you know you didn't make it, and pity butters no bread, Mr. Brown. It's out of pure regard to yourself I've mentioned this, for I bear the poor fellow no ill-will, not I; but I can't sit down and see an honest man like you ruined, when it can be prevented."

"It 'ill serve him right," said Mrs. Brown, who stood at the far end of the shed, and overheard all that was said. "And as I said to my husband yesterday, you act like a gentleman and a true friend to him, and never do anything but what the first lord in the land might do. And as for yon upstart short-leg, with his new ropery, why a prison's a deal too good for him: he ought to be transported for treating you as he did. And his fine daughter, marry! I see nothing so grand about her, that there need be such fuss made; and I believe she did all she could to colly-foggle Sir Edward, and they do say she gave him love-powder: I saw her come out of Spouncer's the druggist's myself. And as to her mother, why she's had sich a dragging up, and is so vulgar, that it's a shame sich a woman should be allowed to live anywhere but among heathens, where they've no more manners than a dog, and are no more civilized than a lot of hedge-beggars, that all pig together on the same sheaf of straw. So they'll come to the workhouse at last? O, I am so thankful for your kindness, Mr. Banes, nought can be like it! I'm sure I can't say half what I feel, it's so good of you to treat those low-bred Giles's like muck as they are."

She gave the keeper a sidelong look when she had done speaking, which he did not fail to return, and he thought within himself

that she was a good-looking woman, considering she was fat and forty. Nor would Mrs. Brown suffer him to go away without first accompanying her home, and tasting a drop of something to "drink to their better acquaintance." That morning Mr. Banes squeezed her hand, and she returned the pressure; "hoping," as she said, "he would never go past without calling."

Banes met Oram, the chief-constable, in the village street, and they retired together to the Blue Bell, where they had several pints of ale, and drank success to their "new job;" for so they termed their villanous design on the honest Roper.

Squire Bellwood lost no time, but immediately after the attack we described in a former chapter, rode over to his friend the magistrate, and procured a warrant for the apprehension of Walter Northcot. This "friend" was a character the very reverse of Justice Bellwood; a vulgar roystering blackguard—a meet companion for the villanous Squire, and a disgrace to the bench of magistrates. Drinking, fox-hunting, and committing poor devils to prison, were the only things he took delight in. He was a perfect rural tyrant; such a man as in any other country but England, would have been waylaid and murdered on the first dark night he ventured abroad, and no one would have been sorry for him who knew him. When the plan for building the new poor-house was first set afloat, he proposed that the building should be run up with a single brick wall; and when Justice Bellwood remarked that such a building might be blown down in a storm, he said, "so much the better, we should then have fewer paupers to provide for." He had a son, as good as he himself was bad, but he had long since turned him out of doors, and now paid fifty pounds a-year to a neighbouring farmer for maintaining him. This son (whom we shall call William Manning), was a worthy young man, and was beloved by all who knew him, even more then his father was hated; and many believed that it was only respect for the young man that saved the property of the father, when the fires of the incendiary flashed redly, on the dark wintry sky, night after night, and alarmed the wide county of Lincoln.

But with these two characters, the good and the bad, our story hath at present nothing further to do, than simply to announce that the magistrate issued a warrant for the apprehension of Walter Northcot, and that he would have done the same against any other person, had Squire Bellwood requested it. Nay, he had often sworn in his cups, that before he died, he would will all the property

he could to Bellwood; and well was it for his son that the estate was heirable. As it was, he felled his trees and sold them, got rid of his stock, and impoverished the property, greatly to the injury of his son, who had been absent some time on a visit to a brother of the farmer he resided with, when the scenes we have described took place. William Manning (when at what was now his home) lodged with honest farmer Kitchen, at Burton Woodhouse.

Walter Northcot had acquainted Sir Edward Lee with the attack made upon him by the wood-side, and the baronet dissuaded him from taking any further notice of it, promising also that he would summon Banes to the Hall, and reprimand him for his conduct, and also see that the poor woman was restored to her friends. More than this he said, and more he intended doing; but on after-reflection, there came the remembrance that he was in Banes's power, and bitterly did he regret this ill-fated passion for Ellen Giles, since it threw him into the clutches of his own gamekeeper, of whose true character as yet he was ignorant.

All this Banes had calculated upon, for he was well skilled in the arithmetic of villany, knew every table of addition and subtraction, and had reckoned up to a fraction how he should stand, if matters came to the worst. But he forgot that Justice was the stern schoolmaster, who would at last sum up the total.

Sir Edward Lee, with all his faults, was a proud and honourable man, so far as the latter word is at present understood by the world, and in spite of all the misfortunes which his own misdeeds had called down, he had never allowed any servant an unbecoming liberty, or permitted them to advance an inch beyond their station. So far, he no doubt deserved praise; but he forgot when he made advances of love to Ellen Giles, that he himself had crossed the forbidden barrier, and lost the respect of his own kitchen. Not that any liberties were taken in his presence, but the servants no longer treated his name with that respect which they were wont to do, but they talked about him, much in the same manner as they did of their former companion, Ellen Giles. The gamekeeper was perhaps the only one who had gained any ascendency over Sir Edward, since he so far demeaned himself, but he went cunningly to work, and raised himself on the very stones over which his master stumbled. It was not, however, until after a long conversation with Walter, that the Baronet saw how low he had fallen—that he felt he had in a great measure sunk his own self-respect; and when a man finds that he has done this by

his own misconduct, he loses at least a "foot of his former height," and this saying we think much better than any high-flown philosophical conclusion we might please to make.

And here we would advise our readers, if ever they do that of which they are ashamed of the world knowing, and with which some one must be acquainted, to trust only to a tried and true friend; one who for his own honour will take no advantage over them, but would be as much censured for blazing it abroad, as those who are themselves the offenders will be, when it is known. This is a maxim not laid down by that king of clever men, Machiavel, but it is nevertheless worth remembering. And further, the man who never did a thing which he cared not for the world hearing, is not a man whom we should care to own for a friend; for he either must want a common portion of "respectable shame," or be much too good for the company of average sinners like ourselves. We know a good man who often boasts that he "has erred *wisely*, but not well." Now the Baronet would have fared better, if he had made a confidant of his love for Ellen Giles of Ben Brust, than of Banes; because Ben was the better man, and if his conscience would not have allowed him to do any more, he would have been sorry for the Baronet, and instead of persuading him to have gone deeper "into the mire," have helped him out of the depth he had already sunk into, if he could have done no more. This we hold to be good, nine-cornered reasoning.

The Baronet summoned the gamekeeper to attend at the Hall; nor was it long before Banes made his appearance, and they met each other in the park, while Sir Edward Lee was taking his evening-walk.

Banes had prepared himself for this meeting, for he was well aware how high Walter Northcot stood in the Baronet's estimation; nor had the latter yet discovered what a villain he had to deal with, in the character of Banes.

"I have sent for you," said Sir Edward, coming at once to the business, "to explain this affair of Mr. Northcot's, and insist upon knowing your reasons for insulting him in the manner you did, and how it was that Squire Bellwood and that notorious fellow Boswell chanced to be in your company at the time, for it strikes me forcibly, sir, that some villanous plan has been laid amongst you, to injure this young gentleman, and but for the timely interference of honest Ben Brust, it would have succeeded. Now as you value my favour

speak the truth, whatever it may be. And if Bellwood is the originator of it, which I am very suspicious of, tell me at once, and I will pardon you for any share you may have been tempted to take in so disgraceful an affair."

"I should ill deserve your favour," answered the villain, "were I to attempt to deceive you in anything:" he looked on the ground as he spoke, for rascal as he was, he dare not raise his eyes to gaze on the Baronet, who to him had ever been the kindest of masters. "That Squire Bellwood bears no good-will to the young gentleman, I am well aware, and indeed considering what a treasure he is likely to lose, I am not at all astonished at it, well knowing that the lady would be an honour to the greatest ——"

"This is not the business I am talking of," said Sir Edward, his colour changing: "all this I well know. Answer the inquiries I have made respecting the unmanly attack on that gentleman."

"I can answer for no more than I saw," replied Banes, "excepting that I have often heard the woman talking to herself about Mr. Northcot, and in such a way as would lead anybody to conclude that they are no strangers to each other. That I was going my rounds, and that Black Boswell was making the nearest cut to his camp, when I met him in the wood, and while we were talking together, we heard the woman scream, and when we came up, saw her struggling with Mr. Northcot, who it seemed was attempting to force her over the fence. As to Squire Bellwood, he had called at the Grange to see how the puppies got on, that I am training for him, and not finding me at home, was walking across the heath, to see if I was anywhere at hand. For the rest, I have only the poor woman's own words, and you may question her yourself as to the truth of what I have said."

"This certainly looks like the truth," said the Baronet, knitting his brow, and standing for several moments as if wrapt in deep thought; then adding, "Banes, I have ever found you honest and faithful in things of consequence, nor can I suppose you to have any motive for attempting to injure the character of a young man whom I have until now held in the highest esteem. You believe then that it was his intention to force the woman into the wood?"

"I am sure of it," replied Banes, readily; "and Black Boswell is of the same opinion. And whatever other faults the gipsy may have, I'll be sworn he wouldn't stand by and see a woman hurt; he has a daughter of his own."

Banes consoling the Baronet.

"True, true," answered the Baronet, in confusion, for his conscience instantly called up the images of his own daughters, and of Ellen Giles, and he stood for some time without speaking, his face buried in his hand.

A close observer would have seen the devilish smile which sat on the countenance of the gamekeeper as he stood with his eyes riveted on the Baronet, as if enjoying the misery he had plunged him into, for he was at no loss to divine his thoughts.

"Banes," said Sir Edward Lee, speaking without shifting his position, "you have struck on a painful chord. I have also daughters, and one as dear to me as ever was child to parent; but I am unworthy of her. I had thought to have made her happy—God knows at how great a sacrifice!—even at the price of making myself a beggar. It is past, for never shall she marry a man who has degraded himself like Walter Northcot. I am justly punished; it is the will of heaven that I should be miserable, and I bow to its chastising hand. Vengeance hath overtaken me for my evil intentions towards that poor, but virtuous girl, and heaven accepteth no amends until the guilty is punished. But tearing Walter Northcot from the hold he had of my heart, is the heaviest blow of all; for evil as I own myself to be, and as you too well know I am, I believed him to be all that is honourable and noble. O God, how have I been deceived!"

The proud Baronet leant with his face against a tree and wept like a child, while Banes gazed on him with the hardened smile of villany, and he would have laughed outright had he but dared, for he felt no more pity than the iron stem of the oak on which Sir Edward Lee supported himself.

"Take it not so to heart," said the brutal gamekeeper, approaching the Baronet, and placing his hand gently upon his shoulder. "Better be deceived now in the young man than when it would have been too late to have made use of the discovery. I wish my tongue had been torn out before I had spoken the truth, since it has affected my kindest friend so deeply. Bethink you, Sir Edward, it might but have been an unguarded moment, when the young gentleman forgot himself. Such things will happen, and I am sure you are too kind a gentleman not to overlook it. Remember, it is his first offence, and that the character of the woman is no great shakes to boast of."

"I reverence your kind feelings for the young man," said the Baronet, yielding his hand to Banes, "and regret that I have ever entertained other than the highest opinion respecting you. But I

have been deceived; I have been blind to your good qualities until now. But never, unless you wish to destroy the respect I have for you, mention the name of Walter Northcot again. He shall never more set foot upon my threshold. And now leave me. But stay; the chestnut-horse, on which you have sometimes rode with me, and so long admired, I give you. Tell the groom to saddle it, then take it home. It has long been a favourite of mine; you will behave well to it for my sake. It is now your own."

Overpowered for the moment by this unexpected generosity of the Baronet, Banes tried to stammer out his thanks, but, villain as he was, it was too much for him, and he went away ashamed of what he had done. Nay, when only at a few yards distance, he hesitated whether or not to come back, and confess the whole truth of the matter. But then he thought again that he might only be forgiven, and lose the beautiful horse, which, next to Ellen Giles, he had long coveted beyond ought beside in the world.

And now we doubt not but that our readers will see how easy it is for a man to accomplish any end, who possesses a good share of villany, and understands the art of HUMBUG. We wish, for the sake of the fair sex, that the latter science was graced with a less repulsive name; but as the term did not originate with ourselves, we must take it for want of a better. We would not have them to suppose for a moment that we are wholly guiltless of this popular vice, for while "in the world, we are of the world," and being naturally grateful for everything that benefits mankind, why we have a kind of a queer respect even for "Humbug." We believe that as the world is at present constituted, few can live without indulging a little in it; not but that we think something better might be found, but that is not our present business. And now, O reader, we are going to write in praise of Humbug. If thou likest it not, and it has never been of benefit to thee, thou hast our consent to skip over the page, nor shall we respect thee the less, though thou dost begin again with the next chapter. For thou hast this equal privilege with ourselves—we write what we please, and wish thee only to read what best pleaseth thyself.

But before proceeding further, we must acquaint our readers with the fact that we picked up an old book the other day, purporting to be written by one George Parker, who calls himself "A merry fellow," and who went about in his day "from race to race, selling *ginger*-bread nuts." And we think the following eulogium of himself

as good as anything we could quote from either the Greek or the Latin poets on the same subject. There is a certain *naiveté* about it, which would have tickled the risible muscles of honest Charles Lamb with most "provoking pleasure," and which we quote simply because we like it.

"The reader will, perhaps, from too common a mode of thinking, "imagine that the author must certainly have had such connexion "with the parties he describes, as to render himself culpable in the "same degree. 'Tell me your company, and I will describe your "manners,' is an old saying; but there is no rule without an excep- "tion. I am bold to affirm that I have been obliged to mix "with every denomination, and can further say, *I have dined with "seven capital housebreakers in one day, and the same evening supped "with seven peers of the realm.* * * * * * * * If I am with the "lawyer, I can put on the loquacity and consequence of a barrister, "or the stammering caution of a petty-fogging attorney; if I am "with the physical tribe, I can prattle nonsense, and tell Mr. Potion "the apothecary that Sydenham, Stock, and Mead, and other learned "men on the human frame, are as familiar to me as the handbills of "a Hervey or a Matthews; I can talk either ethics with a minor- "canon of St. Paul's, or cant and slang with a tramper of St. Giles's. "* * * * * If a cellar or a night-house contains an oddity, a "drawing-room a fool, or a cathedral a rogue, there are some men "who will dive to take a view of the first, ascend to laugh at the "second, and gravely approach the eminence of the third."—And now for our Essay—

IN PRAISE OF HUMBUG.

Mighty lady! before whose shrine millions kneel, yet are indignant if taxed with their true faith, we own thy potent power. Great goddess! who rulest over all arts, sciences, crafts, and callings, thou universal association within thyself, we own that we are compelled to bow before thee, thou mighty president of "boiling pots." What thousands live on thee who are ashamed of their benefactor, but whom in the end thy vengeance overtaketh, and whom just and upright men kick for their ingratitude. Thou givest unto tens of thousands their daily bread, yet no one publicly offereth thee thanks: in windows art thou ticketed, in advertisements set forth—millions live on thee; to-day thou displayest thyself in a picture, to-morrow in a book, or art ready to shew thyself in any national undertaking—

a column, a building, or a bishop, there art thou in readiness to assist, yet no one calleth thee friend. Thou art ever willing to become a shareholder in any undertaking; and although thousands owe unto thee their success, yet none have ever had gratitude enough to propose a statue to thee, or to offer thee even a paltry piece of plate, fairly engraven with thy "good name." Thy offerings are carried under a cloak, as if men were ashamed of thee; they call thee Honesty, and Honour, Generosity, and Gratitude, nickname thee Service and Sense, and see thy useful abilities, but are ashamed of calling thee by thy real name. We kneel, and own that thou art Humbug alone,—great, glorious, and worthy of a million monuments, most dear delightful Humbug! Oh, when will men be grateful enough to take off their hats, and shake hands with thee in open squares and long streets, and welcome thee by thy own true name, most mighty Humbug! Most sweet soother of every human silliness, softener down of harsh words, luller to sleep of open truth, stiller of stormy passions, refiner of vulgar honesty; kindest friend of form, great merchant of masks, chief strumpet of smiles, blandest of all belles; tender mother of thieves, redeemer of rogues, dear delicious compound of all damnabilities, darling of democrats, we drink to thee, and own thy greatness, Humbug! Mightiest and most agreeable of all pretty sins, how amiable dost thou endeavour to appear; looking ever young, whether thou art shrouded under a cluster of false curls, or carriest a summer bloom of thine own tinting upon thy cheeks, thou dear repairer of faces! Youth thrusts himself into narrow-pointed shoes for thy sake, and old age hobbles along with his triple-corned toes in honour of thee, while fair maidens lace tightly, breathe heavily, and die early, in thy cause. Thou fillest thy votaries with fat turtle and strong wine, giving them countenances like ruddy sunsets, and when they are fully ripe, and move under twenty stone of thy feeding, they rise up, and, like ingrates, preach up the virtue of abstinence! Thou art the great patron of coxcombs, the friend of flatterers, the saintly covering of the hypocrite, promoter of folly over wisdom, a lover of sound before sense, fashion's firmest follower, money-mounter over merit, and ever shewing thyself folly's only friend, and avarice's faithful attendant. What patriots hast thou made! men who would have died for their country's good, had they not found that thou didst reward thy servants with all they thought worth living for. Maker of many converts! backer of the brainless! friend of petty-foggers! favourer of fusty formality, manager of marriages,

deep deplorer of deaths, chief crocodile of weepers, and fountain of onion-eyed tears! no human brain is large enough to contain a tithe of the remembrance of thy great qualities, most omnipotent Humbug! What respectful silence is shewn to thee; how low men speak in thy presence, ever blushing at thy bidding, and deeming it an honour to kiss the soles of thy feet, without once regarding where thou hast trod! For thy sake they become eaters of humbleness, picking up the crumbs that fall from thy bountiful table, until they are rich enough to sit as guests at the feast, then they rail at thee their kind provider, Open-handed Humbug. Oh, what a world would this be but for thy presence! we should then have no stalking-horse behind which to screen our frailties, honesty would wander abroad naked and a beggar, and shrink and hide himself among unsculptured tombstones. Left to thyself, thou art full of kindness; so unsuspecting, easily pleased, ready to lend thine aid to make every one comfortable; wilt sing or play, or repeat verses, dance, and make thyself agreeable even before the smallest greatness. Thou wert a good creature until cunning men took advantage of thy kind nature and simplicity, and spoilt thee with too much flattery. We would that thy name had been more euphonious, but as "the rose by any other name would smell as sweet," so we doubt not that, maugre thy unseemly appellation, thou wilt still continue to amuse, and be worshipped in the world, when we who have rehearsed a few of thy many qualities are forgotten. In conclusion, and with reverence be it spoken, we believe that the greatest number of thy followers are the best and kindest-hearted of the human race. And here we end our chapter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BEN BRUST PREPARES FOR HIS "GENTEEL PARTY"—HOW HE CONSULTS WITH BETTY ABOUT THE PLATES, ETC.—COUSIN WILLIAM'S LETTER ACCEPTING THE INVITATION TO DINNER—ALSO SHEWING HOW "A BIRD IN THE HAND IS WORTH TWO IN THE BUSH," WHICH IS ILLUSTRATED BY BEN'S "SECOND COURSE."

It was a busy day, that which preceded Ben's dinner, and many a one stopped to look at the piece of beef he had bought for the occasion, and which weighed full twenty pounds; for he would let no one pass by whom he could entice in, without shewing them his prime sirloin, and asking with a look of triumph, "If they had iver

seen owt like it in their lives." Then Ben rubbed a little more salt on it, vowing all the while it would eat as tender as a chicken; and again waited at the door, in his shirt sleeves, to catch a new admirer; and we do verily believe that he would have quarreled with any man who had dared to have spoken a word against his beef. It was such a day of preparation as had never before been seen in Ben's cottage; and even Mrs. Brust had to run out at least ten times to tell Mrs. Cawthry how she progressed with her pie and custard, and to shew them what Ben had brought home for her to put in to make them good. Ben picked the gooseberries for the pie, and chopped up the candied lemon, which he fancied would give it a superior flavour: then he watched Betty make the crust, and told her not to spare the dripping, and when once it was put in the oven, Benjamin was in his element; for it was his delight to see that it did regularly, and came out a rich crispy brown. Then he had the eggs to beat up for the custard, and to pick the currants, and taste if it was sweet enough; and had not Betty snatched the spoon away, it is a question whether or not Ben would have left off until he had emptied the basin. "A little more spice, my lass," said he, "and that 'ill be a custard fit for a queen. Lors how I shall enjoy it!" After this, Ben had to look up the knives and forks, and to clean them; and never was there such a motley turn-out as he raked together. Here a fork wanted a haft, another a tine, a third with a white handle had to match with a black-hafted knife; but Ben laid them side by side, counted them, and finding the number agree with his guests, said, "They 'll dow capital when they 've hed a bit of a rub up."

Then Betty had to look up her crockery, and found that she had plates enow, and a few over if she used the white ones which were cracked nearly across, and the blue-edged one with five pieces out, which made it of the "Vandyke pattern."

"How am I to go in with the pie and custard, Ben?" said Betty, "it isn't genteel to eat these things off the same plate that you do your meat, when they're all over grease, and salt, and cold gravy."

"They mun turn 'em bottom uppermost," said Ben, "the under side 'ill be clean enough, I'll warrant it; else rub all the gravy up we' a piece of bread; or teck their tongues to it, which is the best way: I do so mysen often."

"Nay, that won't do," said Betty. "I mun give 'em a rub out in the hot water that I boil the potatoes in, at the same time as I wipe the knives and forks."

"That aint a bad thought," answered Ben; "but I shan't want a plate mysen, coss thou sees when I've helped 'em all to a little bit a piece, I can eat my wack out o' the dish with a spewn. It's no use weshing a plate for me."

"That looks so, Ben!" said his spouse, "for you hev to open your mouth so wide with that big table spewn. I wish, for my part, you could hev done wehout the pie and custard; they'll put me a deal about, weshing the plates and things: you ought niver to give a second course, Ben."

"Why, I would do wehout it if I hedn't promised;" said Ben, "only thou sees I've mentioned it; and farmer Kitchen said he should think much o' the pie and custard, and promised hissen a treat. But if thou likes, we'll eat 'em both up for supper to-night, and say nowt about 'em. They'll hev lots of beef, thou knows, and sich beef—Lors!" Ben wiped his mouth, for the very mention of it made him hungry.

"No, we musn't do soe," replied Betty; "I hope, Ben, thou'll conduct thysen very becomingly, and don't think of tasting a morsel thysen, till iverybody else is sarved. And don't, prythee, don't pull the dishes to thee with the pie and custard in, after thou'st given 'em a spewnful a-piece, and eat all up. Nor dip thy tater in the gravy on the dish, and then in the salt-cellar. And be sure and wipe thy mouth on thy coat-sleeve before te (thou) drinks."

"I'll try to remember," answered Ben; "but don't go to lets hev any more of thy hints how to Eat-a-cat, as they call that book; coss thou knows how unlucky it turned out last time. I've a good mind to ax Walter Northcot and Sir Edward Lee to come; there'll be plenty for 'em, and a finer piece of beef nobody can sit down to. We might borrow another, and a knife and fork or two. I like Walter much, and Gideon can't come."

"Lors, how thou talks, Ben!" said Betty, "however does te' think I could wesh up and do before them. Beside, real gentlefolks, sich as they are, hev roast beef ivery day in the week; and I'm sure I couldn't 'bide th' house if sich grand people were to come. Don't think of sich a thing. I dare say that real gentlefolks hev roast beef all the year round."

"But they can't hev a finer piece than that," said Ben, pointing to the dish, "and surely twenty pounds would be enough for six folks beside thysen. But happen they wouldn't come if I ax'd 'em. What time will cousin William be here? I hope he won't come before

dinner's ready; if he does, he's sure to want me to cut him a slice off before the beef's done: he's the very devil for fresh meat."

"O! he sent a letter by Turner, the carrier, to-day," said Betty, "and talks of starting by four in the morning; so he'll be here early."

Betty handed the letter from the mantel-piece, and Ben twisted it every way, as if he hoped to arrive at its contents by turning it upside down; when returning it, he said, "Thou knows I can only read book-print by spelling it first: thou 'rt the scholard; let's hear wha he says."

Betty smiled, and read as follows, saying, "It's a very feeling letter."

"DEAR COZEN BETTY AND BEN.—John Herod cummed to Winthorpe yesterday, just ass I had dun my second plate of cabbage and bacon, and woz helping mysen two a third slize of fat, which woz bewteefull. He telled me all about the sovrin, and the beef, and your luv two me, and the custard, and the pie, and I sharpened my pocket-knife after dinner to bee reddy. I shan't eat no breckfast, soe I shall cum in prime fettle. Farmer Jones had a cow died in coveing, and I think the beef wood be as well baked ower puttatees, coss o' th' fat—pardon my hoppinyon. Mrs. Clay died onn Mundee, agehed 84. I promise mysen a treat in the pie and custard. I've never tasted one since ant Patty died, when she left mee five pound to bye morning, to goe in black. I shall be there to the minnit—twenty pounds, John sed; I reckon it 'ill take ommost three hours, if it 's roasted thro. We had a peece same size at ant's berrin (funeral), but it warnt dun well. I hope your 's will bee. I helped to carry poor Mrs. Clay to her grave, and we had a nice bit of ham after wee cummed frae church, and sum fair ale, poor thing she brewed it hersen, but itt tasted ower much o' th' hopp, which woss a pitty. I wished she'd bean alive as I mite hev telled her. I telled her sun soe, an he gaped. The berry-pie 'ill want plenty of suggar, my coff's better. I found that parry-gorrick do mee a deel of gud, and soe no more till Fryday till the beef's about reddy, when if I'm famished I shall mak shift wi' a sop till it's dun. And soe your 's till then wi' all luv. W. LONGBOTTOM.

"Postscrape.—Tell Ben the berry-pie's eaten wi' cheese in genteel sossighiety. I thought I'd menchen it, coss of farmer Kitchin. Custard 's my faveritt, coss it's lightest. I shall teck my bitters as hewshall, they give me a happytight. If Ben carves tell him to cut mine thick, an lotts of fatt. Cabbage is just prime now, pees aint

amiss. I thinks the best puttatees is the redd-eyed kidnees. Be sure I shall cumm if I live. Ned and Patty send their luv, and 'ill bee gladd to sea you boath when they kill the next pig, which, please God, they think 'ill be about Crissemais. Little Jonny's hed the mezzles, but's better, I wish it hed been mutton instead, but beef's good meat, and I've hed nowt but bacon niver sin I've been here, but I will say it's prime, soe no moor, as the old song says. I hope I shan't hev to carve."

"It's a pritty letter, aint it," said Betty? folding it up and replacing it on the mantel-piece. "How feelingly he speaks of Mrs. Clay, and Farmer Jones's calf, and aunt Patty, and Johnny's measles, don't he Ben?"

"He does," said Ben, looking at the fire with one eye shut, "and the pie and custard, and the beef. I don't like that mention about his knife and the physic, coss I know what he did at Besthorpe wehout sich help, when he eat the best half of my prime leg. He's a rare appetite, Betty, and a long-bottom to his stomach as well as his name. But he shall hev a fair share of the pie and custard, and no more. Wehout you'll meck up your mind to eat 'em to-night at supper, then they'll be no more bother about the plates. I should like a taste: there'll be lots of good beef, thou knows, lovey, and a bit of prime cheese to finish wi', and what would the king hev more?"

"Nay, I won't touch a bit, Ben, till the company comes," answered Betty, shaking her head. "I shall put 'em on the shelf over the door to cool when they're done, and grate a little lump sugar over the pie to meck it look frosty, and niver look at 'em again till to-morrow."

"Well, well!" said Ben, "Ill try to do the same. But lors! Betty, the smell of that custard's enough to tempt a saint. But I'll just cut a thin slice off the beef, to taste how it eats, and think no more of neither the pie nor the custard."

"You'll spoil the looks of it if you do," said Betty, seizing the knife; "do meck shift for one day wi' a bit of bread and cheese, and behave like a Christian: remember, to-morrow 'ill soon be here."

"Well, I'll try," said Ben, "but bread and cheese is poor stuff for a healthy man like me. And to-morrow! life's uncertain Betty, you remember what the parson said on Sunday, 'man cometh up like a flower, and's cut down again afore you can say Jack Robinson,' and we mightn't live to taste neither of that beautiful sirloin, nor a morsel of that pie, nor custard. And to think of anybody

else eating 'em! but I'll try, though I think if I smelt it when it was just getting brown, I couldn't lay easy in my coffin."

But Ben lived to see that morrow, though it was ushered in with the "heavy clouds" of Betty's wrath, for Benjamin had got up in the night, and cut off and eaten a slice of the beef, while his wife slept, and he endeavoured to console her with the assurance, "that there would be still plenty, and to spare." Poor Ben! he tried to sleep on bread and cheese, but could not, while there was so much beef in the house; and while under the same roof there stood untouched a gooseberry pie, and a custard almost all eggs.

Ben bore his wife's abuse in the morning most manfully, for his attention was directed to the fire, which by ten o'clock was one mass of glowing red. That morning Ben had no breakfast, which Betty attributed to the self-denial he was undergoing in order to be ready for the dinner; but Ben had other reasons for declining the basin of skimmed milk which farmer Kitchen furnished gratis daily, and which would have put to shame the antique "new" of mighty London, even if the close-court-kept grain-fed cow, was milked at the very door.

But we will not detain our readers with a description of Ben's cookery, suffice it that it outdid his former exploit with the mutton; we will not tell how he perspired, and went to the door many times during the morning for air, wiping his honest brow on his shirt-sleeve; and proud he was of the fragrance which issued from his cottage, and which more than one stopped to inhale. Cousin William came half-an-hour before time, and he won Ben's heart at once, by saying, he had never set eyes on a sweeter piece of beef in his life, then added, "the pie and custard's cold in course."

"Baked yesterday," answered Betty, "and made as rich as those I used to make when I lived cook with Colonel Sipthorpe."

"Mustn't over-lay with beef then," said William, and he took out his huge clasp-knife, and run his finger along the edge, adding, "I think it would cut a air in two."

The potatoes and cabbage were both done to "a wabble," as the country-wives call the bubbling of a boiling pot, and which is synonimous in roasting, with "done to a turn." And while Betty was straining them at the door, she exclaimed "Here comes farmer Kitchen, and John Ostler, teck the beef from the fire, Ben."

Cousin William held the dish, while Ben took down the beef, and said, "Remember a middle cut for me Ben, the outside eats best cold."

Farmer Kitchen entered and shook Ben by the hand, while the latter returned the friendly grasp, and pointed in triumph to the joint, saying, " is that nowt, eh?"

" It looks well, anyhow," said the honest Farmer; " and I think there will be a bit left for cousin William this time, for its larger than the loin."

" I made it up since then, Sir," said William, laughing, " out of that prime leg you've heard of, that we had at Besthorpe."

" Come, come," said Ben, smiling good-humouredly, " and be thankful you're not tecken in this time; you'll be kind enough to carve Mr. Kitchen."

" That I will Ben," answered the Farmer; and he proceeded like a good workman, cutting across the whole length of the ribs, and helping them to such slices as hung over the edges of their plates. The farmer had made his usual luncheon of bread, bacon, cheese, and good ale, and felt not so hungry as either the host or his other guests. It was a pleasure to him to sit and see, how rapidly mouthful after mouthful vanished, nor would he allow Mrs. Brust to wait at the table, but made her sit down while he himself attended to their wants, helping them to bread, cabbage, potatoes, and beef, and snatching a mouthful himself as he could.

" Remember the pie and custard," said Betty, as cousin William was about to be helped a fourth time to the beef. " I can promise you, you'll hev such a treat as you hevn't hed for some time, for I put twelve new-laid eggs in the custard, beside spice and sugar, and it was every drop new milk, and the crust made of sweet fresh butter, and I'm sure the pie 'ill melt in your mouth."

" He can but fill his belly," said Ben, who began to shew rather uneasy symptoms, as he finished his last plate of beef.

" I'll find room enough for your second course, as the quality folk call it, niver fear me," said cousin William; " I should hev eaten about a pound more, hedn't it been for the pie and custard."

" I've left a little space for them, myself," said the Farmer. " I hope the eggs turned out well Mrs. Brust?"

" Beautiful," answered Betty, " the yellows were the colour of gold, and the whites clear as a bell. I'm sure you'll like it, though I say so as shouldn't."

The Ostler said nothing, while Ben looked out at the door, for Betty was already washing the plates in readiness for what William called " the second course." Ben helped to wipe the knives, and

strange to say, whistled all the time, although the tune seemed to savour more of melancholy than of merriment.

"I think," said cousin William, "that of all things upon earth man ought to be the most thankful, for look here farmer Kitchen, a horse gets his hay or corn, grass or water, and looks for no more. While us Christians are indulged in luxuries. Here we put aside this beautiful beef, which it's really a pity to leave, and now we are going to enjoy custard and pie, and sich delicacies as a king of Britain a thousand years ago niver knowed! But they do say men were stronger when they drank watter and eat acorns, and niver hed a fire to cook their meat,—happen they were. But here comes the custard."

"Bless me," said Betty, descending from the stool, and placing an empty dish on the table, "I've made a mistake, and yet I thought I'd baked it in that dish," and she again mounted the stool, for the dishes were placed on a shelf over the doorway. Ben looked on the floor, scratched his head and said nothing.

"It looks as if there had been sommut nicish in this dish," said cousin William, leaning over the table, and taking a narrow survey. "But its empty enough now however."

"Ben, you brute, you hev, I know you hev," said Betty, still standing on the stool, and displaying a very small portion indeed of the gooseberry pie in the next dish. "You've eaten every morsel of the custard, and left no more pie than would do for a babby three months old. O! I shall faint, to think how I'm disgraced we you, you unmannerly glutton."

"What! are we done again?" said cousin William, drawing the morsel of pie that remained towards him, and finishing it at two mouthfuls. "Why, dash thy buttons Ben, this is worse than iver! but it does taste 'moorish.'"

Farmer Kitchen threw himself back in his chair and laughed aloud, neither could the Ostler refrain, for there was such a look of mingled roguishness, guilt, and humour in Ben's countenance, as he proceeded in his defence, that it rendered the scene highly comical.

"I'll tell you what it is," said Ben, "I'm guilty and no mistake. But its all Betty's fault, for yesterday she wouldn't allow me owt but bread and cheese for dinner, when I knew if we'd done two or three pounds of that beef, there would still hev been lots, and to spare. Well I went to bed, and neither tasted o'th' beef, pie, nor custard, although I may say I was half-famished. But sleep I

E. Lambert.

Ben Brust's second course.

couldn't, though I tried—it might be the smell of the pie, or custard that kept me wacken, be that as it might I could not sleep a wink. So you see I got up and set by the fire, which happened to be a pretty good 'un. Well, I caught sight o'th' the beef, it was the sight as tempted me! so I hed a frizzle. Well, do you no, when that was done, somehow or other I caught a glance o'th' dish with the custard in it, and I thought I should like to taste, only just a spoonful. I did so, and it was just like a jug of good ale, where one glass helps down another. I tasted, and tasted, till I eat it all, for I knew Betty would make a row when she fun it out that I'd hed a bit, and I knew she couldn't do no more when I'd eaten it all. I did stop two or three times, but it was of no manner of use, for somehow the spoon seemed to come up to my mouth by itsen like. It's a good prayer that, 'deliver us from temptation,' and I'll try to remember it in future."

"O Ben! Ben!" exclaimed Betty, "and not to call me up to hev a taste, but it sarves me right for not locking it up in my own safe. O that iver I should hev hed you, when I might hev married a footman to a real gentleman. Reach me my smelling bottle, or I shall sink off my chair:" she took a pinch of snuff, while cousin William handed the smelling-bottle from the mantel-piece.

"But the pie, the pie Ben!" said farmer Kitchen, his laughter still unabated, "you didn't finish that at the same time did you?"

"No, not at the same time," answered Ben, "that was another affair, and I niver meddled with it till this morning. And I'm sure I niver thought about it, till I happened to catch the sight o'th' crust, and it looked so crispy-brown and tempting-like, I couldn't for the world help breaking a bit off. And when I'd once begun, I fun it as bad to leave off as I did on the custard, and to tell the truth I eat all I could. But as my wife wisely says, for she knows my weakness in these things, it's all her fault, for if she'd locked 'em up I couldn't hev gotten at 'em, wehout breaking the safe open, and she knows I niver did that in my life."

"But you once got up, you no' you did," said Betty, "and took the keigh (key) out of my pocket, and eat the whole of the pork-pie, which weighed four pounds, and which my cousin Bella sent over from Brompton."

"I did, I did my wench," answered Ben; "but thou knows I'd been a long way that day, and was very hungry, an' if thou remembers I brought home a sheep's head and pluck to meck it up. But I

hevn't eaten the cheese—we'll trouble thee for a bit of that if te' pleases. They reckon it good for digestion, Mr. Kitchen; cousin William, thoul't find it prime Cheshire, you no' what a good judge my wife is."

"I'll try a bit more beef," said William, getting up and helping himself, for it stood on the opposite table. "It 'ill do to fill up we, though I'd thought a deal about the pie and custard. But I'm thankful things are no worse, for I hed my doubts last night, as I was saying my prayers, about the beef."

Betty was so bad that she was forced to put off her tea-party; the neighbours did say that Ben had eaten the plum-cake she made, but Ben said he had seen his dog run out with something as big as a basin. And so ended the dinner, which Ben gave to his "genteel party," and before night it was talked about all over the village, and many a customer at the Blue-bell asked the Ostler how he liked the flavour of Ben Brust's pie and custard.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW WALTER NORTHCOT WAS DISMISSED FROM THE HALL OF BURTON WOODHOUSE, AND THE LADIES "TOOK UP CUDGELS" FOR HIM—WITH A LITTLE MUSIC "RATHER SOFT;" AND A HOMELY DEFENCE MADE BY BEN BRUST.

Sir Edward Lee entered the hall of his forefathers with a clouded brow and a heavy heart—for he was conscious that he had dealt uprightly with Walter Northcot, had kept no secret from him, but had entrusted his reputation, and the cause of all his care to the young man's confidence; and great was the anguish he felt at the thought that he had been deceived. Had his favourite daughter Amy played him false, he could not have felt greater pain; for hitherto he believed Walter to be all that was upright and honourable in man. The poison that Banes infused into the Baronet's brain, "worked well" for the villain's purpose.

Walter was in the summer-parlour when the Baronet entered. He was accompanying Amy on the harp. Sir Edward waited in sullen silence until the song was ended, then beckoned the young man aside, and they entered a private room.

We will half-draw the curtain over this interview, which, on the

part of the Baronet was stormy as dark December, while Walter listened with knit brow and burning cheek, and only said, "You believe me guilty then, and refuse to hear any explanation?"

"I do," said the Baronet, "and from this moment insist that you will never approach my daughter again, or dare to set foot within my doors."

"I will obey you, Sir," answered Walter. "It is enough that you believe me guilty. I crave not the company of any man who for a moment could think so meanly of me. If I were guilty, I should be unworthy of his notice; but I am innocent, and he is beneath mine."

Walter left the hall without uttering another word. He was a man of proud spirit, and, conscious of his innocence, disdained to stoop to an explanation. He thought the Baronet had known his character too well to entertain even a thought that he was guilty of the crime laid to his charge; for only to hint suspicion would have set his proud blood in a ferment; for he felt that he had a soul incapable of prostituting itself to so base and unmanly a purpose as that of which he was accused.

And here we will take the liberty to hint, how careful a person ought to be, before he attacks the character of a man which has long stood fair with the world; but above all, one with whom he has been intimate, or has sincerely respected. For be it remembered, that we either pass over the assault of a stranger in the street, or resent it on the spot; but an insult from one with whom we have long been friendly cannot so soon be pardoned; for then there are other feelings to appease, and it too often happens that the heart never returns to its former state, but that the foot which trampled on its kindness, leaves the mark there for ever—the wound which death can only heal. Coleridge, 'the old man eloquent,' has given a beautiful illustration of this feeling in his inimitable "Christabel," beginning with—

"'T is said they had been friends in youth," etc.

But returning to the Baronet. After the departure of Walter, he joined his family, and narrated all that he had heard, adding also a high eulogium on the character of Banes, and not failing to tell them how the gamekeeper had interceded for the pardon of Walter Northcot, which, he said, confirmed the truth beyond all doubt, and did credit to the heart of the keeper.

"It is false! I would pledge my life that he is innocent!" said Amy, springing up, and overturning her harp as she rose, while her beautiful brow crimsoned, and her eyes flashed—like those of an angry ring-dove that springs up from its nest to defend its young. And in that brief look of beautiful passion, her face bore a strong resemblance to her father's, in the curled lip and the scornful nostril. She stood like the gentle Psyche enraged—it was but for a moment—then her head sank—the crimson on her cheek faded—her eyes glanced on the floor—and she added, in a melancholy tone—(O how unlike the first words she uttered!)—"It is false,—or there is no truth in man."

Her father gazed on her in speechless silence. He had never before seen such an expression in her countenance. A poet would have said, that it was as though the Goddess of Love had sprung suddenly from her couch of flowers, and seizing the trumpet of Mars, sounded the war-cry of the God of Battle on Olympus, with eye dilated, and bare white arm upraised,—then sank again upon her bed of bloom. It was the sudden courage of daring love—or in plainer words, it was that little morsel of pretty devilry which was given woman at her birth, just to save her from being an angel—the iron link in the golden chain of her divinity—the alloy that first prevented her from being too pure, and of which too many grains converts into base coin.

"I do not believe a word of what the gamekeeper has uttered," said Lady Lee. "It is a plot between him and Bellwood, and so you will discover in the end. I would answer for the innocence of Walter Northcot, were my life at the stake. I have known him from a child. His actions are written in his looks. Sir Edward, you have made a confidant of that fellow Banes too long. No one saving yourself speaks well of him. He is disliked by all your tenants. The poorest cottagers shake their heads when he passes. Send for Walter back this instant, and confess that you have done him wrong. Only to entertain such an unjust thought of him, is too great an injury, without dismissing him unheard. It is adding insult to injustice."

Amy moved to the side of her mother, and seizing her hand, let fall a tear while she kissed it; and Lady Lee returned the kind pressure of her daughter, while defending her lover; and when she had done speaking, threw her arm around Amy's neck, as if to say, "I will be thy defence."

"A few hours ago," said the Baronet, "and I should have spoken of him as you have done. But can you believe that there is a man so base as to forge a story of such a serious nature as this? And that the very same man should entertain as great a respect for the party as I myself do, and should even intercede for his pardon? Human nature is not yet so debased. A college-life has changed many a young man; that is all the excuse I can find for Mr. Northcot. I speak from neither angry nor selfish feelings, Lady Lee, but I will not see my daughter insulted. Surely it was enough that I was content to throw her away upon one with very humble prospects—that I consulted her happiness before ——"

He was unable to proceed; and throwing himself into the nearest chair, he pressed his forehead, and exclaimed—"I have deserved it all."

"Dear father," said Amy, springing to his side in an instant, and throwing her arms around his neck, "believe me, Walter is innocent. Remember, the poor woman is herself distraught. Think me not so mad, that I would disgrace myself with entertaining a further thought of him if I believed him guilty. Let him be heard for my sake. O send for him back! You have always been kind to *me!*" The Baronet pressed her hand between his own; but was silent.

"You know Bellwood is his enemy," continued Lady Lee; "have owned that he is base enough to enter into any plan that would serve his own guilty ends. How happens it, that he and the gipsy should be on the spot at the time? and how unbecoming is it of any one with the pretensions of a gentleman to mingle with such characters as a familiar, which you well know he has done. Assuredly the statement of Walter and poor Ben Brust, as they call him, than whom I have heard you say a more honest and simple man lives not in all Lincolnshire, would, even in the severest court, go before the word of such a man as Bellwood, or that of the notorious gipsy."

"Were I their judge," said Lavinia, "I should need no more evidence than their looks. I could trust poor Ben in anything or anywhere—but the larder. As for that Banes, I never can bear to look at him. His treatment of Ellen Giles is sufficient to tell any one what he is. Do allow me to ring the bell, father, and send John for Ben Brust."

"I will do it myself," said Lady Lee; and the order was immediately given.

"Ben was not by when the assault was committed," said the

Baronet. "But I believe the poor fellow to be honest, and will hear what he has to say. You think too harshly of Banes. It was with reluctance he told the truth. I wish I may have been deceived. If I have, my gamekeeper is the greatest of villains."

"No one doubts it but yourself, father," said Lavinia. Amy sat down to the piano as she spoke, and her father's answer was drowned in tones of music, which at first were more loud than sweet. But the air soon changed to a low, sweet melancholy,—for Amy excelled all her fair compeers, as well on the piano as on the harp; and strange were the effects those sounds produced on the Baronet. She struck up a low, wailing tune, that breathed of love and sorrow. It seemed to speak to the heart, as if the very notes dropped tears,—as if a nightingale chanted over a dying couch, and that death-bed was a pile of all sweet flowers. Then came the tones of memory—notes that seemed as if they sounded afar off, full of sweet sadness, but ever and anon bursting on the heart like sudden sunshine on a landscape, and breaking the gloomy melancholy with pensive pleasure,—a kind of mournful gladness—a sanctifying of all that has been dear to us, which seemed to come and go, like waves of the ocean—sounds which played with the feelings of the past, making pain a pleasure—such tones as no one can feel unless they have loved—have lost dear friends, and buried a part of their affections in the cold, dark grave. Strange is the power of music on sensitive feelings! Those very tones wafted the mind of the Baronet back twenty long years. He sat with his eyes closed, and memory ran over many a forgotten incident. He recalled moonlight walks with his wife—the sound of sweet waters that had babbled at their feet when they were much younger—the dreamy motion of trees—her own whispers when he led her in virgin white, to the church where his forefathers had for centuries, knelt and prayed—silent hours, when they sat beside the couch of their firstborn, who was hovering between life and death—the rain pattering on the trees—the very sound of the low wind without—the tread of muffled feet on the floor,—until room, wife and child all arose before him; and Lady Lee, as beautiful as she was on the dawn of her bridal day. And he unconsciously edged the chair nearer to where she sat, and for the first time for many a day took her hand, and pressed it to his lips, then held it between his own, while tear followed tear down his cheeks. He thought not then of Ellen Giles; or, if she did cross his memory, it only caused him to grasp the hand of his wife more warm, as if to own how much he had wronged her.

AMY LEE PLAYING TO HER FATHER.

O tell me, dear reader! dost thou think that aught but the "joy in heaven over a sinner that repenteth" can excel what we feel, while here below, when taking again to the heart what we once dearly loved, and what has long been estranged from it?

But perhaps thou didst never hug a dear, fallen creature — never open thy heart anew, and bleed over it, mingling thy grief with tears—wishing for death then, lest the cruel world might again cut asunder all those fond affections — feeling it was a time when it would have been no pain to have died; when the heart felt its injuries no more, but gushed out in all its love, and forgiveness, and pity! Then, and only then, are we what God created us. That is the moment when we could lay all our crimes at the feet of the Omnipotent; and kneeling with downcast eyes, and pleading only with silent tears, listen to that fiat which would be fraught with the music of mercy. This is the repentance of love—the religion that has no fear.

At that hour Sir Edward Lee was a changed man.

But where is Ben Brust and John the footman all this time? Ben was asleep in his chair by the fire when the footman entered, for Ben had no knocker to the door; it was only "pull the bobbin, and the latch went up," whether it was the Wolf, or little Red Riding Hood that called. Ben was asleep, his belly full, and his heart at ease; he had never done any injury, and therefore felt no remorse: his boots

stood on the hearth, side by side, containing no more care than himself. True, an extra slice of mutton, a pie or a custard, did at times flit across his conscience—but nothing more. He had never missed a chance in his life of doing good when he could; had never caused a fellow-creature a moment's wilful pain; and the worst wish we have towards our readers is, that they may all fall asleep with as quiet a conscience, and awake with as good an appetite as honest Ben Brust. "If I see a bad, griping, pinch-gut sort of a fellow," said Ben once, "and have to eat wi' him, I tuck in all I can, and bless mysen to think that Heaven gave me a great appetite to punish him." This was Ben's highest notion of vengeance. And he fought on the same principle that he eat; he had no malice in either of these occupations; jaw-work or arm-work was to Ben the same. And there he sat asleep in his chair, his wife in bed, and the door unlocked, as it had been for hundreds of nights; for Ben used to say in the morning, "There's nowt worth heving but me, my wench, and they would sooner keep me a week than a fortnight. I often wish that somebody would run away wi' me that keeps a good cupboard; you would soon see how glad they would be to pay my coach-fare home again."

Ben sat with his legs stretched out, his breeches-knees unbuttoned, his neckerchief off, and a smile on his face, even in sleep; for if he did dream of anything, it was only of the quantity of roast beef there was left cold for the morrow. They might raise corn or taxes, or go to war, it was all as one to Ben; only leave him room on the road to drive his sheep and bullocks, and they might do as they liked.

Ben yawned when the door opened, and, taking up his boots, was soon ready to attend the footman, who, during their walk to the Hall did not fail to communicate what he had heard of the business, for the parlour door was ajar while the conversation which we have recorded took place.

"Whew!" said Ben, giving a long whistle, "I smell a rat my boy, and 'ill put 'em all to rights in a brace of shakes, see now if I don't."

Ben entered the hall unabashed, making a quick kind of a bow, as if a hundred-weight had dropped on his neck for a second, and been as suddenly taken off again, and saying, "My sarvice to you, Sir Edward; my sarvice to you, ladies," he stood as upright as honesty itself, and listened to the inquiries of the Baronet without once interrupting him until he had done.

"I'll tell you wot it is, Sir Edward," said Ben in his turn, "two bigger villains niver went unhung than the gamekeeper and the

squire: the gipsy's no great shakes, but he's the best in the bunch. It isn't wot I saw altogether, for when I came up, Black Boswell had fast hold of Walter, and I made him leave goe nation soon. But the young gentleman telled me hissen, when we were walking home, that he heard the poor mad-woman scream, and then saw her fall down as if she was shot; and when he picked her up and was trying to bring her round, like as any man of feeling would, why out pops Banes and the gipsy, and up comes the thief of a squire. And they all at once began to lie as fast as a racehorse gallops, and said Walter was going to play the devil-and-all with the woman. Now your honour knows that the sun niver shined on a better, or a kinder-hearted gentleman than Mr. Northcot. I wish your honour was no worse a man. But I'm d——," added Ben, stamping his heavy stick on the floor, "if he's capable of harming a flea, much more of laying hands on owt that wears a petticoat. I saw him t'other day in the village go up to a poor tramp-woman wi' a bairn on her back, and he tuck her to old Coles the cobbler, and bought her a pair of second-hand shoes, then went with her into the Blue Bell and ordered the landlord to fill her belly, and then he gave her half-a-crown out of his own pocket, besides paying for a bed for her. I heard the landlady tell all about it, and I'm sure she cried while she telled it, and so did I to hear her," said Ben, raising the cuff of his coat to his eyes; "and she said it would have moved a stone to hev seen the poor woman kneel down and kiss Walter's hand before he went. And then to think of him meddling wi' that poor mad-woman—I'm ashamed of your honour for harbouring sich a thought. By G— I am, and I tell you soe to your face. I ax pardon, ladies, for swearing; but I'm d—— savage, and that's the truth, to think as anybody can be sich fools as to believe that Mr. Walter would hurt a sucking babby."

"God bless you, Ben," said Amy, seizing his hard hand between her own, which looked like a clod of clay enfolded with daisies; then blushing at what she had done, she added, "I knew that he was innocent."

Ben wiped his mouth, and would have given her a kiss, only he thought, as he said after, "Happen the Baronet mightn't hev liked it." As it was, however, he squeezed her hands between his own, and said "Innocent! hey my bonny lass, as innocent as thysen, and I would say soe, if it were to be my last 'speak,' an' I were dying." Ben then proceeded to tell them of his interview with the poor

woman: which we have already described in the thirteenth Chapter. Also giving them, so far as he knew, her whole history, from the time he nursed her on his knee, up to the period of her seduction by Bellwood, the loss of her child, which fell into the pond and was drowned, and how Banes met with her in the wood, while she wandered in search of it. Nor did he fail to hit hard on the Baronet, when he came to speak of Ellen Giles.

Sir Edward Lee listened attentively, and as our readers are aware, was well acquainted with many a fact which to Lady Lee and her daughters were all new. And although the Baronet did feel that he had been too hasty with Walter, and now believed that he was innocent, still he thought that Banes might have been led to take the view that he had done of the matter, through some preconcerted plot between Bellwood and the gipsy. In a word, he still believed, that although the account of the gamekeeper was false, and Walter was innocent, that Banes had been imposed upon by black Boswell and Bellwood.

Such, or something very near it, was his summary of the transaction. But Ben took a right view of the business, and got so enraged, that he called Banes all "the villains he could lay his tongue to." And repeated all the infamous acts he could remember which the gamekeeper had been guilty of, nor was the catalogue a brief one.

When Ben had done, all the ladies together attempted to force money upon him, and more than one sovereign glistened in Amy's white hand.

"No, no!" said Ben, pushing each fair arm gently back, and planting his stick as firmly as a pillar before him. "No! it shall niver be said, as Ben was paid for speaking the truth, and defending the innocent. If I'd dun a bit of fighting for you, same as I did for Mr. Walter the other day, why I would hev tecken a shilling to hev drunk your healths with. Then addressing the Baronet, he said, "Depend upon it your honour, the long and the short of it in the end will be, that you'll find this Banes the biggest thief, and liar, and villain, and scoundrel, that iver escaped a honest gallows, an' I niver spoke an ill word of a man in my life, though I say it, if he didn't desarve it."

Ben departed, but only into the servants' hall, where Lady Lee had given orders for the best the house afforded to be set before him, and before going he shook them all by the hand, not even omitting the Baronet, for there was so much of what is happily called "plain

sailing" in Ben's conduct, that Sir Edward Lee took the honest hand of Ben Brust, and shook it warmly.

Ben was a child of nature, and although he did not conduct himself as a finished gentleman would have done in the hall of the Baronet, yet neither etiquette nor education could have given that sincerity and earnestness of manner which he possessed, for truth was stamped on his brow, and there was that persuasion in his looks which surpassed all eloquence.

That night, Ben got drunk in pledges to the happiness of Walter Northcot and Amy Lee; he "fought his battle o'er again with the gipsy," and he believed that Black Boswell would turn out a trump at last, "Because" said Ben, "he would have fought me fairly, if Walter Northcot hadn't hindered him." What he said of Banes and Bellwood our readers need be at no loss to guess.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN WHICH WE AGAIN VISIT THE GIPSY-ENCAMPMENT—ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE A NIGHT-SCENE IN THE WOOD — AN ADVENTURE OF WALTER NORTHCOT'S—THE KINDNESS OF JAEL, ETC.—THEN END WITH A MOST SLEEPY ADDRESS TO SLEEP, WHICH IF THE READER CAN KEEP AWAKE WHILE READING, BRINGS HIM TO THE END OF ANOTHER CHAPTER.

The night after the attack on Walter Northcot, Black Boswell was half-drunk when he returned to his camp in the wood, and came up in one of his sullen moods. He took a purse from his huge coat-pocket, which he threw into the lap of Jael, who was seated by the camp-fire, saying, as he jerked it towards her, "A curse light on the coward who gave it me, had I a son who possessed no more courage than the cur of a squire, I would cut his throat from ear to ear."

"Be not angered, father," said Jael, slipping the purse under her garment; "thy wrath will never mend him. I am glad you have found him out at last. He who sets on a dog to worry others, is the first to fly from its bite."

"Found him out, saidst thou?" echoed the gipsy; "why the young fellow Walter is worth a million such mongrels as Bellwood. I love a brave villain, but a cowardly scoundrel is what I hate worse than hell itself. I shall never forget how he stood when I offered him the loaded pistol, and the other mettlesome blade waited with

his ready cocked; the cur of a squire shook from head to heel; a man about to be hung could not have trembled worse, and when the other plucky lad fired off his pistol in the air, and called him a d—d coward, I saw Bellwood wink like a woman, and turn pale as a white-gate. I hate a coward," said he, throwing himself down by the fire: and resting on his elbows he gazed on the pile of burning wood, in long, and thoughtful silence.

"Who does not," muttered Ishmael, patting the head of a huge shaggy dog which lay beside him; "here's Tiger knows one by the smell, dont you old fellow?" the dog licked his swarthy face by way of reply.

"I hope you'll never listen to his offers again, father," said Jael; "I know you honour a brave man, and why should you seek to molest Walter Northcot? I loved to listen, and hear you tell how you were wont to wage war with the strong, and how many a morning woke with the crow of the red-cock, and saw the injuries of the weak righted in a night, while no trace of the hand could be found which did the deed. You have not done these things since you knew this Bellwood."

"The strong pay better than the weak," answered the gipsy, his shaggy brows darkening and shrouding his eyes, which were thrown into deep shadow before the strong fire light. "I have done more good than evil in my day, but have always been best paid for the latter. Jael, say no more! Where is Israel?"

"Gone in search of the asses," answered Jael; "they strayed from the wood yesternight. Abaddon has gone with him, and they waited till dusk, that they might the better break open the pin-fold in which they have been locked up all day, if the tidings we heard are true."

"May they break the Pinder's head to boot," said Boswell; then turning to a young woman he said, "Winifred, my dell[1] was the pad[2] benar?[3] did you ply your fambles[4] among the ruffmans,[5] and cloy[6] the duds?"[7]

"Hye, by my salomon![8] I did," replied Winifred laughing; "I gave them ben-whids[9] for their cackling-cheats,[10] and have lambed[11]

[1] Dell—young woman. [2] Pad—road, highway. [3] Benar—better.
[4] Fambles—hands. [5] Ruffmans—hedges. [6] Cloy—steal, take away.
[7] Duds—clothes. [8] Salomon—oath. [9] Ben-whids—good words.
[10] Cackling-cheats—poultry. [11] Lambed—beaten.

Black Boswell's encampment.

all the harmenbecks,[1] and deserve a gage of ben-bouse[2] before I go to my strummel[3] this darkmen."[4]

"May thou never trine,[5] Winifred," said the gipsy; "but I must couch-a-hogshead[6] for my lamps[7] grow dasened.[8] Jael, be thou the bluffer."[9]

The gipsy threw his full length on the greensward before the fire, while Jael half filled a horn with spirits and handed it to Winifred. No sooner was Boswell laid down, than a huge mastiff stretched itself at his feet, and opening its eyes at every sound which rose above the drowsy murmuring of the leaves, kept a sullen and silent watch over his master.

There was a look of wild and savage repose about the gipsy-camp, at that hour of the night, as the strong red fire-light flashed upon the trunks of the tall trees which rose dark and high with their branches and thickly-leaved tops, and seemed to support the deep blue of the sky, with all its golden-inlay of stars. Here, a mass of foliage caught the full effect of the flames, which rose high above the tops of the tents, and stood in a dusky-kind of golden light, a broken bronzy hue, that partook of all shades of sad colouring, like the gloomy effects of a strong eclipse of the sun. There the light glanced off, and left a horrid mass of darkness,—a black gulf between the overhanging umbrage, like a hideous cavern guarded by tall giants, for such seemed the high boles of the armed trees which alone caught the full reflection of the blazing fire. Further on was a depth of impenetrable gloom; a huge shaggy pile, footed with closely-woven underwood; gnarled and aged hawthorns, knotted crab-trees, and tall furze-bushes, reaching to the undermost boughs of the high trees which overhung them, and making the very noon-day like deep twilight, but at that hour looking blacker than the surrounding darkness. Even the very sounds which now and then broke in upon the silence of the scene, seemed to be in solemn harmony with it; as the wood-owl hooted in the dusky distance, and the raven gave a drowsy croak upon its nest, which was answered by the low barking of the prowling fox, or the far-off quaking of the corn-drake. A narrow woodland-stream also brawled near at hand, and trickled into a small lake at the far end of the glen or

[1] Harmenbecks—beadles. [2] A gage of ben-bouse—cup of liquor.
[3] Strummel—straw-bed. [4] Darkmen—night. [5] Trine—hang.
[6] Couch-a-hogshead—go to sleep. [7] Lamps—eyes. [8] Dasened—dim.
[9] Bluffer—host. Old cant phrases, a few of which the gipsies still retain.

valley, varying its incessant murmurs as it flowed over some broken fragment of stone, or was interrupted by the stem of a fallen tree. Then came the deadened roar of the leaves, now in one hollow moaning gust, as the wind arose, then sinking away in stifled sobbings, like a heart tortured with incessant pain.

Below, and giving life to the wild picture, lay the gipsy-encampment, with its arched tents and crackling fire; above which rose a column of blue smoke, that seemed to curl up to the summits of the tallest trees. Beside the fire lay Black Boswell, fast asleep, partially covered by the old red cloak which Jael had thrown over him, his face turned to the flames, and his barked and swarthy countenance, stern as knotted oak even in sleep, catching the full blaze of light which streamed upon it, and seemed to point out the many fiery eruptions which had there burst out: that face the blackened vestige of terrible throes, looking hard and fearful even in rest, as if the burning and encrusted mass was not yet set. It looked like a face rough-hewn out of granite, so hilly, hard, dark, and savage Opposite, sat Jael, plying her needle, her red-hood drawn over her head, while her sable ringlets drooped down her nut-brown cheeks, and kept moving to the motion of her arm, and ever and anon she sighed heavily while she gazed upon her father, who breathed deeply in his sleep. Winifred sat with her bare-feet within a few inches of the red-hot embers, holding her stockings to dry before the fire, and now and then nodding, as if half asleep. Ishmael was also recumbent, resting on his elbow and half his side; and sometimes he caught hold of Jael's thread and checked her work, then he patted his dog, or kept pulling the long dark hair of the handsome gipsy-girl. Two gipsies sat at the entrance of the camp smoking and playing at cards, while three or four dogs lay basking around, in the most picturesque positions. It was such a picture as Maclise would love to paint, teeming with all the wild poetry of nature, and just relieved of half its savagery by the beautiful figure of Jael, and the wicked-looking face of Winifred. But we must change the scene for a few moments, and follow the footsteps of Walter Northcot after his stormy interview with the Baronet.

It was dark when he left the hall of Burton Woodhouse, and, regardless of what course he took, he struck down the gloomy avenue which led to the ruined fountain, neither knowing nor caring whither he went, so that he could but shun the face of man. The first resolution he formed was to hasten to the gamekeeper's resi-

dence, and drag him by the throat before the Baronet, and there, on his knees, compel him to confess all his villany, or break every bone in his skin on the spot. Having thus decided, he hurried on like a madman and took the wrong turning, and found himself at the north-end of the park. Young, strong, active, and in a rage, he cleared the wall in an instant, crossed the high-road and struck up a hilly-lane in the direction of the woods, though still bearing to his left, and going as far from the gamekeeper's residence as he well could. On he went, head foremost in the dark, and the first thing that brought him to his senses was the head of a donkey, which he run full butt at by the side of a wood.

"Hilloa, young gentleman, where are you going at this hour?" was the question put by a man at his elbow.

"To the devil," answered Walter, pushing the man on the bank, who was one of the gipsies returning to the camp with the donkeys.

"Then I'll teach you to go more civilly," said another, stepping up before him and raising his arm as he spoke.

But Walter's blood was at boiling heat, and he felled the man at a blow, saying as he dropped, "Take that for your instruction."

Both the men had been inured to blows from boyhood, and they sprung up again in an instant, and each seized him at the same moment of time.

"Hold!" exclaimed Abaddon, as his comrade's arm was uplifted to strike: "You are the young gentleman we've heard so much of. Israel, he is the ben-cove Jael spoke about. I never saw him but once, but I'll be hung if I'm not right.—Be easy good friend, you have fallen into right hands—you know Jael the gipsy?"

"I do," said Walter, picking up his hat, "and her villain of a father, but for whom I had not been here at this time; I wish I could meet him now."

"Not so much of a villain," said Israel, "but that he owns you to be a brave fellow; and by my soul, my head rings with the proof of it! You may see him if you choose, for I'll be sworn he's at the camp before this time. Come, if you are not afraid? When Jael says the word, a man's as safe with us as if he was a sworn brother."

"Shew the way, then," said Walter, "I care not where I go; I will learn from this villain, before I sleep again, why he dared to attack me; and woe be to him if he plays me false! Hasten on, I am in earnest; a desperate man heeds not danger."

The men turned their faces towards each other in the dark, but spoke not; then drove their donkeys along at greater speed, and, entering a gap in the hedge, threaded their way through paths well known to themselves in the wood, and soon came in sight of the camp, the fire of which had long been visible through the entangled network of the branches.

Walter's hot blood was not yet cooled down; and when he saw Black Boswell sleeping before the fire, he sprung forward as if to seize him, but Jael caught the skirt of his coat, and raising her dark piercing eyes to his face, said, "Are you mad? Bethink you where you are."

The huge mastiff stood growling before him, and, but for the hand of Jael moving him back, would in another moment have hung at his throat.

"Sit down," continued Jael, pulling him on the pile of turf on which she had hitherto been seated. "Waken him not, I beseech you, if you value your life. The evil spirit is upon him now. I know his mood as well asleep as awake. Look on that countenance!"

Walter did look, and remembered where he was in an instant. The noise had disturbed the repose of Black Boswell, but not thoroughly awakened him, which was alone owing to the liquor he had drank having stupified his senses. Had it been otherwise, the motion of a rabbit passing by and stirring the fan-like leaf of the fern would have aroused him. As it was, however, his brow became darker, even in sleep, and his broad bony hand made a movement as if to seize upon the pistol in the inside of his coat; but before reaching it, fell nerveless, and listless by his side, and his deep breathing soon told that he again slept soundly. Jael kept her dark eyesriveted upon Walter, while he gazed upon the countenance of her father; and when he averted his glance, she placed her hand gently upon his arm, and, in a low whisper, said, "It is well he woke not in that mood,—for hearing the dog growl, and seeing a strange face here, and he in drink, he would have fired, and the ball must have struck either you or I."

"Had it hit me," said Walter, "and shot me dead on the spot, it would have done a most merciful deed. I am weary of my life."

"Say not so," replied the beautiful gipsy, in such soothing tones as would have gone to the heart of any other less wretched than himself; "I know you have been wronged—most grievously wronged, but fear not; for although my father hath but little sympathy for

aught living saving myself, still he honours a brave man, more than he detests a coward; and will, I hope, yet make amends for the evil he has wrought against you. For with him, to speak well of a man is at once to become his friend."

"I blame him not so much as Bellwood," answered Walter; "and for your kindness, Jael, I will forgive him, on condition that he acknowledges the whole truth of the affair, and that, in the presence of those I shall summon him before, he confesses to the whole of the plot."

"There must be no conditions," answered the gipsy, her eyes flashing as if with pride for a moment, then adding, in almost a whisper—"Remember what I told you in the park. He loves danger better than strong drink, and serves no man but for gain, or when it best pleaseth himself. You must not breathe a word of confession or apology into his ear. Sever him limb from limb," continued Jael, her face lighting with sudden but beautiful indignation as she spoke, "and not a word—unless to curse—would escape his lips. I know his nature well. What he does, will be done of his own free will. Anger him not, I beg of you;—he must be won by fair words only. Threats make him fierce as a tiger.—But you are cold," added she—for as she concluded, she had taken Walter's hand between her own; when, rising, she said, "I will give you a dram—that will render you proof against this cold night air. But wait until my father awakens, and trust me, all shall yet be well."

She lifted up the blanket which hung over the entrance of the tent, where her father usually slept, and bringing out a large drinking horn, poured into it some brandy, which she offered to Walter. The young man pledged the handsome gipsy, and nodding to the rest of the group, raised it to his lips, but was unable to swallow it, so strong, and fiery, was the spirit.

"You must drink it," said Jael. "It may be four or five hours before he awakes; and this bleak night air will be but ill brooked by one so tenderly nursed as you have been."

"Then it must be with water," said Walter, who now began to feel himself more composed, "for I like not to return my cup unemptied to so fair a hostess."

"Then with water be it," said Jael, taking up a brown jug; "and I myself will fetch it, from as clear a brook as ever bird dipped its bill in, or lazy bee went humming over."

Walter drew out his cigar-case, and wicked Winifred reached him a light, leaning most familiarly across his knee; while she held it with her own hands, and looking him full in the face, which was all of a ruddy glow as the lighted brand fell upon it.

The beautiful form of Jael was only lost for a few moments, as she threaded her way through the bosky barrier that led to the wild woodland brook, when, placing her hand on the stem of an old hawthorn that hung aslant the stream, she filled her jug, and re-entered the tent. Walter held up the drinking-horn, and Jael raised her rounded olive arm to fill it; then, taking the offered cup, she lifted it to her lips, and with a smile, uttered something in the language of her own tribe, and which, although he understood it not, there was in her looks what told that she drank to his welfare.

The fire blazed merrily, and gave a cheerful aspect to the wild scene, breaking, far around, the midnight darkness which hung over the wood, and Walter rested his back against the side of one of the tents, and smoked his cigar in apparent comfort; while Winifred held the drinking-horn, and from time to time pressed him to drink —not failing to raise it to her own lips at each turn. Jael sat on the other side of him, and conversed at intervals in low whispers, telling him all she had gathered respecting Bellwood and Banes, and the plan the keeper had laid for the capture of Ellen Giles, when he got her father discharged from the rope-walk. And many other things did Walter that night learn, which he had hitherto been ignorant of.

All the rest of the tribe, saving Ishmael, were now asleep, and some of the men had betaken themselves to their tents, and Walter at last began to feel drowsy; for the cold night air—the soothing influence of the cigar and the liquor, added to the silence which reigned around, and which was only broken by such sounds as are calculated to produce sleep—all had their effect upon him. Once or twice he dozed, with his arm drooping listlessly over Jael's shoulder, who drew the half-smoked cigar gently from between his fingers, and threw it into the fire. And in that brief slumber he heard the dreamy waving of the trees, and the low feeble midnight murmuring of the brook; then he started,—for his fancy had called up the voice of the Baronet raised in anger against him, as when he dismissed him from the Hall. He woke up, and the fire was still crackling and throwing up its ruddy blaze before him.

"You had better lie down until my father awakes," said Jael. "When he has slept off the effects of the drink, he will arise in one

of his kindest moods. Come," added she, drawing back the drapery at the foot of her own tent, and which stood next to her father's, "come; no one hath slept here since my own hands washed these blankets at the woodland brook, and hung them on the sweet woodbine until sunset to dry;—and who knows what fairy-bird may have charmed them, and what sweet dream you may have of the bonny lady you love! Lie down, and I will keep watch while you sleep."

It was Jael's own tent; and never did a young lamb sport across the daisied meadows at the sweet spring-time with a whiter fleece than was there revealed by the strong light of the fire. Around it, and fastened within the hoops which formed the arched roof of the tent, were stuck small branches of wild-flowers, which gave out such a fragrance as Adam may be supposed to have inhaled as he led our first mother to her nuptial couch, when, "lulled by nightingales, the flowery roof showered roses on them all the night," and when they awoke at morning, a thousand new buds hung above their heads fresh blown! Not that Jael grew a rose-tree in her tent; though she had many as sweet a branch of wood-blossoms and blushing woodbine as sunbeam ever beat upon.

Walter accepted the offer, and, ready-robed as he was, threw himself on the lowly couch, which none saving the fair form of Jael had ever pressed. For a few moments the novelty of the situation kept him awake, as he gazed upon the reflection of the fire, which made a kind of red, hazy light, upon the roof, only darkened here and there, where the hoops spanned across, or where the branches of flowers and herbs were suspended. At length he fell asleep, without once dreaming of danger — so firm a faith had he in the integrity of Jael. He slept soundly, although his throat was bared, and at the mercy of the greatest ruffian in the tribe.

Jael kept watch at the entrance of the tent, having with her own hands secured the curtaining with pins, so closely that scarcely a shrew-mouse could have entered unheard.

The beautiful gipsy threw more wood on the fire; then, drawing her hood closely around her head, sighed deeply as she gazed upon the stern features of her father; and folding her arms, kept a silent and solitary watch over the camp while Walter Northcot slept.

* * * * * *

Sleep on! the time may come when a fair head shall rest beside thee Walter, and the heaving of thy manly breast, stir the drooping ringlets which fall upon it in rich clusters. When a breathed word,

as it comes half uttered from pouting roses above the parted-pearls, shall waft thee to Elysium.

And now as we have not yet written half down our side of foolscap, we will *Burke* the *Sublime.*—So here goes—to Sleep.

Awful and Holy art thou, Almighty Sleep; thou great drawer down of darkness at noonday. Death resting himself ere he reaches the end of his journey—a brief night in the grave, broken by the morning's resurrection. Haunter of prince and peasant, castle and cottage, thou restest at times more soundly on the bleak and desolate heath than on the couch of three-piled velvet. Thou art the kind Soother of many sorrows, the great Healer of aching hearts, the great Bail that fees the debtor from his duns; "looped and windowed raggedness" sink on thy soothing bosom as on a bed of cygnet-down, the gold-engirded brow of the monarch presses not the weight of a thistle-down heavier upon thee, than the infant that breathes its first hour; pride leaves not a deeper dint in thy pillow than poverty. The dreams of honey-lipped eloquence, and the wild thoughts of the maniac fall on thine ear with the self-same music; the breath of innocence and the sighs of guilt, sully not the lustre of thy dark watching eyes. Sorrow falls senseless beside thee, and pain lies prostrate in thy lap, and grief with hair unbound presses her cold finger to her silent lip while her sobbings are stilled. Great Destroyer of all Distinction, awful statue, that ever seemest to stand pointing thy stony finger towards the grave! Mighty Usher of the Black-rod, what a lesson dost thou nightly teach us poor worms! Thou plantest thy dark foot upon us—and what are we, more than the mute dead which the grisly grave holds in its cold, black jaws? Great grave, in which all mind lies buried! Gloomy change-house of life, which skirts the black forest of death, and where all blind roads meet, until we are bewildered and lost,—not knowing whether we may see the morning light break above the thatch of the next grey hamlet, or the mists of death curling coldly around the grim gateway of the grave!

Sweet is thy reign, O Sleep! to the wretched. Tears that no human hand could wipe away, are dried by thee;—sighs which would have broken the heart, thou hast stifled. Thou art the great resting-place for all pain;—thou canst alone "minister to the mind diseased." Thou art the brief righter of all wrongs—the momentary blotter-out of all transgressions—the drowsy sister of Death, that lives in utter forgetfulness—the grave into which we drop alive.

What art thou, mighty Sleep? Art thou not the boon which Mercy craves nightly of the Highest;—ever kneeling with supplicating hands, and begging another brief respite from the tomb, that we may repent, and live to amend our evil ways? Happy is the man who can welcome thee at each return, and with calm mind receive thee, with such holy reverence, as if he expected it to be thy last visit. Thou art misery's only friend—the comforter that change affecteth not. Prosperity or adversity doth not alter thee. Thou visitest humility and contentedness under lowly roofs; and their repose is sound as the wood-linnet's in its nest. Thou hangest over the couch of ambition like the wind that blows around the solitary eagle sleeping on his cloudy crag, with eyes closed and head bowed; the ruffled crest and back-blown plumes bespeak the stormy slumber, and beat back the quietude and calm thou bringest. Statesman, warrior, bard, and sage, all fall before thee; the clinking links of thought are locked, as if by the spell of a magician. The "fever and the fret" of life lie dormant—the human hum dies away, like the sound of waters, falling fainter as they close deeper over the drowned.

Then comes Death!—the long midnight unbroken by a brawl—the silent city that stirs not at the cry of murder, fire, or flood!——But the grey morning already breaks upon our casement. Industry is now astir; and we——no matter. The bright light that seems to dim our watching eyes, breaks beautifully over many a tranquil spot that we still "in fancy see." The river, with its willow-crowned bank—the hill-side, covered with trees, are now unrolling themselves from the darkness, and the valleys change from grey to green. The spire is now visible—the meadows to the right of it dotted with fleecy sheep—masses of moving mist—so indistinct do they seem. The milkmaid will soon be up, and she will hear the birds as if answering her, while she goes singing through the quiet green lane. Perchance in our dreams we may be there—may hear such sounds

> "That, when we wake after long sleep,
> Will make us sleep again."

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW SQUIRE BELLWOOD HAD AN INTERVIEW WITH HIS FATHER AND PROMISED TO BECOME BETTER, WHILE HE "LAUGHED IN HIS SLEEVE"—WITH A FEW REMARKS, WHICH MAY EITHER BE PASSED OVER OR READ, WITHOUT INJURY TO THE STORY.

Return we to the Squire. "That Banes is a clear-headed fellow," said Bellwood to himself as he was returning home after having had a long gossip with the Gamekeeper, "I will be ruled by him, and blind the old man a little. I marvel the thought never struck me before, Banes is a clever fellow." The Gamekeeper had been clever enough to get Bellwood into his leading-strings, and now guided him with less difficulty than ever he had done the Baronet.

The Squire entered the hall at a much earlier hour than usual, which caused no small surprise amongst the domestics, for many a suspicious whisper had long been circulated respecting the manner in which he spent his time until midnight, for he seldom came home before. But the young Squire was a welcome guest under many a happy roof—happy indeed, until he was received as a visitor; for there were fond and foolish mothers, who only looked at his faults as those common to young men, who believed that when he had "sown his wild oats," he would settle down into a decent kind of a husband. "Such a girl as our Mary, would just suit him;" so too many of them thought, "he wants a wife with some life in her, one that could rattle after the hounds, and not a delicate sort of a creature like Miss Lee. He wants a woman with some spirit." So they talked and thought, and bore his coarse jokes, even arguing their daughters out of all modesty; for the hopes of a match with him was not to be lost for trifles; and on some young unsuspecting hearts, his off-handed manner and senseless "small-talk" made an impression, while upon more than one family it brought such misery as had befallen poor Mary Sanderson.

When wearied with wooing, there was still the boisterous hall of the fox-hunting Justice to fly to, and he had more than once taken Banes along with him, so that by those who knew but little of the gamekeeper's real character, he was now looked upon as a rising man, and several of the small farmers' wives who had good-looking daughters to dispose of, instead of calling him "Keeper" as they

had formerly done, now saluted him with the full title of "Mister Banes."

But following Squire Bellwood—he entered the hall-passage, hung his hat upon the same peg with his whip, inquired of the servant "If the old gentleman was in," and being answered in the affirmative, ordered the boot-jack and slippers to be brought into the parlour, and made known his intention of supping with his father. "I must work the oracle," said Bellwood to himself, for he had a happy knack of uttering what is called "slang" when conversing with his inferiors, if indeed he had any, and when communing with himself his thoughts generally shaped themselves after the aforesaid fashion. "I 'm like a bird," said the Squire, as he entered the old-fashioned parlour where his father was seated, poring over a three-days old paper, for the post-delivery was anything but regular at Bellwood Hall. "I 'm like a bird that's tired with flying about, and so makes for its nest at last. I begin to be weary of this idle life, and wish I was settled, in some way. Old Manning was talking to me last night, and saying that if he had his life to come over again he would enter the army. What think you to buying me a commission?"

"The army! a commission!" echoed the old Justice in astonishment, as he slowly raised his eyes from the paper; "Heaven forbid, my boy! remember, my dear brother William was killed in the late war. I wish Manning was at the devil, where he's sure to go some day, for putting such thoughts into your head." The squire well knew that his father would object to the proposition; for the old man could never allude to the profession of arms without a feeling of pain, since his brother had perished in the battle-field; and further, he had discovered that his son lacked the courage which is essential to a man's advancement in that peculiar *walk* of life, which Bellwood might have changed to a *run* whenever danger confronted him, for he was an arrant coward. The worthy Justice continued to run on with the account of his brother's death, how valiantly he had conducted himself in the army, and by the time that he had finished the narration, and wiped the tears away that coursed down the aged furrows of his cheeks, supper was ready. During the repast, the young squire managed, as he afterwards told Banes, "to play off his cards and lead trumps" by opening at once upon his marriage with Amy Lee, vowing that he loved her to such excess, that without her his life would for ever be miserable. Nor did he fail to allude to Walter Northcot, whose true character he said had at last come to

light, since his attack on the woman, and that he doubted not but as Sir Edward Lee's eyes were now open, there would no longer be any difficulty in settling matters at once. The worthy Justice listened to his son attentively, and after weighing affairs in his mind, for several moments in silence, and rubbing his chin very slowly, he spake as follows :—

"I regret that your conduct has not of late been such as I have wished it; but no more of that. I would rather you had made companions of any others than such men as the Gipsy and Banes, whose very looks would condemn them in any court; but shake them off, and I will never allude to them again. Respecting that matter of Mr. Northcot's with the woman, why was it not brought fairly before me?—to be plain, I doubt the truth of it, and shall not fail to examine her myself. As for Miss Lee, try to render yourself a little more worthy of her—nay, sit still, I will be heard out,—endeavour to do so, and leave the rest to me. She is a worthy young lady, I know not her equal; you have but to obtain her consent—nay, not altogether that; only let me see some amendment in your conduct, and she is yours—she is yours."

This was the moment the Squire had been waiting for; for he saw the struggle in the old man's feelings, between the love he really bore him, and the dislike he had long had of his conduct, and he now began to play the part which Banes had schooled him in, by throwing himself at his father's feet and seizing his hand, while he exclaimed, "I know I am unworthy of her, but point out any way by which I may regain your favour, and again secure your warm interest in my behalf, and I will do it! I only require her, to make me happy, to make me what you would wish me to be. Believe me, kindest of fathers, it is love for Miss Lee that has driven me to such wild courses of late. I have not cared what might happen to me; for when I saw her father, even before my face, give the preference to Walter Northcot,—when I saw him ever by her side,—it made me mad and reckless. You know not what I have endured. Sir Edward Lee has himself all but told me that I am undeserving of her, that he should look upon an alliance with your son as a disgrace."

"Ay, has he so?" said the old Justice, springing up, his pride and passion for the moment overpowering his calmer judgment—"and did he not tell you, at the same time, that but for my help he would ere this have been a beggar? See here, my boy! see here!" added he, hobbling to an old oaken bureau, black with age, and rich in the

carving of the Elizabethan period, which he unlocked, and then produced a scroll of parchment, signed and sealed with the most lawyer-like accuracy. "Undeserving, forsooth! scorn an alliance with my family! when his ancestor, Reginald, followed mine as an esquire to the field of Agincourt, buckled his armour and carried his shield and helmet, which I will shew to you in the original grant, given to the first of the Lees that ever held an acre of land. And now he himself is in no better condition, unless he can redeem this bond with fifty thousand pounds, or give you the hand of his daughter whenever I demand it. There now!—behave well, alter your conduct; let me see you deserving of her, and she shall be yours, my boy—she shall by ——!"

"Clear the table," said the Squire, as the servant entered. "Bring out the brandy, and see that the water is hot to-night, and never let me see a partridge on the table again until they are flush. And so you hold his whole estate in your power?" continued he, rubbing his hands. "I often wondered how he managed to pay off the debts for those two elections he lost when he contested the county. Well, father!" said he, after a time, filling his glass, "but you have not told me the whole of the conditions of the transfer; what are you to receive for the fifty thousand pounds, or rather what am I to receive after the marriage with his daughter? Come! now to business."

"The whole estate after the Baronet's death," answered the Justice, "subject to a certain annuity if Lady Lee survives, and a yearly allowance to the second daughter."

And the honest Justice ran on with a long provision for first child, and second child, if there was issue; and even went so far at last as to read the whole contract, with its dry details of manors, lordships, granges, lands, tenements, meadows, pastures, rents, reversions, services, woods, tithes, parsonages, churches, chapels, advowsons, nominations, patronages, annuities, rights, interests, entries, conditions, commons, leets, courts, privileges, liberties, franchises, with all the 'aforesaids, savings, persons,' etc. etc. etc. which have muddled the clear sense of such deeds ever since the days that William the Bastard, and his Norman cut-throats, carved out the broad lands of England with their swords, and in this country firmly established the devil and all his works.

When the old Justice had finished reading the agreement, he assumed one of his most solemn looks, and said—

"Remember, that from childhood I have looked upon Amy Lee as if she had been one of my own daughters; and I bless God, I have reason to believe that she has almost as much affection for me as if she was my own child; and mark me! although I have been led away to-night to express myself somewhat more warmly than is my wont, yet I must be convinced of such a change in your conduct, as shall warrant my pressing this agreement home. I believe you, my boy, to be sincere in your repentance; nay, hide not your face, you have my forgiveness for what is past; but if ever I find you in future guilty of such things, or— or—" the old man was deeply excited, "as have made my heart bleed to hear of, by —— I will thrust this deed into the fire, forgive Sir Edward his debt, and leave the dear young lady free to choose a husband worthy of her; and now good-night." And the honest Justice again shook his hand with all that affection which only a fond father can feel for so villanous a son.

"Oh! oh! that's how the game sits, is it? Whew!" said the Squire, giving a long whistle, when his father had departed; then ringing the bell for more hot water, mixing himself another glass, and lighting a cigar, he told the servant he need not sit up. "Now, if the old gentleman should kick the bucket before this marriage takes place," continued he to himself, "then, my fine Baronet, I pop upon your estate, leave your daughter to marry who the devil she likes, and make you my steward, if you behave yourself. Hum, ha!" added he, puffing out a huge volume of smoke, "What if I make safe of the contract now," turning his eyes to the ancient piece of furniture. "But it's all right enough as it is. I didn't think he'd been so poor though. And do I love Miss Amy after all? a queer question to ask. Pretty—devilish nice girl! Yes, I like her better than any one I've met with. Markam's a finer bust. Arundel dances better. Little Capes beats her hollow at sitting a horse. Garland has a hoarse voice, strong enough to stop a galloping nag. Spirited devils all of 'em, and would fight like cats to have their own way. But Amy would sit down and cry, and I could pay her off by making her heart ache, for fooling so long with this cursed Northcot. I should kill her in a year, and she deserves it. Curse the fellow, what can she see in him better than me! I can sit a horse as well; no man in the country rides better than myself; but she don't like me, and that's clear. Well, then, the fun of the thing is in making her have what she does not like. I'll gammon the old man, and it

shall be done. You'll be safely locked up by to-morrow, Master Walter. Poor Poll! she is ready to swear anything, even that he attempted her life—only prevent them from finding out that she's mad, and I kill two birds with one barrel. But this Banes is an out-and-out rascal after all," added he, after a long pause. "When all's settled I must be rid of him, somehow. He knows too much; he plays too deep a game for my hand. I hate the fellow; and so they say it ever was, one rogue never liked another. Well, well, its too late to turn honest now. Poor Mary, and Hannah, and Jane, begin to grow troublesome. I've my hands full any how. Well, well!" and he sighed unconsciously.

He spoke the truth, for every day his crimes seemed to ripen; he had more villany on hand than he knew how to manage, even with the assistance of Banes; he had sown sorrow, and was doomed to reap it back in bitterness. He had sworn many a solemn vow, and accomplished his evil purpose. He deepened his oaths when nothing else would serve—swore by Heaven, and all holy things, and left fair cheeks wet with tears; leaning on garden-gates, or reclining on the stems of dark trees, he left them, and hurried off to bury his cares in the wine-cup, and drink himself into forgetfulness. Do such characters live in our own days? some of our readers may inquire. We could here mark down two letters that would make the name of one, now living, as plain to many thousands as the sun when it shines on an unclouded day. But the character is already well known to hundreds, in spite of the tricks we have played with names and localities. Gold has silenced even the tongue of justice; many a matter has been hushed up in a country-village, which had it come before a fair and open court, would have proved how utterly the imagination falls short in creating for romance, what really has lived and moved, and transpired, in actual life in our own day.

Let an author draw the character of a villain in the blackest colours he can use, such a one lives in the world. Let him paint murder in its most sanguine hues, writhing, brutal, and horrible, the next month proves how much he fell short of reaching the actual colouring. Let him break hearts asunder, bleeding and aching with blighted love; draw the curtain and reveal all that is awful in suicide and death, then turn to the every-day world, and with a shudder he may view the self-same picture. He outrages not nature, for nature is every day outraged; let those who disbelieve us, sum up all the unnatural deeds which the last twelve moons have waxed and waned over.

Kind reader, we but shew thee vice that thou mayest hate it; we cloak it with no false charms; read on, and thou wilt arise from our book a "thinking" man, or our labour is indeed in vain. Remember that the vilest sinner is a "brother," and that he who plunges headlong down a foaming cataract, instead of flying from the danger, seeks his own destruction. Sin is the deadly basilisk, which to look upon is death; the charmed eye, which may please for a time, but will in the end destroy. May Heaven give us grace to shun its gaze!

Many of our "bottle-companions" have laughed at what they call our "sermonizing" in this work. My dear old friends, may you long live to laugh, while we sit alone at midnight bending over these pages, and wondering, when on our death-bed, whether or not they will rise up in judgment against us. Yes! we have had such thoughts, and knowing how much we often write, that will neither improve the head nor mend the heart, we have every now and then tried to sprinkle the evil over with good, mingling corn with our *chaff*, and those who only look for the latter have our right good-will to take it as a reward for their labour. But we have not time to "sermonize" now, when events come thicker and faster upon our story.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONTRAST BETWEEN MRS. GILES AND HER DAUGHTER—HOW GIDEON WAS MET BY ORAM AND LAWSON, THE TWO CONSTABLES, TAKEN BEFORE JUSTICE BELLWOOD, AND COMMITTED TO PRISON FOR SELLING HIS GOODS WITHOUT A LICENSE.

Disappointment, no matter in what shape, sooner shews the real disposition of a person than anything we know of; nor can we resist introducing to our readers a little domestic scene, as an illustration of the truth of the above remark. The supper-hour was past, when Mrs. Giles and her daughter Ellen, sat by the fire, waiting the return of Gideon.

No man living adhered more closely to his promise than the Roper, and if the evening meal was appointed to be in readiness at eight o'clock, the foot of Gideon was generally heard without on the scraper, almost as soon as the church-clock had done striking. That very day, to save a few pence, Gideon had taken a little bread and cheese with him, when he set out to hawk his goods, for as he often

confessed, he cared but little for a comfortable meal unless his family shared it with him; and to make up for this scanty dinner, his wife had promised to have a beefsteak and onions ready by eight, with a nice dish of new potatoes, which Ellen, with her own hands, had dug out of their little garden.

A quarter past eight had already struck, but no Gideon appeared —the cause we shall soon arrive at.

"How tiresome it is to wait," said Mrs. Giles, drawing the dish a little further back. "Here 's this beautiful steak which I took such pains to cook, 'ill be dried to a cinder. I think your father might be content to eat his own supper when its spoiled without letting ours be done to death along wi' it. I hate to wait."

"Be sure that something more than common has detained him, mother," said Ellen, in her usual meek tone of voice, "or he would have been here before this time, for he has but fared scantily to-day compared to us. But I wish he would come."

"Compared to us," said her mother, repeating the sentence snappishly; "why I can't see but he might have a hot dinner as well as ourselves when he's out, if he liked. But how aggravating it is," added she, lifting up the lid of the saucepan, "these potatoes 'ill be as sad as liver, and then I wouldn't tell my name for 'em."

"Perhaps he may have stayed to do some little repairs somewhere on the road," replied Ellen, "and may have a great distance to come, for he took his tools with him; and he must be both hungry and weary by this time, for the little bread and cheese I put up, would only be poor support during all these hours. It is for him, mother, more than ourselves we ought to care." And she went to the door to look out for her father, while a tear stood in her eye.

"Then he ought to have told me he'd taken his tools with him," said Mrs. Giles, "and not keep one shilly-shallying this way."

"You was not up," said Ellen, as she came in, and sat down in silence—and not another word was exchanged between them, until the clock struck nine.

An artist might have told the story in a picture, had he but copied the countenances of the mother and daughter, as they sat beside the hearth. The many quick turnings of the dish, at one moment pushed a little nearer the fire, lest it should become too cold, in another instant drawn back, for fear it should be too much dried, plainly told that the mother's thoughts were wholly bent on the supper. But far different was the expression of Ellen's countenance, as she

sat with head averted, listening to the sounds without, and springing to the door whenever she heard aught resembling a footstep move, for there was a look as of pain upon her lovely countenance, which told how much she was concerned for the absence of her father; and as the evening darkened, her cheek grew paler, and her lips more closely compressed, for she feared something had befallen him.

But in order to account for the absence of Gideon Giles, we must for a short space shift the scene of our story, and bring forward an event which the reader has long been prepared for. And here our tale becomes "ALAS! TOO TRUE."

Beside the low, sandy road, which leads from Burton Woodhouse to Gainsborough, there stands a small alehouse, the east front of which faces an old plantation that crowns a range of little hills, in ancient times the barrier of the river Trent. A few years ago there was an open footway through this beautiful and shady retreat; and many a vow of love has been uttered beneath those dark fir-trees;—but the pathway is now closed, the preservation of game being a greater consideration to the lord of the manor than the health of the surrounding inhabitants. The closing of this sylvan walk led to much ill-feeling at the time, for it was associated with many things which both old and young reverenced. But it is useless here dwelling upon these reminiscences,—they only awaken angry feelings. Such deeds have been done in too many parts of England of late;—God grant that thay may not be remembered when the lion-hearted "Sons of the soil" are called upon to defend such spots!—and may that time never come. * * * We crave thy pardon, reader! but thou canst not feel what we do at this moment. Another day, and we may unbosom ourselves—the troubles of the poor Roper will be enough at present.

But shouldst thou ever journey through the county in which this scene is laid, thou wilt not fail to glance at this roadside alehouse. Beyond it, to the westward, stretch hundreds of acres of rich meadow-land, called "the Marshes." In those are reared our huge Lincolnshire sheep and bullocks. Through these marshes flows what a great poet has called "the hundred-armed Trent," one of the crookedest though sweetest of rivers in England. Across the river rises green uplands, famed far and wide for their corn, clover, beans, and hops—for Retford is no great distance. The scene is beautiful at any

time, but more so in the summer months. To a poet it would almost be holy ground; for there he might learn to love God's works—there worship Nature, admire old mossy trees, ancient and broken stiles, brown footpaths, villages, woods bathing their stems in that very river; gather wild-flowers in those fields, watch the birds in the hedges, and, if he lived there long enough, fall in love—bury dear friends in some of those green churchyards—see the sun and moon rise and set from those hills (as we have done hundreds of times)—walk, talk, play, love, and read for miles around that neighbourhood. Even now, when we visit the same scenes, we feel a pleasure for a little time which exceeds all description,—but this changes into a strange melancholy, which can only be felt; and we know not from whence comes the change.

At this little roadside alehouse, where Ben Brust often quenched his thirst, they "take in cattle to bait,"—"deal in ale, foreign spirituous liquors,"—have "good stabling," and write up "wine,"—though no one ever remembers to have seen more than the two bottles, on which are legibly written "Sherry" and "Port," and which answer to the call of "Rum" and "Gin;"—but they have heard that there is such a thing as wine somewhere in England; and Ben Brust said he once tasted "real wine," which he declared "was no more fit to be compared to ale, than Lincolnshire cliff-chalk was to Cheshire cheese."

It was on a summer's afternoon when Gideon Giles reached this rural "Traveller's Rest;" and calling for a "gill of ale" (the common phrase in that county for half-a-pint), he sat himself down on the bench beside the door, the same side as that on which the beehives stand, behind the row of rose-trees, then in full bloom. Gideon sat down, and threw his heavy load on the hard sand-walk—for he had been "hawking" his goods all that morning; and when the landlord brought the ale he had ordered, the honest Roper inquired if he wanted anything in his line that day. The landlord had people who called at his house when they bought pigs; and as pigs are not the most obliging of brutes, his customers were at times compelled to drive them home with a strong cord suspended to their hinder legs, to prevent them (when they were disposed to go) from going the wrong way—a habit not confined to swine alone. Pig-cords being often inquired after at the house, the host purchased a shilling's-worth, at three-halfpence each, getting Gideon to throw him one in for taking so many, and carefully counting out to the

Roper tenpence three-farthings, which was deducting the amount of the "gill of ale." Within the doorway, and overlooking the whole of the transaction (though unseen by Gideon Giles), stood Oram and Lawson, the chief-constable and his deputy; and no sooner was the money deposited in the jacket pocket of the Roper, than Oram presented himself, and demanded to see his license. Gideon had just raised the ale-can to his lips, and without either drinking or speaking a word, gazed at the constable as if "struck all of a heap;" and after a long pause, said, "License!—what do you mean? I manufacture my own goods!"

"Oh! do you?" said Oram, winking to his deputy; "so did the man we took to Girton House of Correction a week ago; where he must stay for three months, unless he can pay the penalty of forty pounds. Let me ask you this one question—have you a license?"

"I have not!" answered Gideon; "nor was I aware that one was needed, where a man only offered the goods for sale which he himself made."

"Nor more it is," answered the constable, "if a man only hawks them in fairs, or market-towns, or in boroughs and cities. But when he goes about to villages, and comes to an odd house like this, why then, you see, he must either shew his license, pay forty pounds, or else go to prison for three months—and that's the law of the land."

"And a cruel and unjust law it is," replied Gideon, now deeply excited. "We are then allowed to sell our goods in market-towns, and parishes where such things can be got, almost at the next door; yet when we come to offer them for sale in out-of-the-way places, where they are the most likely to be needed, then it is a breach of the law—a crime that subjects us to penalty and imprisonment! What can be more unjust or more foolish than such an Act!"

"It is done to protect the large shops in towns," said Lawson,—"those who pay rates and rents, and such like."

"To protect the shops!" answered Gideon with warmth. "Yet it is legal to offer them for sale, even at the doors of these very shops, and in the towns where they are situated; whilst in places where there are none of these high-rated and high-rented shops, and where people are compelled to go miles for the articles they want, a man subjects himself to imprisonment for selling them,—leaves his family to the mercy of a workhouse, and is himself deprived from following his calling to get them bread, while he lingers in prison among rogues and robbers, and is fed and kept in idleness at the expense of the county. Yet this is the law of England!"

Gideon Giles taken up for hawking his goods.

"It is," said Oram, placing his hand on the Roper's shoulder, and taking out his staff; "and for breaking it you are my prisoner, and must appear before Justice Bellwood—so come along."

"Touch me not!" said Gideon, raising his arm, while the dark veins in his forehead swelled with anger; then letting it fall without striking the blow, he added, "Any other villain would be ready to do the same. I will go with you. It is those who made the laws, more than yourselves, that are to blame; though I would sooner die by the road-side of hunger, than be the wicked instrument to put in force such unjust measures."

"We must do our duty," said Oram, a little softened; "and we may as well have the money as anybody else, for, as you say, we didn't make the laws; though to get a living we are forced to see they ain't broken. But come quietly, and we won't handcuff you, same as we do thieves and housebreakers."

"Take me in chains if you will," replied the Roper, gathering up his load. "If it is a crime to endeavour by honesty and industry to procure bread for my family, let me bear the full punishment of it. God knows I wandered many miles to seek for employment, and could obtain none; and had it not been for meeting with a friend, and buying a little hemp to begin with for myself, we must all have gone to the workhouse. And now I must be sent like a felon to prison, for honestly keeping my family from the parish. O God! what will England at last come to!——Come, hasten on, and let the prison walls close upon another victim to her tyrannical laws."*

"I wish I had been hung with the cords, before I had bought them," said the kind-hearted landlord, dashing away a tear from his cheek, and extending his hand to the Roper. "But God bless you, Gideon!—I did it all for the best. Heigho! I wish I was in America, or some other country, where they think it an honour to

* Hundreds of our readers will remember the case of the poor man who was, a few months ago, imprisoned for offering a work-box (or some such matter) for sale in Pimlico, and who was committed to prison, because he had not a license; although he was the maker of the article, and, if we err not, stated that the wants of his family compelled him to "hawk" it. Nor will they forget the feelings of the public on that occasion;—the spirited conduct of the press—the interposition of the minister in office—and many other things which proved how obnoxious such a law is to the feelings of freeborn Britons. That such an unpopular law may be blotted out from the civil code of England, is the object of this Work, and the sincere prayer of its humble author!

reward a man for his industry, instead of imprisoning him.—But these things will have an end some day—or woe be to England!"

"They will!" answered the Roper, returning the friendly shake. "Some one may yet hear of the wrongs I have endured; they may perchance find their way into some newspaper; and many a heart will burn with honest indignation, when they hear how unjustly I have suffered. Farewell! and God deliver you from all such troubles!"

As if ashamed of their business, the two constables struck over the fields with their prisoner, and took the most private footways across the hills and beside the woods, in the direction of Bellwood-Hall. Gideon walked along in silence, and with a heavy heart; for he knew that his family would ere long be anxiously awaiting his return, and be uneasy at his absence.

Passing over their entry at the Hall, the sorrow and surprise of the servants, with whom Gideon was a great favourite, and the astonishment of the honest old Justice, when the prisoner was brought before him, we shall come at once to the business in hand, than which nothing could be more clearly proved. Justice Bellwood sat in his old armchair, and gravely listened to the charge which Oram laid against Gideon; and when the constable had done speaking, the worthy magistrate turned round to the Roper, and with a look of deep meaning, and mingled kindness said, "But this was some order you took home, was it not Gideon? You understand me? he had told you to leave him the shilling's-worth of cords some day or two before, had he not? try to remember."

Had Gideon answered "yes," the cause might have been instantly dismissed, and Oram and Lawson packed off quicker than they came; for the kind-kearted Justice thought a trifling falsehood like this would be more readily got over by the Roper than either penalty or imprisonment, and the good old man wished from the very bottom of his heart that Gideon might confirm the lie he had invented. But the Roper was one of those stern and upright men who, whatever may be the result, take a pride in uttering only the truth, and he answered without a moment's hesitation, "No, your worship, they were not ordered; I called and inquired if he wanted anything in my way of business, the same as I had before done at above a hundred other houses this very day, unconscious that I was doing wrong."

The worthy Justice knit his brow, rubbed his chin with a quick

motion, tried to cough as loud as he could, then muttered to himself, "the man's a fool for his honesty."

"Please your worship," said Oram, "I heard him make the bargain, saw him deliver the goods, and take the money, after paying for his ale; and when I asked him to shew his license, he said he had none, and then your worship knows that I was compelled to do my duty, according to the Act of George the Third, clause the twentieth, beginning with "And be it further enacted,—"

"Be it further be d—d," said the Justice, glad to find a loophole through which to vent his anger, for the old man was vexed at the answer of Gideon, which left him no alternative but to put the law in force as it stood against him. "Do you come here, fellow, to teach me my duty, when I have sat upon the bench for above thirty years. And mark me, Sir! I believe during all that period I never committed a greater rogue than yourself. And now, Mr. Giles," added he, again addressing the Roper, "tell me, had you not been hawking your goods in Gainsborough—Gainsborough you know is a market-town, and the mere calling at a roadside house, and taking part ale and part money for goods is but an exchange, a matter of barter, or such like. Gainsborough is a market-town," continued he, taking down a book which contained the Act for Licensing Hawkers and Pedlars, and turning to the twenty-third clause, that he might give the Roper time to take up the hint, and shape his answer accordingly, he read as follows:—"Provided always and "it is hereby enacted, that nothing in this act shall extend to prohibit "any person or persons from selling, etc. etc. * * * Nor to hinder the "real worker or maker of any goods, wares, or manufactures of Great "Britain * * * from carrying abroad or exposing to sale, and selling "by retail, or otherwise, any of the said goods of his, her, or their own "making, in any mart, market, or fair, and in every city, borough, "town corporate, or market-town," etc. etc.* "Now you see," continued the kind-hearted old Justice, "having as you say hawked your goods in Gainsborough, and it being a market-town, and you the manufacturer of the articles you offered for sale, which I know to be true, why you are by this clause acquitted. The taking part ale and part money, as Mr. Oram, the worthy constable, says you did, being

* Vide "Act for placing the duties of Hawkers and Pedlars under the management of the Commissioners of Hackney Coaches. Anno Quinquagesimo, Georgii III. Regis. Lond. Printed by George Eyre and Andrew Spottiswoode, printers to the Queen's most Excellent Majesty. 1839.

only barter or exchange, what our people hereabout call 'wrapping,' or 'swapping.' You understand the laws, I know, Mr. Oram, in these matters," said the Justice, wishing to win over the constable, "and I need not explain them to you, seeing that you are as well acquainted with them as myself."

The constable smiled, made a low bow, thanked his worship for the compliment, and added, "I see it clear enough now, but Gideon was not at Gainsborough; and I heard of him selling his goods both in Lea and Knaith yesterday, and can bring witnesses to prove it."

"He speaks but the truth," replied Gideon, "nor will I, whatever may befal me, shelter myself behind a falsehood. To-day I have been calling at the villages of Beckingham, Sawnby, Bole, and Wheatley; nor did I enter Gainsborough further than the town-end to cross the bridge. I am unconscious of having done wrong. The little capital which was lent me, and which I wished to pay back as speedily as possible, compelled me to seek the readiest market for my goods, and I have worked early and late to make up for the time I lose in hawking them round the villages. And God knows that had I not begun for myself, there was nothing but the work-house left for my family, for I went above a hundred miles in quest of employment, but could obtain none; and I thought it better to bring in a few shillings by beginning for myself, than to sit idle and see my family want. If slaving from village to village (until I have many a time being fit to sink through weariness) as I sought customers for my wares, be breaking the laws, then I am guilty, and honesty and industry is a crime."

The worthy magistrate heard the poor Roper, through without uttering a word, twisting the book round in all directions which contained the detested Act, and after a long pause added, "I cannot commit you on this evidence, but will dismiss the case."

"Then, please your worship," said the deputy, now advancing, "I can take my oath that I saw him offer for sale a well-rope, last Wednesday at Blyton, which Farmer Watkinson bought, for I stood talking with him at the door at the very time."

There was then a long silence, until the old clerk caught the motion of the Justice's eye, and administered the oath, which Lawson readily took, and when Gideon was appealed to, he simply answered, "It is true!"

"This act, then," said the old Justice, speaking with deep emotion,

as he opened the unbound volume of pamphlets, (for he was ashamed for his country that such a law existed)—"This act, Gideon, compels me, God knows with what reluctance! to cause the sum of forty pounds to be levied by distress and sale of your goods and chattels, for having illegally, and without a license, offered your wares for sale; and until the said sum is paid, I am compelled to commit you to Girton House of Correction for the space of three calendar months, or until such time as the forfeiture is paid. Let me, however add," continued the kind old man, endeavouring to find an excuse for so harsh and unjust a law, "that it is my belief, and I trust for the credit of my country it is true, that it never was the intention of the framers of this law to check industry, but that when the privilege of hawking the goods a poor man manufactures, was extended to market-towns, boroughs, and cities, by some oversight I believe, and nothing else, the villages and hamlets were excluded, and not by any wilful design. I am really sorry to be compelled to abide by the strict letter of this—I will say—too severe a law,—though I am excluded from the bench of Justices to-morrow; and I would, but that I reverence—no, no, I do not!" added the old man with energy, and he threw the book aside with violence, and without once observing where it fell, which was no other place than the back of the fire, where it was consumed to ashes in a few moments. The old man half rose from his chair, as if to rescue it, when keeping his grey eye steadily fixed upon it for a moment, he muttered to himself, "let it perish!" It did! and with it many another law that has given the heartache to the poor sons and daughters of England, such as the "Game Laws," "New Poor Law," etc. etc.

"This is a hard case, your worship," said Gideon, "and I feel how much it must go against the nature of so kind-hearted a gentleman as I know you to be, to put so cruel and oppressive a law into force." The old Justice half raised his head as if to speak, but there was a tear on his honest cheek, and he felt ashamed lest it should be seen, so hung his head lower, and it fell upon the floor, while the Roper thus proceeded, and again repeated his objections to the law, as he had before done at the roadside house:—"Here is a law which allows me to sell my goods in towns and cities, where they are the least needed; nay I can even call at the doors, and the very shops, which this law is supposed to protect, while in villages and odd houses, where there is no chance of obtaining such articles without going miles for them, a man is liable to be taken up and

imprisoned if found there, offering them for sale without a license: such a law is foolish and absurd in the extreme. What would these law-makers have a poor man do? According to this Act, unless he is rich enough to obtain a license, he may stay at home and work, and when he has filled his house with goods, sit down and see his family around him crying for bread, and he liable to be imprisoned for walking out a few miles, and turning them into money to supply their wants! But he must not do this; for the law says they must starve—and only the prison awaits him, if he steps out and offers them for sale in the neighbouring villages. All I possess will not pay the penalty this unjust law demands;—for I will not rob the landlord of what you know he so kindly lent me—every shilling I possess shall be returned to him. As for my family—the New Poor-house must be their doom, while I linger out my term in prison! God above, protect them!" exclaimed the poor Roper, while he raised his eyes to the roof, and the tears coursed down his brown manly cheeks.

"They shall not go to the workhouse, by G—d!" said the old Justice, half rising from his seat. "I will see that they want for nothing. I would pay the fine, but—the law must be abided by; and—may the hand be cursed that framed it! There," turning to the constables; "you are both d—— rascals,—now go and tell that radical justice, Hemings, what I have said!——John, bring me in a glass of wine. I have not felt myself in such low spirits for many a long day. And then fill up the warrant. It shall not be for long Gideon, trust me. I know you to be an honest and industrious man, and will do something."

The wine was brought in, and the honest magistrate ordered another glass, and bade Gideon drink to revive his spirits, adding, "I must do my duty; and were it my own son, and the law compelled me to commit him, I would do it, though my heart broke the next moment!" The old man's hand shook as he lifted the glass to his lips.

The clerk sat down, and filled up the warrant, which, when done, he handed to the Justice to read.

"No," said the magistrate, putting it aside. "Go on, and be quick. The business is becoming painful to me, and I am growing old—very old."

The clerk then arose, and, heaving a deep sigh, read as follows:—
"Be it remembered, that on the 27th day of June, in the year of

GIDEON GILES IN PRISON.

"our Lord 1837, at Bellwood Hall, in the county of Lincoln, "Judas Lawson came before me, James Bellwood, Bart., one of "Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said county, residing "near the place where the offence hereinafter mentioned was com- "mitted, and informed me that Gideon Giles, by trade a roper, and "residing in the village of Burton Woodhouse, in the said county "of Lincoln, did, on the 21st of this present month, illegally sell "a well-rope to John Watkinson of Blyton, the said Gideon Giles "having no license to sell the same. Whereupon the said Gideon "Giles, being duly summoned before me (and having heard the "charge contained in the said information), acknowledged, and "voluntarily confessed the facts therein stated to be true. Where- "upon the same was fully proved on the oath of Judas Lawson, a "credible witness, and therefore it manifestly appearing to me that "the said Gideon Giles is guilty of the offence charged in the said "information, I do hereby convict him of the said offence, and do "adjudge that he hath forfeited the sum of forty pounds of lawful "money of Great Britain, to be distributed as the law directs, "according to the form of the Statute in such case made and pro- "vided," etc. etc.*

* See the Act beforementioned, clause 28; the above being a literal copy of the conviction, though perhaps deficient in the form of filling up the blanks, which the author is ignorant of.

The old Justice then added a few lines, the purport of which was that he must abide in prison until the sum be paid. He then signed his name with a trembling hand, and affixed his seal to the document.

"There is no more to be done," said the Justice, throwing the pen into the fire, that it might never again remind him of having signed so detestable a document. "Unless," added he "you have a wish to see your family before you depart to ——" The very name of "prison," stuck in the old Justice's throat, and he could not utter it.

"No! no!" answered Gideon; "they will hear what has befallen me soon enough. Their sobs would only unman me; and Ellen ——" he buried his face in his hard hands, and wept; then added, "I know your kindness—you will send some one to call upon them, and comfort them. Tell—tell my dear children they will soon see their father again,—that it is for their sakes he is about to suffer,—that he carries no crime upon his conscience. And my wife—tell her to return what money there is left to the host at Newark; for not one farthing will I pay to procure my liberty, were I to be kept in prison until the day of my death. God is witness I have done no wrong! The hour of danger may come, when the framers of these laws shall call upon those whom they have oppressed—shall look up to the hard-working sons of England to defend the land in which they now groan—shall call upon the millions who now with difficulty procure a livelihood, whose bread is taxed—and even then, their hands fettered by such tyrannous laws as these from procuring it,—and then will their consciences smite them for what they have done. But I forgive them—for your sake, Justice Bellwood, do I forgive them! and my prayer shall be, that I may live to see a law abolished that is painful to an English gentleman like yourself to put in force."

"It is! it is!" said the honest Justice. "I will write to the Secretary of State. I will myself carry up a petition to London for its abolition. I will ride through the county to obtain signatures.—But go—go; you will hear from me soon. I will send to your family before I sleep. As to you two," added he, turning to the constables as he left the room, "you have done your duty, and will, I doubt not, be d—— for it. John, see that they have neither bite nor sup in my house; but let Gideon have the best the larder can furnish. I will have him out of prison before a week hence, or the devil's in it!" The old Tory was a hater of tyranny, though he fulfilled the laws.

After a brief space the poor Roper was mounted in the light cart used for the removal of vagrants, and driven at a good round speed to Girton House of Correction, which he reached about sunset. Oram was the driver, and he vented all the ill-nature which the severe remarks of the Justice had called forth, on the back and haunches of the poor horse. And when Gideon remonstrated against such unnecessary cruelty, he only replied by saying—"It belongs to the parish."

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW GIDEON GILES WAS TREATED IN PRISON—HIS ASSOCIATES DESCRIBED—WITH A FEW REMARKS ON THE INJUSTICE OF MANY OF THOSE PETTY AND ANNOYING LAWS WHICH ARE STILL IN EXISTENCE.

Following the footsteps of the poor Roper for a few more pages: he reached the prison about sunset, and was locked up for the night in the receiving-cell, there to await his examination by the surgeon of the establishment, before mingling with the numerous prisoners confined within those walls. The cell in which Gideon was locked up for the night, was situate at the top of a flight of stone-steps, and the strongly-barred window overlooked a kind of court or yard, surrounded by a strong iron palisade, the top of which was spear-pointed. Within this secure square walked the prisoners of that particular ward—taking short and sudden turnings, like so many wild beasts confined in too small a den. Across the yard was seen the tread-mill, where these unfortunate wretches were doomed to grind the wind, and for which each received one halfpenny a-day, when in full work. For what real use this expensive machine was intended, no one, we believe, has yet discovered.

Gideon leant upon the window-sill, and gazed at the massy bars, through which the last sunbeams streamed, falling upon the iron bedstead and the naked walls of the cell, and his heart ached while he thought of home. Oh! how different was that place to his own sweet chamber, on which the same sunset shone, chequering the clean floor as it came in between the dark-green leaves of the ivy which ran up to the very roof of his cottage! He turned round and gazed upon the filthy blanket, the horse-cloth-looking coverlet, and the dirty covering of the hard straw-mattress, while a strange sickly feeling came over him, and he was compelled to support himself by the wall, until he at last sank down upon the foot of the iron bedstead.

By and by the last gleam of sunlight vanished, and the shadows of evening gradually gathered around his prison-house, as the noise without was hushed, and around him reigned a silence mute as the grave,—for the last sound that greeted his ear was the grating of some ponderous key within its lock—then all again was still. At length the prison-clock told the hour of nine, and his fancy recalled the scene we have described in the opening of our last chapter—the supper waiting, the cheerful fire, and all the comforts of home; and he wished that he had sent for Ellen, and apprised her of what had befallen him. Then he began to feel very thirsty; his tongue seemed baked in his mouth; a strange kind of feverish excitement came over him, and he felt as if he would have given the world for a draught of cold water. He knocked at the door, but there was no answer; he called aloud for water, but not a voice replied,—he was only mocked by his own echoes. He groped around the cell in the dark, and in one corner found an earthen jug; it had stood there for several days; the water it contained was thick and stagnant—the very smell was sickening; but so painful were the pangs of thirst he felt, that he rinsed his mouth with it.

Through coming in so late, the turnkey had neglected to search his pockets, thus leaving him in possession of a short pipe, a small portion of tobacco, and a few lucifer-matches. No one but a man who would sacrifice the luxuries of a Lord Mayor's feast for a whiff of tobacco, can imagine the comfort that solitary pipe afforded the honest Roper. It made him feel himself a man again. Parson Adams with his Æschylus in his hand, never felt more tranquil—more ready to bow to the "stern decrees of fate." The poor Roper felt no accusing pang; no cloud came over his conscience. He knew that he was imprisoned for no crime—was conscious that he had injured no one—and trusted that Providence would, in the end, deal justly with him. While these comfortable thoughts passed through his mind, he raised his eyes to the iron-barred window, and saw the evening star shining, as if stedfastly upon him. "Brighter days will come yet!" were the first thoughts that came across his mind; for he felt as if that solitary star was sent to cheer him. A man with an evil conscience could never have enjoyed such happiness.

And we will here briefly state our belief, that however low a man may become in circumstances in this life; that whatever crosses or mishaps may befal him—providing his conscience is clear, and he finds no accuser in his own conduct—no hole in the armour of his

integrity—no fear in the censure of friend or foe—but rests secure in the uprightness of his own internal motives,—we here record our belief, that such a man is more happy in his poverty—more at peace in the midst of his misfortunes—than the wealthiest robber that ever heaped riches together, or grasped his golden cup, filled with the juice of the choicest grape, amid the smiles of his false friends! Gideon in prison, with his short pipe, that night felt more easy about the heart, than many a man who to-morrow can call himself the possessor of a million of money!

After a time he shook the ashes out of his pipe, and without undressing, threw himself back upon the hard couch, and soon fell asleep. At length the morning came, and he was turned in amongst the rest of the prisoners, after having been carefully searched, and every trifle in his possession being as carefully taken from him. He entered the yard (with a brown earthen porringer and wooden spoon in his hand) just in time to receive his "daily bread," which was a very small loaf, and also his share of hot oatmeal and water, flavoured with a little salt, and commonly called "Skilly-go-lee!"

Although Gideon was not committed to the "Common Felons'-ward," still be was compelled to associate with as hardened a lot of rascals as ever the walls of a prison encompassed,—and the more hardened during their sojourn in that place, which was so wisely set apart to improve the morals of all who entered therein; for it has almost become a proverb, that however few the faults of a man may be when he enters such places as these, there is but little doubt of his coming out a confirmed rogue, although the offence for which he is committed may not amount to a trivial crime. Witness the tender mercy shewn to a man, in any trial in the present day, who has once been in prison!—nay, if only tried, and honestly acquitted.

"Have you any tobacco?" said a poor peasant, who was committed for picking up a few rotten sticks for fuel. "If you have, I have a wooden pipe I made; and you can smoke up the chimney of a night, and nobody can smell it."

"Hang your tobacco!" said a half-starved labourer, who was sentenced for three months for refusing to live with a wife who had twice attempted to poison him. "Hev you brought any beef?—this is all we get here," added he, stirring his oatmeal porridge, which was really very thin.

"How long are you for?" inquired a poor fellow, who had caught a hare, that came every night and supped on the few starveling cabbages

which grew in his garden, and for which he was convicted as an arrant poacher. "I've got another side of bars to rub off, then I'm out." —He alluded to the number of iron bars on one side of the palisade, which equalled the days he had yet to stay in prison. Every morning when he arose he pointed to his companions, and shewed them that he had one bar less to stay.

"I wish I was out," sighed a hungry-looking bricklayer, who was found guilty of leaving the New Poorhouse without giving a proper notice; and had been taken away from a summer's job, at twenty-five shillings a week, on the second day of his employment, and whose "whereabout" was only discovered by the letter and the half-sovereign he enclosed to his wife in the workhouse, to come and meet him, and which sum he had drawn on account of his new master. "But," added he, "another fortnight will soon be over; then I shall be free again."

Gideon made a courteous reply to each; and having ascertained the offences many of them were committed for, dropped his spoon in his porridge, and exclaimed, "God help the poor!" And he stirred up his oatmeal and water, and wondered what a magistrate would think of such a breakfast, and that if another hundred years rolled over, whether or not the people then alive would believe that such a law ever existed, as that which doomed a man to prison for being industrious.

After breakfast he was ordered to the tread-mill—the poachers were not,—and according to the laws of his country, he "winnowed the buxom air." That morning there was a plan laid amongst the prisoners to break the odious mill; and this was to be done by their standing all at once on one step, and jumping together: they did it, and smash went the machine. Then they had a holiday until it was repaired.

One or two of them endeavoured to persuade Gideon to affect illness, and get into the sick-ward, where, they told him, he would be allowed meat and broth. They recommended his swallowing a little tobacco, to make him ill and deceive the surgeon. During the afternoon several of the oldest and most daring of the prisoners discussed a plan for seizing the turnkey, and setting themselves at liberty. The poachers amused each other by pointing out the best places for game, and agreed to make a "little party" when they were set at liberty, and to have a "jolly night of it." Some planned letters to send to their friends by those whose time was nearly out,— how money was

to be sent concealed them in the soles of a pair of shoes,—how others were to throw tobacco over the walls when they got out,—and how such a warden, when he went his rounds, would, for a " consideration," deliver it per address!

In fact, Gideon heard such theories started, and saw such plans put into execution in a few brief hours, as completely startled him, and made him conclude that, however honest a man might be when he entered those walls, it would be his own fault if he did not quit them as great a rogue as ever made his escape from Newgate.

Still there were many imprisoned in that place for such trifling offences as are beneath the notice of the laws of a boasted free country like England. Here were found the victims of those " silence sirrahs!" issued by brutal and unfeeling magistrates, who, either in haste to eat their dinner, or hand and glove with the rich oppressor and persecutor, refuse to hear what a poor man has to say in his defence. Men in office who, instead of kindly admonishing and gently punishing the unfortunate prisoner, browbeat and bully, and insult him, turning all his better blood to gall; driving him to join rebellious factions, to carry the torch at midnight, and meet with riotous assemblies at day. Men who emigrate, and teach their children to hate England; who become spies, and hold up their country as a laughing-stock to the stranger, and who sometimes turn heroes, and when the hour of danger comes, wreak their vengeance on their native land. Men committed under petty and aggravated laws, which chafe the spirit more than when found guilty of any serious crime. Laws that tend to demoralize and make men disloyal, desperate, and mad; turning their blood to blackness.

Here was a poor sickly-looking man, committed for a month because he had not taken home a piece of work at the appointed time, though he had been laid up with the ague. But he was told that he must either make good the price of the piece (which was an order and the sale lost), or go to prison. The poor man had not a shilling in the world, so was committed, while his family were compelled to part with their furniture to get bread until he was released from prison.

Another was sentenced for having trespassed on a field which the owner had shut up, though it was an old footpath; but the poor man had no one to back him, had no means of defending the action, and his doom was a prison.

A third had left his wife and family because there was no longer any

work for him in his native town; he had wandered hundreds of miles in quest of employment, had borne cold, and hunger, and fatigue without a murmur, and during his absence, his wife was compelled to apply for relief to the parish. They were taken into the workhouse, and he was committed as a vagabond for three months. That man became a leader amongst the Chartists.

A fourth had been found fishing in a broad navigable river which ought to be free to all, but he had neglected to ask permission of the owner of the field—along the bank of which ran a public footpath, where he stood to angle, but the magistrate was not able to decide his right to the spot, so being the least trouble, filled up the warrant and imprisoned him.

A fifth was a poor pauper, whose wife when far advanced in pregnancy, and while suffering under a severe cold, was doomed to stand over her wash-tub, in a damp outhouse, the walls of which were constantly wet. Her husband had remonstrated against such treatment, and was committed to prison. The day before Gideon arrived he had heard of her death, and that night vowed, on his knees before God, that when liberated, he would murder the hard-hearted overseer. Shortly after he was narrowly prevented from fulfilling his word,—and in a fit of desperation he hung himself.

One was committed because his dog had started out of the high-road, and given chase to a rabbit, although he paid the dog-tax, and had done his best to call off the animal; he was told that he had no right to keep a dog, and was imprisoned. One poor old man had being found guilty of gathering herbs, where he had no permission to go. He had no other means of obtaining a livelihood.

Another was sentenced to three months for having struck a constable, though the brutal official in office had kicked over his basket of apples which he had placed on the pavement for a few moments to rest his arm. But he had obstructed the footway, struck an officer, and the anger of the moment was not thought of, though if the man had died of the blow, he would have got off though a little longer confinement.

Reader! these are awful truths, though they seldom appear in the columns of a newspaper.

It is an error to suppose that imprisonment will alter a man's opinions, especially if he is committed with the full conviction in his own mind, that he neither intended to do harm, nor has injured any living soul. Martyrs were burnt at the stake, and new converts

to their creed sprung up every day. Crime deserves punishment; but to imprison a man for breaking a hard law—a law which half a nation considers unjust, is both wanton and cruel. We may not see our way clearly, but trust that however much we are deficient in legal knowledge it will, in some measure, be counterbalanced by what we know of the classes we are advocating. Honest and sensible men, whose forefathers have defended their country in the hour of danger—men whom even now if needed, we should have to call upon to fight our battles, in whose hands the defence of millions would be entrusted, are surely deserving of the notice of our legislators. This is not a time to trifle with the feelings of a nation, nor is it yet too late to win back tens of thousands of alienated hearts; and those who refuse to do it, are the greatest enemies to their country. A fair Lady wields the sceptre of Britain, and every true British heart would shed its best blood in her defence, but there are cold icy barriers thrown up between her and the warm love of her people; cunning, calculating, selfish, and money-loving men, who care more for themselves than their country, have for long years stepped in between us and shut out the lustre of that beauty, which would, if left to diffuse itself, "make sunshine in many a shady place." They have made hard and iron laws, which men writhe and groan beneath, and feel more of hatred than love towards their framers. We write more in sorrow than in anger, and in the full consciousness that such measures do more harm than good.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MRS. LAWSON AND MRS. BROWN HAVE A LONG GOSSIP—BEN BRUST VISITS ELLEN GILES—HOW THEY SET OUT TOGETHER TO SEE GIDEON, AND WHAT BEFEL BEN WHEN THEY ARRIVED AT THE PRISON.

Next morning the village of Burton Woodhouse was filled with strange rumours, for tidings were soon afloat that Gideon Giles was committed to prison, and that Walter Northcot could nowhere be found. Mrs. Brown, the master-roper's wife, was quite delighted when Mrs. Lawson, who was full of the praises of her husband's valour, called in to tell her the news; and the account she gave of

how Lawson had captured Gideon, was enough to make any one who had not known him, believe that the Deputy was a second Achilles.

"Last night, was it?" said Mrs. Brown, reaching down an extra cup and saucer, and throwing into the pot another spoonful of tea while speaking, for she had only just sat down to breakfast when the deputy's wife entered. "Last night, do you say? Well I'm quite delighted to hear they've got the villain at last! To think for to go to set up against my husband. And then for that low-bred Madam to dare to compare herself to me, and she only a poor journeyman's wife. Why, *we* was forced to let em hev money beforehand; and I declare to you, I one day gev her an old gown, that I was going to throw into my rag-bag; and I've often given their lad bread-crusts that we couldn't eat, and bits of fat meat, when he's come to do anything for me, or gone on an errand to Gainsboro.' Ah! sich ingratitude, I knew it would come home by 'em, and I said so to Mr. Banes, who was kind enough to come and sit up we me till nearly twelve o'clock last night, for my Brown didn't feel very well, so he went to bed early. Is your tea sweet enough, Mrs. Lawson?"

"It's quite niced, thank you," answered Mrs. Lawson, giving a very peculiar look at Mrs. Brown as she said "Mr. Banes is quite a favourite with you, I see. But as I was saying, my Lawson was forced to do all the speaking afore Justice Bellwood, for Oram hadn't a word for a groat. Now isn't it a shame that a man we sich courage as my husband, and who can talk like a lawyer, for bless you, he'd a good eddycation; and don't you think now, he ought to be made chief constable, instead of being deputy?"

"That I do," replied Mrs. Brown; "and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll mention it to Mr. Banes, for bless you, he'd do any mander of thing in the world for me, and I'll get him to speak to the Baronet, for he telled me last night he could do just what he liked with Sir Edward; and see now, if we don't get him made chief. And what do you think he said beside?" continued Mrs. Brown, looking down and stirring her tea as she spoke—"oh, these men!"

"I don't know," replied her gossip; "wehout he said he was in love we you, for upon my soul I really believe he is."

"Laws, do you think so now?" said Mrs. Brown, trying to look most particularly bashful. "But men say anything to a married woman; he said he wished I was single. But I told him he

wouldn't have taken me for the same person if he had seen me when I was so; bless you! I'd a colour like a rose, and everybody used to admire my hair, I took such pains with it, and many of them tried to wear such shoes as I did, but they never could walk in em like me—between you and I, I could wear narrower points, because my two little toes lap over the others. Mr. Banes remarked my handsome foot: I'm stout now, but then you might almost have spanned my waist, it was so slender. I'm sure I don't know how I came to hev Brown. Mr. Banes said, last night, I was the finest woman of my years in Lincolnshire! Just take a glassful in your last cup," added she, introducing the brandy bottle.

"Not quite so full, that will do nicely," said Mrs. Lawson, observing that the glass run over; "and I should say mysen, you must hev been as handsome a woman as ever stepped in shoe-leather when you was young. I was reckoned very good-looking when first I knew my Lawson. I was a good deal the figure of Ellen Giles, only not quite so tall, and rather stouter, while my face was round as a dumpling, and hers is what they call oval. But years alter one, Mrs. Brown; heigho!"

"They do, some people," answered the Roper's wife, "exspecially sich as hev a common look, like Mrs. Giles, but sich as mysen, age only helps to make look more womanly like. Well, but I reckon them Giles 'ill go to the workhouse in a week or two, for however can they get a living, an him in prison. If they're sold up, I think I shall go bid for that set of china they hev, it's a pretty pattern."

"I don't think they'll hev to come to the parish for some time," said Mrs. Lawson, "coss you see of the Miss Lees, who I've heard are very kind to em, and happen Sir Edward himself may do something-like. For you know, what can a woman do left in that way, if he should come and offer to take Ellen into keeping—money does a many things, Mrs. Brown."

"It does," replied the Roper's wife; "I know from the experehehence I hed when I was about nineteen. Hey! you should have seen me then. But surely Sir Edward 'ill niver go to put up wi a low-bred journeyman's daughter. Though from all I hear, she's as fond on him as a cat is of new-milk—sich forward minxes. Well, some people have a taste, marry have they! while others that I know, look out for a woman that is a woman, and I think their taste's more to be commended. Come, have this other cup, Mrs. Lawson, and put another half glass in it. It's a pity to leave such a drop of tea. I'm sure it looks quite tempting."

Mrs. Lawson had the other cup, and a little more brandy, which example Mrs. Brown followed, and as their countenances became more ruddy, their conversation grew warmer, until they got into most comfortable scandal, and Mrs. Brown finished their long gossip by speaking in raptures of Mr. Banes, whom she declared she thought "one of the kindest-hearted creatures living."

How different was the scene in the cottage of the poor Roper! for they had received tidings, the night before, that Gideon was in prison, as Justice Bellwood had sent down his faithful old servant, to bid them be of good comfort, for he would take care that they did not want. Mrs. Giles thought no more of the supper that night, and many a keen pang of reproach did she feel, for what she uttered in her impatience, and after that, she sat down and wept for hours, crying, "Oh, my dear husband! to think of putting him in prison for nothing at all in the world, but working to keep his family."

Ellen said nothing, although her grief was the deepest, for she felt more keenly than her mother; she thought not how they themselves might manage, but of the privation her father would be doomed to undergo while in prison. That night she closed not her eyes; and when she arose in the morning, her beautiful countenance had a strange care-worn look—lovely it was, even more so than when her heart was free from sorrow, but it was the loveliness of grief, such beauty as the sculptor shapes from marble, bending pensively over a sepulchre,—forms that we look upon, and weep over.

That morning the breakfast was prepared as usual, but no one eat, saving the children, they knew that their father was absent—and they knew no more; one little fellow did ask, "what his father would bring him home, when he came from prison?" he knew not but that it might be some distant fair he had gone to.

Poor Ellen! she felt that low aching sensation about the heart, which is so difficult to describe—that depressing feeling which saddens the spirit, and which still remains when the eyes are dry, and leaves no further traces of sorrow than the half-stifled sigh,—the wan cheek, and the fixed glance which settles by the hour upon one object, yet sees nothing save the images that move across the aching eye of the mind. Her mother was also sadly depressed, but the chief cause of her sufferings sprang from the thoughts of how they were to live until her husband was released from prison; from doubts of who would give her credit, and who would not. True, these were cares heavy enough for any mother of a family; and, as

honest historians, we are compelled to record it, she thought more about them than she did of the privations of her husband in prison.

So stood matters at the cottage of the poor Roper, when the honest countenance of Ben Brust broke in amid all the gloom and sorrow, to offer them consolation.

"I'm so sorry," were Ben's first words, as he took Ellen by the hand, "so sorry, that I spent that sovereign Walter Northcot gave me, so foolishly as I did (poor young gentleman, I've been seeking for him all over), but here's ten shillings I've got for you, and you may pay me again, when you can, in a year or two. And don't be down-hearted my lass, for I know we shall soon get him out. I went to see old Justice Bellwood this morning, before he was out of bed, and he says he'll be twenty pounds towards paying the fine. And I'm going to see Gideon to-morrow, and shall teck him some tobacco to comfort him, and a piece of prime beef, Butcher Hyde gave me, and a famous lump of bacon I got of Farmer Kitchen, and a great cake, my old woman's baked, and thou shalt go we me, my lass if t' will, and I'll bring thee as safe back as a miser would his money."

Ellen thanked him with tears, for his kindness; and then inquired what had befallen Mr. Northcot; and a close observer would have noticed the deep colour that for a moment mantled her neck and face, when she asked the question; but Ben had no such penetration, and he told all he knew respecting Walter, for he had traced him to the gipsy-camp, which he heard Walter had quitted about day-break, with a promise from Black Boswell, that he should be cleared from the charge laid against him, respecting the poor maniac, and that they had, through the influence of Jael, parted with the most friendly feelings. "And," added Ben, "I was sorry to see old Boswell look so shaky; he said he felt a kind of a cold shivering all over, and his teeth chattered, just for all the world as if he'd gotten the ague."

What Ben said was the truth, though it was an hour before day-light when Walter left the gipsy encampment: for the first faint streaks of dawn were only just visible above the cliffs, when he parted with Jael at the woodside, and made just light enough to see the handsome features of the gipsy, as he stooped his head to salute her lips at parting. True enough, Jael said, "Fie, Master Walter!" and struck him on the shoulder with her beautifully-formed hand; but the young gipsy smiled as she did it.

Before reaching the camp, she had heard the sound of voices behind her, as if in anger; and without hesitation instantly retraced her steps. But when she came to the rude gap in the hedge, where she had parted from Walter, she saw nothing but the cold grey hills, and the intervening fields, in which some solitary steer or sheep had just risen, and was feeding on the dewy herbage. She listened many times as she again walked back to the camp, but heard only the rich mellow pipings of the blackbird, as it sang on the branch above its nest, and was answered by the throstlecock from a neighbouring thicket.

Events now begin to fall so thickly together in our story, that we have not space to describe the sensation which Walter's absence created at the Hall of Burton Woodhouse, nor the grief of his worthy uncle the rector; which last-named gentleman is only a kind of "sleeping partner" in a tale, in which we have been compelled to introduce so many characters to work out the incidents. It would take up too much space to tell how Amy Lee looked that day,—how her colour changed when she heard that her lover could nowhere be found,—how she fainted away, and was carried to her chamber,—and when she came about again, dispatched messengers in every direction to seek Walter. All this we must leave to the reader's imagination;—also the pain the Baronet felt for what he had said on the previous night; together with the grief of his lady. Neither shall we describe the parties who were sent in quest of the lover,—how some came back and said there were footmarks leading into the river, which corresponded with Walter's; while others declared they were too broad by an inch, and that no one in the county had so beautiful a foot as Walter Northcot. All this would be tedious information, and we are conscious of having already filled numberless pages which add not a jot to the interest of our story;—pages on pipes, and children, humbug, and sleep, and other etceteras, which were written for no other earthly reason than to please ourselves at the time. And here we make our bow, and crave pardon for having transgressed so many times on the reader's patience.

All that day Ben Brust was among the foremost who went out in search of Walter Northcot; but still with all his affection for the young gentleman, he had a strange yearning towards Gideon; and the next morning he set out with Ellen Giles to visit her father in prison.

The two travellers started at an early hour,—Ben laden with pro-

visions, and Ellen carrying all she could gather together in her little basket, to make her poor father comfortable. Ben had an order to deliver at Lea about some sheep, and to call at Willingham, to say "the bullock was too dear," besides delivering a message at Glentworth, which caused them to take the most round-about road; so they struck off above Lea, made for Fillingham, and threaded their way along the high range of hills on which the ancient city of Lincoln is situated, bearing northward in the direction of Spittal. The beautiful scenery through which they passed had but few charms for the daughter of the poor Roper, though Ben made her halt on the brow of the hill beyond Fillingham, which overlooks as beautiful a landscape as ever the imagination of painter conceived — a perfect quiet, and thorough English scene. In the valley, and half-way up the hill, stretched the beautiful village, as if sleeping in the morning sunshine under its canopy of picturesque trees, every one of which seemed to droop over some thatched cottage, or partially to screen the roof of some farm-house. The houses, built of the selfsame stone as the cliffs on which they stand, which stretch for miles along the hills—now green, or grey, just as some little quarry was revealed in the sunshine, and broke the rich colouring of the steep pasturage. Below, spread a sheet of sweet water, shining like silver in the distance; while deep-wooded lanes went dipping down the hill-sides, and led to lovely granges and rich fields, where corn grew, and hay was in the cock, and the red and white clover-flowers spread over many a rich acre, only varied by the yellow "kecks."

On they went, their road lying between still green woods, and stretching before them, broad, brown, and silent, but on each side leaving wide green pasturage, where many a horse and cow grazed, which, but for the watchful eye of the boy who tended them, would soon have wandered beyond the circumscribed bounds, and have reached at last some neighbouring pinfold.

Here we might throw a rich flush of green over these pages—a dash of woods and waters; the lowing and bleating of cattle; the cheerful singing of birds, and the glad humming of flower-loving bees, might make milkmaids sing and ploughboys whistle—send up smoke from cottages, and sweet smells from the hay-fields—point out churches half-hidden in ivy—make the valleys musical with rural sounds,—all this we might do, and yet not express half of what we feel when among such scenes. O Nature! thou art God revealed! The beauty of sunsets and rich landscapes, over which we have hung

breathless, are glimpses of the Deity here below; the skirts of the Almighty's garment trailing in green and gold over the earth, then vanishing with the sunset into heaven; for He yet walks the garden "in the cool of the day." But here we must shut the gates of our heart, for our pathway leads to a prison—to where Gideon Giles sits down, a sad and silent man, and thinks, as the sunshine streams through the iron-bound window, of his little garden with all its trees and flowers, and of the free birds that skip and sing around his cottage. God help thee, Gideon!

On went Ben, with the huge cake or loaf under his arm, and the beef and bacon thrown over his shoulder, front and rear, like two saddle-bags, and Ellen Giles beside him, carrying her little basket, and making the best of their way to Girton, where they arrived while the day was yet in its prime.

Ben pulled the handle of the huge bell when he reached the arched gateway, which bore no bad resemblance to the gate of a Norman castle, so gloomy and forbidding did it look. A man was just coming out as Ben rung the bell, and the side-door was opened; otherwise he would have been reconnoitred through that modern portcullis, the little grating of the gateway. As it was, he half thrust his big, manly body in, without ceremony, though the turnkey tried hard to close the door.

"Your order, sir," said the gaoler, thrusting out his head, and holding forth his hand for what Ben never dreamed of obtaining.

"Please sir, we have come to see my father, Gideon Giles," said Ellen, "and have brought no order, not knowing that one was required; neither did we know where to apply."

"Then you must go out this instant and obtain one," said the turnkey; "we cannot admit any one here without an order." And he began to push honest Ben as he spoke; but he might as well have tried to remove St. Paul's with his shoulder, for Ben had planted himself firmly within the half-closed doorway.

"Order!" echoed Ben, in astonishment, but standing as immoveable as a church, with his leg planted before him, like a massy buttress—"Order!—go out!—I'm d—— if I do, till I've seen Gideon, not for you, nor the best man that ever stepped on English ground. Order, indeed, to go into a cursed place like this! who iver heard of sich a thing? An order to go out when a poor devil's been confined here for months is worth summut; but to go in!—why you teck all kinds of thieves and rogues, and surely you may let in a honest man man, for once, wi'out your order."

Ben Brust at the Prison gate.

"If you don't go out," said the man, still pushing at Ben, "I'll fetch those who will keep you here longer than you may like to stay. So get away while you've chance."

The door was still half-open, and, finding he could not remove Ben, he made a rush at Ellen Giles, who now stood beside him, and came against her with such force, that she fell down on the hard, gravelly causeway, calling on Ben to help her as she fell. Reader! didst thou ever see a burly butcher knock down a bullock at one blow? if thou hast, thou mayest form some idea of the effect produced by Ben's ponderous fist as it fell on the chest of the turnkey, for he was laid prostrate on the pavement in an instant.

There was now soon help enough at hand, for out rushed turnkeys, and oatmeal-boilers, and tread-mill governors, in all directions, and the door was locked in an instant, and Ben and Ellen Giles as safely within the prison walls as if they had committed a highway robbery. The noise had caused numbers of the prisoners to rush to the palisades that surrounded the little court in which they were allowed to walk, and amongst them Ben recognised the face of Gideon Giles.

"I'm here, my lad!" shouted Ben at the top of his voice, "and likely to stay, for owt I know. But I've brought lots of beef and bacon and a good loaf," added he, shewing his load, as he spoke, "so we shan't starve."

But Ben reckoned without his host; for he was soon compelled to give up his treasures, no such thing as food being admitted, beyond the prison allowance, nor aught, saving a change of linen. And after a long investigation, honest Ben was committed to take his trial (for breaking into prison) before the first magistrate that might call.

The Governor, who was a worthy man, and too good for such an office, coming up, and seeing how matters stood, with reluctance gave his sanction to the committal of Ben; and, although against the rules of the prison, permitted Ellen to see her father without an order; but prohibiting her from even giving him a change of linen, until it had been examined, to see if anything was concealed in it: as to food, or any such like comfort, it was against the laws, and, as he said, "more than he dare do for his own brother."

Ellen stayed as long as she could be allowed, and both the meeting and the parting were too painful for us to describe: though it was noticed by many of the prisoners that the Roper seemed quite calm, nay, almost unmoved, while Ellen was present, but that her back was no sooner turned than he was observed to raise the cuff of his jacket-

sleeve to his eyes, and that when he felt the warm, manly grasp of Ben Brust's hand within his own, he leaned upon Ben's broad shoulder and wept like a child.

The kind-hearted Governor had allowed Ben to go at once into the same ward as that in which Gideon was a prisoner; for although only a gaoler, he was "every inch a man."

The day was far advanced when Ellen Giles left the gates of the prison to return home; for the Governor would not allow her to depart until she had partaken of some refreshment, and his wife kindly pressed Ellen to accept a bed for the night; but no persuasion could induce her to stay.

So here leave we honest Ben in prison, with only the prospect of oatmeal porridge before him, and Gideon's company to comfort him; and now we must follow the footsteps of Ellen Giles, who, without money, the sun setting, and many miles before her, set out alone on her return home.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW ELLEN GILES FARED ON HER LONELY AND DARKSOME JOURNEY —WAS STOPPED ON THE ROAD BY ROBBERS—AND AT LAST MET WITH AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE WHO "TOOK HER IN" FOR THE NIGHT.

It was a weary, weary way, that Ellen Giles had to traverse in that sultry summer's evening, and by the time she passed the end of the road which leads up by Spittal, the shadows of evening began to gather around her. There was also a threatening look about the heavens, and many a dark cloud hung around the setting sun, which, instead of "growing golden all about the sky," seemed to turn blacker as the last rays folded themselves up for the night. But Ellen regarded not these signs, her thoughts were with her father in prison, or when they changed, it was to think about home, and the long miles she had yet to traverse, along a road which she was a stranger to. By and by there rose up that deep hollow roaring amongst the trees, which is the sure forerunner of a storm, and the broad flat rain-drops began to fall heavily, leaving round, dark, marks on the dusty road, like spots on the back of a leopard. Ellen walked on faster, but by the time she reached the gloomy fir-

plantation which skirts the edge of Fillingham Park, it was almost dark; and while she paused a moment as if to consider whether or not to descend the hill or proceed further along the ridge, a deep peal of thunder burst forth, and went muttering away in the distance, and certain that she had taken the right turning, she now hurried on with almost breathless speed. She passed through the village, where here and there a light was seen through the windows, but the doors were all shut, as if in expectation of the coming storm: the solitary barking of a dog, and the voice of an old man as if speaking to his wife as he closed the chamber-window, and said "we shall hev a fearsome night," were all the sounds that saluted her ear as she hastened through Fillingham.

She passed the last cottage, with its straggling garden, turned the sharp angle of the road, and entered upon that long sandy lane, with its dark high hedges, which leads to Willingham, and where there are only one or two solitary farm-houses along the whole length of the lonely road. She walked along in the dark—dark as death, saving when the jagged lightning shot forth a momentary blaze—without meeting a living soul. It was a heart-aching sight to see that beautiful girl, traversing those gloomy and lonely lanes, in a heavy thunder-storm, at that hour of the night. But on she went, endeavouring to raise her spirits with the thoughts of the many miles her father had walked when he went to seek work, that he might obtain for his family bread. "God will protect me," thought Ellen, as she proceeded along her dreary path, "if it is His will, I shall accomplish this journey as safely as if it was noon-day."

It is a miserable road at any time, and now one heavy mass of wet sand, only varied where large beds of rough stone from the neighbouring cliffs had been thrown down, to annoy, for a few weeks, the footsteps of the traveller, until they worked their way down, and were buried deep in the sandy soil.

She passed Willingham in the dark, left the church to her left, and the long street of the village behind, and now entered upon a road more lonely than any she had hitherto traversed—a long, weary, unfrequented path, extending for three miles, and only relieved of its solitariness, about midway, by one low road-side alehouse. Ellen began to wish she had honest Ben Brust for her companion, then she thought his company might be a relief to her father in prison, yet wished once more they were both with her, for she felt that if they were present, she could trip gladly along that cheerless way.

But the rain still rattled on the hedges; it fell in heavy showers from the boughs of the trees, through the foliage of which it had now penetrated; the way was dark and dreary, and she had only God, and the innocence of her own heart to comfort her. By this time her feet grew painful, for she had walked above twenty miles that day. She crossed the highway many times in the dark, to find a better path; now traversing beds of flooded grass, pools of water, patches of rushes, boggy slips of waste land, and other impediments, which so wearied her, that she felt ready to fall upon the ground. Poor Ellen Giles! she walked on with the tears coursing down her cheeks—it would have melted the heart of a ruffian to have seen her, with garments drenched through, her feet wet, no one with her, the night dark, and rainy, and not a human habitation near at hand. And many a homeless wanderer often journeys through the lonely roads of England, at midnight, wet, hungry, and cold, with only God for their guide.

"Hilloa! stand!" exclaimed a stern, deep voice, and the figure of a man stood before her in the midst of the highway, though the night was so black she could not see his features.

"Deliver your money," said his companion, who had climbed through a gap in the hedge—for now two robbers stood before her.

"I have no money," answered Ellen, in a voice tremulous with fear, "not a farthing in my possession. Do me no harm! I have been to see my poor father who is in prison; had I money, I would give it you."

"Father in prison!" echoed the other man, "who is he?—what's his name?—what has he done?—what do you here at this hour?"

"My father's name is Gideon Giles," answered Ellen; "they have put him in prison for selling his goods without a license. God knows he hath done no man wrong!"

"Gideon Giles!" said the man who had demanded her money; then addressing her in more gentle tones, "and you are his daughter?—God help you!"

"You are going home then," said his companion; "we know where you live; but this is a long way round, and there is a nearer path to Burton Woodhouse by above a mile. Fear nothing, we will not harm you. We must either do what we are doing, or break stones on the highway for a shilling a day. We were once honest men, but we have families, and they must live somehow."

"Honestish," said the other; "though we would yet prefer hanging

to going into that d——d New Poorhouse, where they give a poor fellow no more to eat than would serve a three-year-old child. But come along, we'll see you as far on your road home as we dare venture to go. We meddle not with such as you."

Ellen thanked them, and followed in the steps they took, without asking a question, though not without feelings of fear. She thought within herself that it would be more honest to break stones on the road than stop people on the highway; "and yet," said she to herself, "these men may have struggled and endeavoured to keep honest until their families were in want of bread: misery and want may have driven them to these evil deeds. God grant that my father may be preserved from such crimes!"

Poor Ellen! she knew not that they but did openly what too many do in another way, and call it business; that a robber and a rebel are sometimes only such through ignorance of the proper knack of managing things.

Wet, and shivering with cold, Ellen followed the footsteps of the robbers, now along some narrow footpath which crossed a field, or skirted the side of a wood, then by entangled ways that wound through patches of land on which grew only the prickly gorse, broad fern, dark heath-flowers, or stunted sloe-bushes. At length they halted beside a stile which led into a dark plantation; bidding her cross it, then take the field to the right, which would bring her to the entrance of a lane that led direct to Burton Woodhouse. Ellen thanked them, and struck down the lonely avenue alone in the darkness. While Ellen pursued her way through the gloomy plantation, the two men retraced their steps over the fields.

"I say, Jack," said one of them, "we have rubbed off an old deed to-night by shewing yon bonny lass her way; this good turn must make up for the trouble we put her father to, about those ten sovereigns we took from the drunken gamekeeper on the heath."

"Hey, hey!" replied Tom, "this will square the reckoning, and we may now open a new account as soon as we like. But I wish we'd taken her down by the Tiger-holt, she may mistake the turning by the wood-end yet, and that will cause her some trouble, for the night's as dark as December."

"We're as near as we must venture," answered Jack, "after this affair of Walter Northcot's. Do you think Bellwood means going further than he said? I didn't like his looks."

"No, he daren't do what he would like," replied the other. He

then whispered something, as if giving his reasons for supposing so, and throwing open a gate, without endeavouring to check the noise it made, as it swung and whistled upon its dry hinges, and they were soon lost amid the gloomy windings of a wood.

By this time Ellen Giles had crossed the plantation, and she now entered a narrow field which led to a large white gate, and opened upon an immense wood. While she paused a few moments to recal the directions she had received from her guides, she heard the sound of footsteps, as if approaching along the wood-side, and presently a man, followed by a dog, stood before her. The night was so dark she could but just discover the outline of his figure, and he, knowing from her voice that it was only a woman which stood before him, offered in tones which approached to tenderness, in answer to her inquiries about the right road, to direct her home.

Ellen thanked him, and told her simple tale in a few words, stating where she had been, and on what business, and how two men had conducted her to the entrance of the plantation, which she expected would have led her out on the heath, whence she could have found her road; but had, she feared, mistaken the turning in the dark.

"I will shew you a much nearer path," said the man, in the same soft voice. "Follow me. The cut across the corner of this wood will bring you to the end of the lane that leads down to Burton Woodhouse." He threw open the large white gate, and Ellen followed him without hesitating a moment.

"Are you not Justice Bellwood's gamekeeper?" said Ellen, walking close behind him through the wet pathway, which was overhung with thick underwood, from every branch of which rattled down a shower as they swept along.

"I thought you would know me," answered her conductor, and muttered something which she did not distinctly hear, then added, "when we reach the Lodge I will change my jacket—for I am very wet—and then walk home with you."

Ellen continued to talk on, telling him that she had met Ann Proctor, an old sweetheart of his, at Gainsborough Mart; also where Ann was now living, and how she looked; with other matters equally light, and which, to him, she thought would be interesting, as they had known each other beforetime.

Their course now lay through a narrow and unfrequented path, such as a gamekeeper traverses when going his rounds, and which could only have been followed in that deep darkness by one

Ellen Giles recognises her guide.

familiar with every foot of ground. Her guide was very attentive; now pausing to part the hazels overhead, that she might pass without shaking down a heavy shower upon her; sometimes lifting a trailing bramble, or setting his foot upon it to prevent her from stumbling; then again, taking hold of her hand, and leading her along,—only remarking how cold her hand was, while his own glowed again with heat.

At length they reached the wood-side, crossed a kind of rude stile (over which he handed Ellen most carefully), when, taking a key from his pocket, he unlocked a door—for they were now behind what seemed to be some large building.

"Come in for a minute, while I change my jacket," said her conductor, as he opened the door.

Ellen entered, and, as he closed the door, she crossed what seemed to be the dark kitchen, and gained the opposite apartment, in which a cheerful fire was blazing. He bade her light the candle which stood on the table, while he still lingered in the back kitchen, as if putting away his coat, or searching for something he wanted. Ellen lit the candle, and, as the light diffused itself through the apartment, she turned slowly round to survey the room, until her eye fell upon the doorway she had passed through, and in the centre of it stood Banes, his hand resting upon his gun, and beside him his huge mastiff.

Ellen Giles stood before him speechless, her hands clasped, and her eyes riveted upon him, as if she disbelieved what she saw. He stepped into the room, and rearing his gun in the corner, said, in his true tone of voice, "So you have come to see me at last, Ellen!—and I bid you welcome to the best my poor house can afford." There was a look of grim triumph on his features as he spoke.

"Villain!" exclaimed Ellen; "let me begone this instant, or I will purchase my liberty at a dear price!" and she rushed forward, and, seizing the gun which he had reared on end, pointed it at him — for Ellen possessed the spirit of a true Englishwoman.

"Come, now, put the gun down before you spoil it," said Banes, seating himself quite coolly in his arm-chair. "If you want to learn to shoot, I will put a cap on the lock to-morrow. Come, be a good Ellen for to-night, and I will use you kindly. Sit down, and dry your clothes — you shall go home to-morrow: upon my soul I mean you no harm. What will you have to eat? I have cold pheasant, part of a roasted hare;—or what say you to a cup of tea, and a frizzle of ham?" said he, placing the kettle on the fire.

Ellen threw down the gun, and burst into tears; while she exclaimed, "O my dear mother!—O God, protect me!"

Just then, footsteps were heard on the staircase, and the poor maniac burst into the apartment in her night-dress, exclaiming, "It would be a long time before you asked me to partake of such dainties; though, when I first came, there was nothing too good for Mary!—she might have anything then!"

Banes knit his savage brow, and seemed to hesitate whether or not he should rise from his seat and strike her; but, looking at Ellen Giles, and changing his purpose in an instant, he said, "Surely you need no invitation, when all the house affords is open to you! Come, Mary, you can be good-natured enough when you like!—go up stairs and throw your gown on, then get this young woman a cup of tea ready. She has walked a long distance to-day, and had lost her way, when I met her by the wood-end. She will rest here to-night, and go home early on the morrow."

The poor woman went up stairs to dress, muttering, at every step, "To-morrow!—he told me the same when he found me in the wood, and to-morrow has not yet come!——But I have no home now, only the grave in which my child is buried!"

"Do not be cast down, Ellen," said the villanous keeper, speaking in the kindest manner. "Your mother is in bed before this time. Rest yourself a little while, and take some refreshment; it will soon be morning. Come!" added he, drawing a chair for her towards the fire, "after you have dried your clothes, I will then walk home with you—if you are determined to go. Forgive all that is past, and believe me, I mean kindly to you. I regret that I have ever done anything to offend you——but that night I had taken too much drink."

By degrees he succeeded in pacifying Ellen so far that she consented to sit by the fire until her garments were dried. He told her it would soon be daylight, then he would walk across the heath with her, and until that time would go and lie down for an hour, leaving her, meantime, to the care of the woman.

Banes lit a candle, and went up stairs, leaving Ellen and Mary Sanderson together, and promising to join them in an hour or two.

The poor woman made Ellen take off her wet things, replacing them with others of her own, while she hung Ellen's before the fire. And so tender was she in her hospitable office, that no one would have suspected for a moment that her intellect was deranged. She

spoke kindly to her guest, called her "her child!" forced upon her a cup of excellent tea, made her swallow a few mouthfuls of ham, and would have "no nay," but poured a spoonful of brandy in Ellen's last cup of tea, and at last persuaded her to go lie down upon her own bed, promising to walk home with her in the morning, and bidding her not be afraid of Banes, as he never entered her room, the door of which she said she would lock; and telling her that the keeper would be up early to go his usual rounds, then they would walk to Burton Woodhouse together.—It was one of her lucid intervals.

By degrees Ellen began to think better of Banes, and regretted that she had misconstrued his intended kindness, believing that what he had formerly done had been at the instigation of the Baronet; and now, dry and refreshed, she went to bed with the full confidence that she should be with her mother early in the morning, nay, feeling thankful that she had not broken her rest at so late an hour; and, seeing that the chamber door was safely locked, and being very weary, she laid down, and was soon sound asleep. The poor maniac reclined beside her, and the red cock had long crowed from the distant farm-house, and the sun risen high over the heath, before they again awoke.

Banes had retired to his chamber—but not to sleep. He sat in the chair by his bedside, and heard their footsteps as they ascended the staircase. He also heard the key turn in the lock as they secured the door, and said to himself, "The first night is got over without much trouble, and to-morrow is a new day. What a lovely neck she shewed when she threw off her shawl! How beautiful she looked as she sat by the fire!—what a colour—what sparkling eyes,—and she is sleeping under my old roof at last! Well, this is something to begin with—I have outwitted the Baronet—and to-morrow—— but the devil will suggest something to keep her here. I have served him too long to doubt of his deserting me at the last pinch. I would marry her, if she would have me, and the other vixen was safely out of the road,—but she sticks as close to me now, that I want to be quit of her, as the coat to my back. Well, I must sleep on it! 'Possession's half the law,' as old Justice Manning said when Bellwood had made safe of Walter Northcot. Heigho! many a poor devil who hardly knows how to get his next meal, will sleep quieter to-night than either myself or the Squire." So saying, he had a long pull at the brandy-bottle, which stood in the adjoining closet, and then he went to bed.

He fell asleep, and dreamed of many things. He fancied the Baronet standing before him with lowering brow, and discharging him from his situation. Then he was exchanging angry words with old Brown the roper, and Mrs. Brown was sobbing and sighing in his ears. Then arose the figure of the maniac, as if mixing poison in his food, or brandishing a knife above his head. Ellen Giles, and Gideon, and Ben Brust also, rose before him. Their images passed away, and Jael, and Black Boswell, and Walter Northcot came next —all with threatening looks. Then came Ellen Giles alone, and in tears; the scene changed to the interior of a church, with groined arches and grim corbels, all of which bore a resemblance to the faces of those he had seen in his dream. They seemed to "mop and mow," and then vanished.—Here leave we then for a time innocence and guilt resting together, like a city that sleeps, with all its virtues and all its vices, under the same blue and tranquil sky.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW WALTER NORTHCOT WAS TAKEN PRISONER AS HE RETURNED FROM THE GIPSY-ENCAMPMENT—AND HOW BEN BRUST MANAGED TO GET A GOOD DINNER WHILE IN GIRTON HOUSE OF CORRECTION—WITH BEN'S REMARKS ON DIVERS POINTS OF THE LAW.

Having somewhat overstepped the order of events in our story, we must go back a few paces, and resume our narrative from a little before the time that Walter Northcot quitted the gipsy-encampment, only pausing to make the reader acquainted with the events which led to his capture. Amongst the gang of gipsies who owned Black Boswell as their leader, was a swarthy, dark-haired, ill-looking fellow named Leonard, a man whom no one in the tribe liked, for he was always grumbling, sullen, and dissatisfied. He had long been suspected of bearing ill-will towards Boswell, for refusing him the hand of Jael; but as there was no open rupture between them on the matter, it was thought that Leonard would one day or other take himself quietly off, and join some other tribe. Squire Bellwood had long entertained a notion that Black Boswell had the utmost contempt for him, and that, although the gipsy took his money, he detested his cowardice; and on this account, the Squire had condescended to pay the most marked attention to Leonard, whenever he met him

apart from his fellows, hoping thereby, in the end, to learn something of Boswell's secret movements, and, if chance offered, to ensnare him. True to his tribe, however, he would not consent to become a spy upon the actions of his leader, though he agreed to do any deed on his own account which might serve the Squire, providing it was kept a secret from the other gipsies. To this Bellwood consented, and for days the gipsy had dogged the footsteps of Walter Northcot. It was nothing unusual for him to absent himself for hours from the gipsy-camp; and when he turned from the fire, and struck into the dark wood, on the night that Walter spent amongst the gipsies, none seemed to remark it, although Winifred said, "Leonard is still in his sulks!"

No one knew the midnight haunts of Bellwood better than the gipsy, nor was there an ear could sooner detect Leonard's shrill whistle than the Squire; and wine and women were both neglected at any hour to answer to that call.

Dark as the night was, and the hour late, Leonard set off for the residence of Squire Manning, which he soon reached; and standing at the carriage-gate, placed his fingers in his mouth, and gave three loud, piercing whistles. Having waited a short time without any one answering, the gipsy muttered to himself, "He is not here; I must journey further." He then struck over some fields, entered a lane, at the bottom of which stood a large farm-house, and again repeated the same sounds. The deep, hollow barking of a mastiff was the only reply to his shrill whistle. "He's tired of her too, it seems," said the gipsy, as he turned away; "and she's the bonniest in the whole bunch." Onward he went, over hedge and ditch, until he came to a low hawthorn-hedge, which skirted a large garden, in the centre of which stood a goodly mansion, and around, in the half star-light, might be traced the white frames which covered the different hot-beds, the roof of the long conservatory, dark lines of young trees, and other signs which mark an extensive nursery-ground, and shew that the proprietor carries on his business on a magnificent scale. The gipsy leant upon the little wicket which opened about midway in the garden, and listened for a few moments, before applying his fingers to his mouth, and he distinctly heard the sounds as of a woman sobbing bitterly, and the voice of a man, now speaking angrily, then again offering consolation, or piling oaths and promises as thickly together as a lying tongue could manage to move. "He is here," said the gipsy; and loud, clear, and piercing as the voice of the

night-hawk, rang his shrill signal through the silence. It was answered by the shriek of a woman—a sound as of one falling heavily on the earth, and the quick footsteps of Bellwood, who was soon without the gate.

"Have you left her so soon?" were the gipsy's first words. "There is no hurry; you have time enough to see her safe in, before going with me."

"She will come round when I am gone," answered the brutal Squire; "and I can't marry a whole parish! Her father's foreman is over head and ears in love with her, and if he waits long enough, he may have her, and a young heir ready to his hands. What's the news? I'm glad you came—I hardly knew how to get away!"

The gipsy then told him that Walter Northcot was at the gipsy-camp, where he would be likely to stay some time, if he waited until Black Boswell awoke, and that he would be sure to return early in the morning; and as Bellwood had expressed a fear about seizing him in a legal way, by warrant, then was his time to look out, as possession was the chief point of the law. The plan met the Squire's full approval, although he expressed an unwillingness to be seen himself in the business; and naming a solitary alehouse of bad repute, which the gipsy well knew, he bade him hasten thither, knock thrice on the shutter, and make what speed he could back with the two men who would make their appearance in answer to his summons.

So was this villanous plan arranged; for neither Oram nor Lawson would venture to put the warrant into execution, which the rascally Justice Manning had granted against Walter Northcot, as they well knew how high the young man stood in the estimation of the whole village, and that the result would be a close examination before honest Justice Bellwood, which would likely enough end in the acquittal of Walter, and the imprisonment of all who were concerned in the business. Nor had the little pettifogging lawyer succeeded any better when he called at Banes's residence, and attempted to draw up a charge from the poor woman's own confession; for he chanced, unluckily for his party, to come in at one of her lucid intervals, and could gather nothing more from her, than that Walter had acted like a kind-hearted gentleman. And she now remembered that some one had pointed a pistol at her from out the wood, and was ready to swear that it was either Banes, or Boswell. Altogether, it was a bad case; but the Squire cared not a straw about the charge being clearly

established; he only wanted to remove his rival from Amy Lee, and to gain time. "An after-charge for false imprisonment," said Bellwood, "may be traversed from court to court, while money can be found to keep it afloat! Beside, I have witnesses ready to swear to anything! Once get him within old Manning's clutches, and he is as safe as if the devil had him,—for not a million would bail him out, until he has had some sort of a trial!" So stood matters at the time when Walter quitted Black Boswell's encampment.

It would only be a tedious scene to describe the meeting of Walter Northcot with the gipsy—the hundred oaths that Black Boswell swore when he awoke. To describe how he shook the young man's hand—praised him for his courage—owned that he was ashamed of being connected with such "a cur," as he called Bellwood; promising also that he would make "a clean bosom" of the whole affair, should the Squire stir any further into it, and confessing that Banes was the originator of the whole plot; and that he should, during the day, seek out Sir Edward Lee, and own how he was induced to take a share in the villanous plot. He then called for some brandy, made Walter drink with him, and having ordered Jael to conduct him through the wood, said, "I will now turn into my tent, for I feel a cursed shivering in every bone of my skin, such as I never felt in all my life before. But brandy will soon put me to rights—it never yet failed."

Walter listened attentively to the gipsy's confession; although his brow lowered, and an angry colour more than once mounted his cheek, as if he hesitated whether or not to resent the injury done him on the spot. But when his eye met the beautiful countenance of Jael, beaming with delight at the pleasurable thought that she had made her father his friend, his anger faded away, and he began to think that, considering the temptation offered by Bellwood, and the love of daring adventure which was habitual to such a character as Boswell, there was, after all, some redeeming traits about the gipsy.

Beside, Walter Northcot well knew the difficulty of bringing such a man to justice;—his fearless character, his wild habits, the daring and lawless followers who surrounded him, the vengeance they never failed of taking in the end on those who had molested them—made it, as Oram once said, "Such a awful thing to carry a summons to a gipsy, that, if he knew where to find him—he would just as soon deliver a warrant to the devil himself!"

Pass we, then, from the encampment, into the very heart of the

wood — the day but feebly breaking, Walter Northcot traversing the long, wet grass, and threading his way through the briery and narrow passes, as he followed the light footsteps of Jael.

They parted, as we have before stated, at the wood-side. Walter offered the beautiful gipsy his purse, with all that it contained. The purse she kept, as she said, for a remembrance, but not a farthing of money would she accept — the gold and silver it contained, she with her own hand forced again into his pocket.

It was the grey dawn of morning — the hour when day seems only to be rubbing his eyes—when the sky has a strange drowsy appearance, looking as if it had been out all night, and wanted some sleep — when nothing appears distinctly — when a tree seems neither green, grey, nor black—when you cannot tell what flowers are at your feet — when only some greedy sheep is astir, as if afraid that his woolly comrades should be up first, and eat all the grass in the field—when the throstle can scarcely see "to gather worms upon the green;" the time when the dusky rooks half-raise their black night-caps, and look out from their nests, calling to their next-door neighbour to get up and look out for breakfast — when the blackbird seems to have got up out of spite, and tries to awaken the feathery inhabitants of a hundred hedges, while they give a grumbling chirp in their nests, as if wishing some sportsman would drop a bullet in his sleek, dark breast for his pains!

And at that hour Walter Northcot was alone. His anger was now cooled down; and he walked along the pathway by the wood-side, wondering whether or not Amy Lee was asleep, or if she had heard of his quarrel with her father, and how it affected her; and if she thought him guilty of the crime laid to his charge. Then he thought what a pity it was that a young woman with such kind feelings as Jael possessed, should be doomed to pass her life in a wild wood, and in the midst of such desperate characters as those who surrounded her. And yet, thought Walter, she seems happy; has a strong affection for her father, and is, no doubt, the means of preventing many a crime which, but for her interference, would be committed;—that Providence, for some great purpose, throws people into strange paths, making them a central link in the chain of life, attaching and holding on in strange harmony—clanking and dragging at times, yet hanging together without breaking; or, if dissevered at all, often in the very spot where it was held to be the strongest. So he walked on, thinking of many things; until at last, feeling the

cold morning-air, he placed his walking-stick under his arm, and buttoned his frock-coat up to his throat. Just as he had done, he heard a rush as from the underwood, which grew deep and thick beside the pathway, and in an another instant three men stood before him. Squire Bellwood was not amongst the number, though he overlooked the whole scene at no great distance.

"Well," said Walter Northcot, halting before them, and slipping his hand to the bottom of his stick in an instant, that he might strike a heavier blow; "well, and what is your business with me?"

"Some law affair," said one of the men who had robbed Banes on the heath, "which I dare say Justice Manning will soon settle; and our business is to take you before him."

"You must first shew your authority," said Walter, "let me know the cause of which I am accused, and produce your warrant; until that is done, I move not a step, unless by force!"

"That we will do all in good time," answered the gipsy, stepping up as if to seize him by the collar; but Walter drew back, raised his stick, and at one blow brought Leonard to the earth. His arms were now seized in an instant, and before he could again strike, he was overpowered by the two robbers. Young and strong, Walter was not easily captured; and he had just succeeded in shaking off one of his assailants, when Leonard rose up and came to their aid, saying, as he seized him, "It's of no use, young man—go you must; we have authority for what we are doing. It is for attacking that woman by the wood-side the other day, that we lay claim to you."

"You are all villains!" replied Walter; "and I well know who has set you on.— But it is of no more use parleying with you here, than for a lonely traveller to argue with a band of robbers when they have disarmed him." He said no more, for he well knew that the odds were against him; so—

> Like a proud steed reined, went haughty on,
> Champing his iron curb.—*Milton.*

It was an old-fashioned manor-house into which Walter Northcot was conducted; one of those old rambling places which seem to stand isolated from all that belongs to the present age. Such a spot as no well-read or imaginative man can enter without calling up the stern image of Cromwell and his gloomy puritans, as if such places were never built for the gay cavaliers of Charles's time to dwell in —the very buildings themselves seeming to demand a change;—

the sombre rooms, the massy mullions, the small diamond-paned windows, all casting "a dim, religious light," calling up images of black prayer-books, starched and taciturn inhabitants, women with grave-looks, and men who fought with Bibles at their belts. Spots where they could kill a man, then kneel around him, and hope that his spirit was in heaven; believing that Providence, for some mighty purpose of its own, had willed his death. It was filled with all that is calculated to make men thoughtful and melancholy. When the wind blew, the doors creaked, the wainscot flapped on the walls, the old portraits moved, the vane turned round with a grating whistling sound, the chimneys were large and cold, and the wind roared down them with a strange hollow voice, as if dead men were calling to one another. Rumour said it was haunted—every day told that it was falling into ruins. But old Justice Manning got drunk every night, and swore it would last him his time; and he cared for nothing beyond.

Walter Northcot was conducted into the old-fashioned hall, and the door locked, there to wait until such time, as sleep had driven away the fumes of the wine-cup from the brain of the roystering Justice; and here, for the present, we must leave him.

Ben had passed one night in prison in company with Gideon Giles; and when he arose next morning, he felt unusually hungry. In due time the loaf which was to last all day was served out, together with the oatmeal porridge. Ben of course eat all up at breakfast time—even to the very crumbs, and threw down his spoon, with the melancholy prospect of having nothing but two more basins of "slop," as he called it, until the following morning. "I shall niver live till then," said Ben to Gideon Giles. "I must hev some bread, and beef, and ale, or I shall be under the doctor's hands before night. I seem to feel five stone lighter since yesterday. You said something about the sick-list," continued Ben, turning to a thin, deep-looking fellow, who was polishing a beef-bone for his breakfast, the remains of his dinner the day before.

"Yes, but you must come the artful," replied the man. "But I'm afraid you're too fat and healthy-looking to gammon the doctor as I do. If you can but do it, you'll have meat and broth to dinner, instead of Skilly-go-lee!"

"But you're not in the sick-ward," said Ben, "though you hev the allowance?"

WALTER NORTHCOT IN THE OLD HALL.

"No," rejoined the man. "I talked so much in my sleep, nobody could get any rest for me. But I don't on this side; and I think it's all owing to letting us stay up an hour later of a night in this ward—for, you see, we're not treated like felons. Beside, the man calls here first with my dinner, and lets me pick which mess I like."

"I see!" said Ben, placing his finger to the side of his nose;—"you're wide awake. I reckon he brings a good many messes of beef and broth, and such like, at the same time?"

"Supplies the whole of the sick-ward," answered the man; "and leaves mine here first."

"It must be very aggravating," said Ben, "when a man holds out his porringer for his oatmeal porridge, to smell all those messes of boiled beef — to snuff up the fumes of the rich broth — and to see the nice smoking mealy potatoes! Lors! I wonder how a man can live after they're taken away, and he isn't allowed not even a taste —nowt but his gruel!"

"It is annoying," replied the man; "but a move can be soon worked, if you like, for he comes round just after they've served out the skilly-go-lee; and then there will be no one in the yard but myself and another I'll get. I think we can 'chisel' him."

"How can it be done?" said Ben.

"There's a downy-card here can come a fit to the life," rejoined the man. "I'll speak to him, and get him to throw hissen into a

fit just as the man comes up with the dinners; then he'll be forced to hurry off for the doctor, and whilst he's away—help yourself."

"It's a capital thought," said Ben. "Go speak to him."

The man retired, and brought up the "downy-card" he alluded to.

"I'll fall into a fit, if that will be of any use," said the fellow who now approached—for he had rogue stamped on his brow, and had been committed to prison before for imposing such like tricks on the public. "I can come it beautifully. I'll kick Bob and Joan with my heels, roll up my whites like a duck at thunder, and groan like a miser at a funeral, when he expects a good fat legacy.——But remember, I go shares of the grub you get; and that, if the doctor comes, you will take all the blame on yourself, and say it was you that was bad."

"Hey! hey!" rejoined Ben, "I'm bad enough, and shall soon be worse, if I hevn't some good beef, or something of that sort. An as to helping mysen to what I can catch, it 'ill niver trouble my conscience. What right hed they to teck the beef, and the bacon, and the loaf I brought, any more than the coat off my back? I've done no harm; and dang me if there's owt either ower hot or ower heavy for me in the eating way that I wont teck, if I can but lay hold on it!"

While they were talking, the man came up with the dinners.

"Here he comes with the tray," said Ben's companion;—"twenty lots at least, all piping hot!—Be ready, as soon as I thrust my arm through, to receive my mess."

"All right!" answered Ben. "Now, my boy—make haste! make haste!" The man sunk down beside the palisade, with a deep groan, and went through the imposition so cleverly, that Ben was astonished to see it; for he kicked up his heels, and writhed about as if he was in terrible agony.

"Run! run! for your life!" said Ben. "Tell the Governor to send for the doctor directly;—it's the worst fit he's iver hed! I'll keep my eye on your tray. Quick! quick!—ask no questions, but run!"

The man set down his tray without the palisade, and hurried off as fast as his legs could carry him, without once turning his head; and scarcely was he out of sight before Ben thrust his arm between the bars, and helped himself to ten rations of beef, with bread and potatoes in proportion. He had scarcely deposited them in his ample pockets, before a dog which belonged to the Governor drew near, and began to smell about the tray; and Ben's companion, seeing the man was returning, began to shout, "Make haste! make haste!—the dog's already eaten half the dinners!"

E. Lambert.

Ben Brust raising a Dinner.

The bearer of beef and broth gave the dog a kick, uplifted his hands and eyes, then hurried back to tell the Governor of his disaster; and when he had gone, Ben entered the room where the rest of his fellow-prisoners were gulping down their oatmeal porridge, sat down and began to prepare for his dinner,—having appropriated, for his own share, what was the prison-allowance for ten ailing men.

Ben drew out his large clasp-knife, and, amid the loud laughter of the prisoners, held up a mountain of beef and bread, saying, "This is the way to live, my boys!—I'll give you all a taste." He was as good as his word, although Gideon refused to accept of any. "Remember, they stole all the meat and bread I brought in yesterday," said Ben, looking at the Roper; "and happen I'm only eating my own after all."

"You havn't given me my share," said the man who had so well played his part. "I had all the kicking and groaning to do, and if it hedn't been for me you couldn't hev got the man off his tray."

"Not a mouthful shall you hev," answered Ben; "though I'll be as good as my word, and bear all the blame when the doctor comes; and you no' I must eat a good deal to give me courage to face him. I don't like to encourage impostors;—somehow it goes against my grain. And I do think its a shocking thing to act the heving of a fit; for you might be struck into one while 'shamming' it. As to what I've got, why they robbed me first; so I'm only tecking back my own, like. And as for your share, I'll give you some good advice instead—Never pretend to hev a fit again, for it's a very sinful and shocking thing."

"It will be a long while before I get you another dinner by acting one," replied the man. "I've got as much as half-a-crown before now for such a fit!"

"If I'd been by," said Ben, "and there hed been a pump handy, you would soon have had half-a-dozen pails of water on you. It's no sin to cheat a cheat."

The prison-doctor only resided across the way, and came running in without his hat, just in time to see Ben busied, with his huge knife, cutting through four slices of the beef (which he had laid one upon another) at a stroke, and helping himself to half a potatoe at every mouthful.

"Which is the man that was so bad?" was the doctor's first inquiry.

"I was rather queer a while ago," replied Ben, with his mouth

so full he could scarcely speak; "but I'm better now. It was only a faintness, like, brought on through eating that cursed skilly-go-lee. You must put me on the sick-list, if you mean to keep me well; for oatmeal porridge don't agree wi' my stomach, doctor; and I think ou can't prescribe me a better thing than plenty of good beef."

The doctor was a good-natured man, and having, as he came in, heard the domestic narrate the loss of his beef, etc. by the dog, saw at once through the whole design; and, taking a pinch of snuff, laughed heartily. Nor was he ignorant of the cause for which Ben was committed — for it soon spread through the town,—so, entering into the humour of the thing, he felt Ben's pulse, and promised, before night, to send him something that would take away his faintness. He was as good as his word; for, as the Governor of the prison had received a letter from honest Justice Bellwood, interceding in the behalf of Gideon Giles, the beef, and bacon, and huge cake, which Ben had brought with him, were given up; and that night there was such a smell of roast meat in the ward where Ben and Gideon were lodged, as had never before scented those dreary walls. Nor was the man who had thrown himself into the pretended fit forgotten. They also managed to get in a huge can of ale; and Ben rubbed his hands and said, "This is summut like a prison!" But Ben had not been fully and fairly committed.

Ben was now a favourite with all the prisoners; for, as we have before stated, there was a greater license granted to this particular ward than any other: the occupants were locked up last at night, and first set free in the morning,—for the greatest culprits among them were only poachers, many of them young men of previous good character, but with the organ of destruction, towards game, largely developed.

"I'll tell you what it is," said Ben, now as good-natured as ever —for he was well filled with beef and ale —"no man living likes to be freer of the highway better than I do; but if there was plenty of sich living as we've hed to-day, why I shouldn't mind spending a month or so here in winter, every year. I was just thinking, like, of what we've done! and d—— me if we ain't better and honester fellows than one half of your big chaps that at this minute call theirsens free! Here's Mike, here, has catch'd a hare or two—I've catch'd some scores in my time—what of it? If they were one man's property to-day, they were another's to-morrow—for they run anywhere when they like! — Here's Dick, committed for trespassing

—a deal of thought these fox-hunting gentry hev, whose fences they break down, or whose crops they injure, when they're after the hounds!—Here's Sam, left the workhouse, and tried to maintain his family wehout being beholden to the parish; and all they charge him wi' is, not giving 'em a regular notice! I think they ought to be thankful for what he's done, instead of sending him to prison.—And my friend Gideon—as upright and downright a man as iver lived!—here he is, for nowt at all but striving to be honest and industrious, and to pay iverybody their own, wehout being beholden to a living soul! Now, I say such laws are all humbug; and I would tell the Governor so to his face, if he was here—for my name's Ben Brust, and I care for no man living, except those as I like.—And what hev they shoved me here for? Why for coming to visit an old friend!—and because I wouldn't see his daughter treated like a dog!—and for giving a brute of a fellow a thump on the head, when he mislested her!—and that's all.——So here's all our jolly good healths; for I don't think there's either a thief or a rogue amongst us—wehout bad treatment made him so since he came here." And Ben drank up his ale, and went to his straw bed and coarse covering with a lighter heart than many a man who that night stretched his limbs on a couch of down, and was wrapped in "sumptuous and fine linen."

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW THE POOR MANIAC BEGAN TO "COME TO HERSELF" AGAIN—AND HOW BANES CONTRIVED TO KEEP ELLEN GILES IN HIS POWER—WITH AN ACCOUNT OF MRS. BROWN'S VISIT TO THE GAMEKEEPER, AND THE RECEPTION SHE MET WITH.

The sun had risen high above the woods when Ellen Giles was aroused by her companion, and great was the maiden's astonishment when she awoke, and saw the strongly-barred window and the wide expanse of heath which it overlooked; and her colour changed when she remembered whose roof she was under.

"Come, my love," said the poor maniac, "speed thee in dressing, and I will away with thee, and we will go," added she, singing fragments of old songs after every sentence, "where—

'The hart he feedeth by the hind,
The buck hard by the doe,
And the turtle-dove is not unkind
To her that loves her so.'

And I will shew thee where they have buried my child; and we will wait to see its ghost. It only comes at moonlight, though," added she in a whisper, "and never stays when the sky is cloudy.

'When the blackbird and the thrush,
That made the wood to ring,
With all the rest, are then at hush,
And not a note they sing.
At dark, the bush and trees,
That were so fresh and green,
Do all their dainty colours lose,
And not a leaf is seen.'

I heard him go out, and he tried to open the door—but I said, no—

'Though the wind is in the west,
And the cuckoo's in her nest,
You shall have no lodging here.'

Heigho! it was a dark night when *it* died!" and she stood with her hands clasped together, looking out upon the heath as she spoke; but her "mind's eye" saw nothing saving the image of her lost child. "Dark—dark—and cold—and the rain fell on the long leaves, where I slept, when *he* found me—and he brought me here—in this room —and then he said —— Heigho!—

'Oh! cruel was the winter's night that pierced my heart with cold,
And cruel was the young man that left his love for gold.'"

"I am ready now," said Ellen, throwing the last ringlet into its proper place as she turned away from the old-fashioned mirror. "Happier days will come soon!—and I will call upon you when I have leisure, and walk with you, and be your comforter. I have heard that you have suffered much," and a tear stood in Ellen's eye as she spoke.

"Kiss me then, and I will love you," said poor Mary. "It is pretty hair," added she, lifting it up, and looking at Ellen's ringlets. "*Hers* would have been the same colour, had *she* lived!—We will sit on the sunny banks;—and I will never love man again—no, never again! No!—he vowed it—and then—deceived me!" and she again sang a fragment of an old madrigal:

" First shall the heavens want starry light,
The seas be robbèd of their waves,
The day want sun, the sun want bright,
The night want shade, the dead men graves,
The April flowers and leaves the tree,—
Before I false my faith to thee."

"I cannot open the door," said Ellen, pulling at it with all her strength, after having withdrawn the bolt and turned the key. The countenance of the poor maniac instantly changed as she made an attempt to open it—but Banes had secured the door from without.

"What shall we do?" said Ellen, looking, with blanched features, upon her mad companion. "Can it be that he intends to keep us prisoners! For God's sake let me return home, or my poor mother will be heart-broken."

"All day long until the night he opened it not," said the maniac, speaking as if to herself, and keeping her eyes fixed on the door; "I sat here weeping, alone,—but I have no tears now. My eyes turned to fire while watching in the dark, as they lighted me to vengeance—to vengeance!" and she set her teeth, and clenched her hands as she spoke, while Ellen Giles trembled from head to foot. "I screamed aloud," added she, "but no one heard me. The old trees roared—the mastiff barked—and the plover shrieked on the wild heath,—but no one came to comfort me—only the spirit of my child! It cried—but I saw it not: I heard its little fingers scratching all night without on the wainscot—but it could not get to its mother."

"God help her!" ejaculated Ellen. "She hath been hardly dealt with. I thought there had been none in the world so unhappy as our family.——Come," added she aloud, "let us not be cast down. There is One above who will deliver us from the power of this evil man."

"He knoweth me not, now," answered poor Mary, clasping her hands, and looking upward, as a gleam of reason seemed, for a moment, to light up her countenance. "He left *me*, when I forgot Him—when they told me I had a sweet voice—when I loved to sing better at the booths on the village-green on a feast-day, than I did in the old church; and I passed not then so often the narrow footway that leads to my mother's grave — when I forgot the old Bible which my mother gave me on her death-bed, and ran out to buy ballads in the street; and said not my prayers, but sat up a-nights and got off songs to sing—because they said I had a sweet voice. He left me when Bellwood came, and brought me flowers to adorn my hair, and gave me gifts that made me proud—when he danced with me alone—when I lifted my head high above my companions, and went to church no longer to pray, but to be admired, and catch a smile from Bellwood.—God left me then!—and I called not upon

his name again until I was a mother;—when I turned round and saw that little face resting on my bosom, then I prayed to Him to bless it, and He heard me, and I wept over it, and it smiled;—God was with me then, and forgave me. But I forgot him again,—and then my angel died."

"He never forsaketh those who put their whole trust in Him," said Ellen, wiping her eyes. "My father is in prison—my mother is at home weeping for me—and I am here in the power of a wicked man: yet I know God will deliver me out of his hands."

" e will!" said the poor woman, bursting into tears, and leaning her head on Ellen's shoulder. "But I have thought only of revenge, instead of forgiveness, have drawn Justice savage as myself! for, until now, I had forgotten Mercy."

We have before stated that poor Mary Sanderson was only subject to her mad fits at intervals,—that there were moments when her reason returned in all its power—after she had given vent to her tears—for tears are God's comforters—the hidden springs that burst forth from the burning desert of the heart. The thoughts of her child, and of her troubles, seemed only to drive her beside herself. Brooding for a long time over her sorrow, drove her mad for a season, acting upon her as too much drink does on some men, and makes them appear raving, and staring mad. A kind physician, and tender usage, would soon have restored her again; but, as may be expected, these were not to be looked for in the gamekeeper. Nor had she, for many a day, been so collected as when she leaned on the shoulder of Ellen Giles to weep.

Just then was heard a sound of footsteps without, and Banes, having scraped his shoes, turned the huge key twice in the ponderous lock, and entered the house. Once within, he re-locked the door, put the key in his pocket, stayed some time below and lit the fire, and, taking a stiff glass of brandy, mustered courage enough to venture up stairs, and release his prisoners.

"This is strange conduct, sir," said Ellen Giles, rushing down the stairs as she spoke, and without again opening her lips until she found the door below locked. "Let me begone this instant," added she, taking up the poker, "or I will force my way through the window. I have heard enough of your conduct this morning to put me upon my guard, and am now convinced of the motives that caused you to deceive me last night, and lead me to this place. Undo the door! or I will stand at the window, and call to the first passer-by to liberate me—I will stay here no longer!"

"I would liberate you this instant, but I dare not," said the villanous keeper. "Believe me, it is against my own wishes that you are now here. But I happened to meet with Sir Edward Lee this morning, and while endeavouring to interest him in the procuring of your father's release from prison, chanced to tell him that you were here, and he bade me, as I valued my situation and the continuance of his friendship, not to let you depart until he had seen you. Be not alarmed, Ellen; nothing shall happen you whilst you are in my care. I believe the Baronet means well. Come—it's time you had breakfast. I should like you to meet Sir Edward, and will take care not to leave you alone with him."

"I'll not stay another moment!" exclaimed Ellen. "I have already suffered enough through trusting to your false promises!—I will ——"

"Why was the door fastened?" inquired Mary, interrupting her. "Banes, disguise not your villany before me! My memory hath been clouded of late—to-day it is beginning to clear up again!"

"Hold your peace!" exclaimed the Keeper, frowning as he spoke; for he could find no palliation for the lie he had told. "I locked it lest you should get up and leave her to herself, while you went to play off your mad freaks in the wood."

"I shall play them off here, in future," said the woman, with a deep, meaning look. "I am calm now — your threats cannot move me.——So you have seen the Baronet? Well! well! — men are changeable creatures! It was only yesterday that he sent back a message telling you never to meet him again. I remember it now; and have not forgotten the rage you were in. The time is at hand that I have so often told you of. Come, let her go home. As for myself, it matters not;—you see I am no longer what I was."

Banes stared at the woman as if he could scarcely believe what he had heard. He had never felt so awed before her, since the night she rushed out on the heath. He knew not what to think. Had he been alone, he would either have knocked her down, or set his savage mastiff on her; but Ellen Giles was present—so he made an attempt to laugh. "Hey! hey!" said he; "give a dog a bad name, and hang him! Come, let us have something to eat, and you shall soon see the Baronet, and others you little expect to see. You are worse than a severe judge, for you give a man no time to produce his evidence, before you condemn him! I am glad, however, to hear you talk so naturally once more. Now, if the Baronet was to step in at

this moment, hand me the money, and order me to procure Gideon's release before night, how foolish you would both look. Well! well! I deserve it all,—you women are hard of belief! But I have done my best for your father, Ellen; and have also called on your mother, and explained everything. And as a proof, you may go and inquire yourself, if you please, although she does not expect you home until towards evening." Saying which, he took out the huge key, and threw open the door.

Banes was a more courageous villain than the Squire—had greater confidence in his own powers. He did nothing by halves; and when the door was thrown open, and he went out to see, as he said, "if the Baronet was coming; as he perhaps might be detained in obtaining cash to the amount wanted to liberate Gideon; or he might have called on Justice Bellwood," Ellen was ashamed of her suspicions; and when Banes helped her to a slice of ham, and told her what her mother had said, and how she looked, and that he should have brought one of her little brothers up with him to the Grange to-day, only the roads were so dirty, Ellen condescended to ask his pardon, so gladdened was she by the hopes held out, that her father was so soon to be free. "As to Ben Brust," Banes said, "I have made that all right, and they will come home together this evening."

"It is not unlikely," said Banes, seeing that Ellen was now apparently easy, "that the Baronet and Justice Bellwood may ride over to Girton together; if they do, our prisoner's will return home in grand style. But come how they may, and when they may, here they call first, and here you will be kind enough to stay, Miss Giles, if it only be, to be the means of reconciling one who has long been undeserving, but now only wishes to shew that he is a true friend to you and yours."

Poor, unsuspecting Ellen! she stammered out something in the shape of a compliment, for she really felt very happy, and never dreamed that the villanous Keeper had neither seen the Baronet nor her mother, and that if he had the power to keep them there, her father and Ben Brust might stay in prison until "the crack of doom."

When the meal was finished, Banes walked out, intending, as he said, to see how the land lay, and promising to bring them word. He left the door wide open, for he felt conscious that he had now gained Ellen's full confidence, and had not the least fear of her attempting to escape. But, lest such a thing should happen, he continued to keep within sight of the house; but neither of them crossed

the threshold. Towards evening he returned, and told them a long tale, how the Baronet and Justice Bellwood had set off to the prison together, and intended returning by the way of Fillingham, and that her father and Ben would call at the Grange and take her home with them; or the Baronet would send over a footman when they arrived, to tell them when the carriage reached the lane.

The day passed over, and evening came, and not until then did Ellen seem anxious to return home.

"Wait a few minutes longer," said Banes, "and then, if they do not come, I will walk with you to the end of the lane."

She waited until it was dark, and when Mary Sanderson went up-stairs to fetch something from her sleeping-room, Banes also followed her, and while she was in the chamber, fastened the door. He then came down and had recourse to the brandy to prepare himself for what he now intended to accomplish. He also prevailed upon Ellen Giles to take a mouthful before proceeding homeward, and with much ado succeeded in getting her to swallow a small portion.

"And now I will go home," said Ellen, approaching the stair-foot to bid her female friend good-night. Banes guessed her intention, and said, "You had better go up-stairs to her." Ellen did, and before she had reached the landing, he double-locked the house-door. "You are safe for another night," said he, putting the key in his pocket, and following her up-stairs.

In an instant the truth flashed upon Ellen's mind—the poor woman was locked up in her room, the night had again closed in, and she was now alone with the Keeper; for as such she might consider herself, since her companion was a prisoner. But before she had time to think further, she was struggling with Banes on the landing, for he no longer made a secret of his purpose, but at once attempted to force her into his own chamber.

As such a scene is both difficult to describe and painful to read, we shall pass it over; for the heavy shuffling of feet, the deep and thick breathing, the cries of Ellen for help, the curses uttered by Banes, the noise made by Mary Sanderson to get out—now calling as if to some one on the heath, then kicking at the door—all made up such a scene of confusion, and such a variety of sounds, that it is almost impossible either to distinguish or point out anything clearly. Banes had, however, succeeded in forcing Ellen Giles into his chamber, and now, faint and exhausted, she sank down upon the floor, unable any longer to offer resistance; and the bleeding face of the ruffian told

how terrible had been that struggle. He had got fast hold of her wrists, when a loud knocking was heard at the outer door. The Keeper bent a moment over his senseless victim, who now lay prostrate at his feet, as if he hesitated what to do—when the knocking was again repeated, and this time seemed almost loud enough to awaken the dead.

Unconscious of who might be the intruder, and half-alarmed at the boldness with which the door was assailed, and feeling sundry qualms at the situation he was at that moment placed in, he turned round, locked the door of his chamber (leaving Ellen senseless on the floor), and went down stairs. His first act was to light a candle, and place a cap on the percussion-lock of his gun, then, with his mastiff at his heels, he boldly ventured to open the door. Alas for Ellen Giles! it was no knight-errant who entered, as of old, just in time to rescue some distressed damsel from the clutches of her ravisher—but Mrs. Brown, the wife of the master-roper! She came in, with a large bundle on one arm, and a reticule on the other, followed by a man who carried two enormous trunks. Her first words were, "Oh, my dear Banes, that brute Brown 's turned me out!—He was listening on the staircase the other night while you were talking to me."

"The devil he was," muttered the Keeper, as he raised up his gun, "and where are you going to now?"

"Where am I going to now!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown in astonishment, and placing her bundle on the table; then adding, "Oh, Banes! this is all through you."

The Keeper walked up and down the room, and wished at that moment that the devil had safe possession of Mrs. Brown, for he now felt himself in a pretty predicament. But she, good woman, knew not the secrets of his establishment, and having given the man his shilling, according to agreement, and dismissed him, began to open her trunks to see that nothing had happened to her finery during the removal, when uplifting her hands she exclaimed, "Good heavens! my best bonnet 's crushed all to bits. I can never go out in it again till it 's been on the block. Did you ever see—Banes!" and she held up her tuscan, which was really very much deformed. "Why, whatever have you been doing," proceeded Mrs. Brown, your face bleeds like a pig's! I'm sure it looks as if somebody had been scratching you. You're quite a fright."

Banes stammered out something about chasing a poacher at sunset through briars and hawthorns, and such like; then inquired where she intended taking up her lodging for the night.

Mrs. Brown dropped her bonnet, and stood staring at him in astonishment, as she exclaimed, "Where?—why here to be sure. Didn't you say if I ever left Brown you had a home for me, and I might come and stay with you until I got a regular divorce, and then you would make me your lawful wife?"

"Well, but what can you get a divorce for?" said the Keeper, "you have done nothing that I know of; and your husband—is a fool," added he, "like yourself!"

"I have done enough to be turned out of doors," said Mrs. Brown, "all because you stayed with me rather late the other night. And I told Brown I liked your little finger better than I did his whole carcase, and he struck me with a rope's-end, and turned me out; and if I can't get a divorce for that, it's very odd; and more I can tell you, if you don't have me, I'll bring an action against you for a breach of promise."

"But my dear woman," said Banes, who now found that she was a greater fool than he had believed her to be, and who had talked of divorce, and such like, that he might win her over on his own conditions—"you are already married, and I only spoke of what might be done providing you were free of your husband. Only think of what the people would say, if you were found living with me, as the matter stands now—of the injury it would do to our characters."

"Character!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, now red with rage, "why didn't you tell me all this before I left my husband? Didn't you say, you only wanted me to make you the happiest of men? Oh that I should ever put my trust in sich a perfidirous man!—What's that?"—exclaimed she, pausing suddenly and listening, for it was the voice of Mary Sanderson calling aloud to be set free. "Oh you villain!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, "you've deceived me, and got some other woman here. Happen you're married, you rogue! But I'll know all afore I quit this house, I will," and she shook her large fist in Banes's face.

"You have lost your senses!" exclaimed Banes, unable any longer to curb his anger; "and must take for serious, what a man but spoke in jest. What, do you think I'm out of my senses too, that I should take up with an old married woman like you? Go home, and tell Brown what a fool you have been. Marry you!—a divorce!—ha! ha! ha!—marry the devil as soon — hey, even if you was single!—Come, pack off, before I throw your traps out of the door! I've fooled with you long enough."

"Oh, my heart!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown; "I must faint!" And she sank down very carefully upon the floor. Banes took up the fag-end of a cigar, and lighting it, walked up and down the room until Mrs. Brown came round again of her own accord, when she sat down very becomingly upon one of her large trunks, and relieved herself by "a good crying," deprecating, all the time, most bitterly, the unconstancy and deceit of men.

Banes was at his "wits' end;" he knew not what to do. And when big Mrs. Brown threw herself on her knees before him, and entreated him, with tears, to get a divorce as he had promised to do, and to make her his lawful wife, he thought that he would run up stairs, unlock the doors, then start off and quit the neighbourhood for ever. Three women were more than the Keeper knew how to manage at one time; and while he hesitated what to do with her, a loud crash was heard outside, as if some one had forced through a window, and carried away both glass and wood-work at a blow. Banes rushed out at the front, and Mrs. Brown after him, with the candle in her hand; and when they got outside, they beheld the head of Ellen Giles thrust through the window, and heard her calling aloud for help.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE INTERVIEW BETWEEN SIR EDWARD LEE AND JUSTICE BELLWOOD —HOW BLACK BOSWELL AND JAEL SUDDENLY APPEARED IN THE HALL OF BURTON WOODHOUSE, AND GAVE "MATTERS A TURN"— WITH DIVERS REMARKS INTERSPERSED BETWEEN.

ANOTHER night passed away, yet no tidings had reached the Hall of Burton Woodhouse respecting the fate of Walter Northcot; neither could any traces of him be discerned from the time he left the gipsy encampment. A strong suspicion, therefore, attached itself to the gipsies, and rumours were soon afloat that he had been murdered in the camp. The family of the Baronet were in deep distress, and the life of Amy Lee was considered in great danger. So things stood when Justice Bellwood rode down to the Hall, with an intention of bringing affairs to a close connected with his son's marriage.

The worthy magistrate had long been aware that Sir Edward Lee had an objection to his son; but the thought had never before entered his head that the Baronet despised an alliance with his family. Now,

however, he believed such to be the case, through what he had gathered from the Squire. So he came armed with wrath and "his bond."

Sir Edward Lee was standing at the Hall-door when the Justice appeared; and as the old man expressed a wish to speak with him on business, they entered a private apartment—the very room in which the Baronet had had a last interview with Walter Northcot. Justice Bellwood was one of those stern old English gentlemen who make a point of speaking, at once, what they think. There were no half measures about the old man—for he scorned the purgatorial path of conduct.

Sir Edward Lee saw, at a glance, that the old gentleman's temper was ruffled; and wishing to steer wide apart from the subject which was uppermost in his own mind, he began to talk about the weather, inquired about the Justice's health, begged that he might be allowed to order something for him, and many other things, such as commonly pass between a creditor and a debtor, when the latter has not the "wherewithal to pay with."

"I have neither come here to eat nor drink," replied Justice Bellwood briefly, "but to bring matters to a close respecting my son's marriage with your daughter; for I have heard—I will not go round about, Sir Edward: I heard it from his own lips—that you think an alliance with my family beneath you. Who are you, sir? what were your forefathers? that you should do this; and why did you not think of it before you consigned your estate into my hands?—answer me these questions!" and the old Justice struck the table heavily with his fist, until the water was shaken out of the ornamented flower-vases—the flowers Amy Lee had gathered with her own fair hands.

The angry spot mounted the Baronet's brow; for he well knew that his ancestors were, both in wealth and title, far beneath Justice Bellwood's; but this he passed over, and said, "The conduct of your son is not such as I can approve of. As it regards ——"

"Conduct!" exclaimed the old Justice, now in a towering passion; "do you talk of conduct, Sir Edward? Look at your own!—what has it been?—the talk and laughing-stock of the whole county. What if he has been a little wild? He has not, surely, demeaned himself lower than you have done—nor have I heard of his falling in love either with the cook, or the scullion. Conduct, indeed!—he may have followed the example you have set him, and taken a little higher walk and a wider range—but he had no daughters, Sir, grown

up to women — no lady at home to feel a moment's pain. Think of these things, before you talk further about conduct!"

"I plead guilty," answered the Baronet, speaking in such tones as appealed at once to the kind heart of the honest old Justice. "I have sinned, and I have suffered for it. The censure of the world cannot inflict deeper pain than I have already felt — than I feel even now. I seek not the forgiveness of the world, neither do I regard its censure. There is ONE HIGHER—ONE MIGHTIER—that I have offended—to HIM alone do I look for pardon. I stand upon this hearth a beggar; but I am a much happier man than I was when rich. I have, by my own folly, sacrificed the little Eden in which I might have lived and died happily.—Take it—it is your own —I am satisfied—for I shall yet save my daughter from the wreck! There is but one blank in the catalogue of my crimes that I have not yet filled up, nor do I believe you would wish me to do it."

"What is it?" inquired the old man, now deeply moved.

"To dig a grave for my daughter, and bury her alive by giving her to your son!" replied the Baronet, his voice tremulous with emotion.

"I would sooner dig my own grave, and throw myself into it alive!" said the old man. "It is true, then, that her choice is fixed on Walter Northcot?"

"So true," rejoined the Baronet, wiping the tear from his cheek, "that she has never once smiled since his absence; and unless he returns speedily, will, I fear me, never again arise from her bed. And—I speak it with pain—there are very strong grounds for suspicion, that Walter has been carried off though the means of your son, in connexion with Black Boswell."

"Then suspicion is a liar!" exclaimed a deep, gruff voice from the doorway, and the next moment Black Boswell himself entered the room, followed by his daughter Jael—for he heard the Baronet's voice, and could not wait to be announced.

"By G——," continued the gipsy, "I don't know what has become of him! He departed from my camp in safety. Jael here, saw him outside of the wood. Your son," added he, turning to the Justice, "is the villain. I will lose my head if he is not now in his power — if he is yet alive." The gipsy then threw himself, without ceremony into the large easy-chair, and said, "I could hardly crawl here. It will soon be over with me; and dying men tell no lies."

A deep, hollow cough followed this outburst, and Black Boswell

threw back his head as if exhausted, while the heavy, quick breathing, told of the dreadful inflammation which raged within that iron frame; and he said, "Jael, some water! I have the heat of hell in my throat. Quick! girl, quick!"

A tumbler of water was brought in, and the gipsy drank it off at a breath, giving back the empty glass to the servant, and saying, "More! more!—it would take the whole river Trent to cool me!" A large jug of water was next brought, and he drank from it with all the eagerness of a horse after a long journey.

After a time, Jael narrated Squire Bellwood's interview with her father, which we have already described in the fifteenth chapter, and went through it so minutely, as to leave no doubt of its truth on either the mind of the Baronet or the Justice.

"It is true," said her father, giving an uneasy twitch in his chair as he spoke, as if his conscience smote him; and speaking with difficulty, he added, "Now that affair by the wood-side—tell them all."

Jael went through the events* with tolerable accuracy; for her father had, beforehand, described the whole scene. Sometimes he put in a word as she proceeded, then ended by remarking, "This was the contrivance of your d——d gamekeeper, Banes. Such villains as he and your son lay down plans which such fools as myself work out, and sometimes get hung for them.—But I shall cheat the gallows!" and he laughed at the thought; though his merriment ended in such an awful fit of coughing, as had well nigh suffocated him.

Justice Bellwood listened to their long confession in indescribable agony; and although he had made a few notes in his pocket-book as they proceeded, yet his hand shook like a leaf in an autumnal storm, and tear after tear pattered down on the pages as he wrote; and when they had done speaking, he said, "And this is my only boy! O God! that I should live to discover his villany! But I am old —very old—and cannot last much longer!" Then, as if a glimmering of hope had suddenly broken upon the gloom of his mind, he said, "But this may all be false; and I have recorded their evidence without first swearing them—bring in a Bible."

A Bible was brought in, and the old man held it towards Black Boswell with a trembling hand, and with a faltering voice repeated the oath.

The gipsy curled up his fevered lip in scorn, and said, "I never

* See Chap. xxiii. p. 183, etc.

kissed the book without lying—even when I came with the intent to speak the truth. I swear enough when I have no need—for an oath seems to come out best with a lie. I cannot read, and know not what your book contains;—but though a villain, I know that truth and honour need no oaths. Take the book away; I have spoken the truth."

The spirit of scorn in which this was uttered, seemed to conquer the disease while he spoke. But when he had done, the fire in his eye was quenched, and he averted his head, as if to shew his further contempt for the Holy volume;—for he had never known its sacred truths, therefore neither reverenced nor feared them. And there are too many like Black Boswell; though they have not the honesty to confess it. Nor can the awe which surrounds religion, and the sanctity which hallows the name of God, deter a villain from falsehood,—if he neither believes in the truth of the one, nor reverences the holiness of the other. A liar will lie in spite of both, and conquer that weakest of all human fears—superstition, if he can but gain his ends. This is done every day, and yet wiser heads than our own are puzzled what to suggest in its stead. If all men were honest, oaths would not be needed; nor have they the power to elicit the truth from those who are hardened in crime. A man who has no veneration for the Bible, cannot be made to feel it in an instant: the conviction of truth comes not so suddenly—the work of conversion is not done ere one can say, "it lightens." We have seen many good men shudder while taking an oath, and even speak so doubtfully of what they were before confident, that their evidence has passed for nothing! When a man feels as if he were speaking in the presence of God, he must have nerves of iron if he has no fear; and under such a sensation, speech loses its boldness—even the effect of truth is lost. It is as if an orator poured forth his eloquence in a whisper, or the oration of a Cicero oozed from the lips of a cold marble statue. Let not our readers think for a moment, that we are speaking of this matter slightingly:—we only regret that there is no other test to distinguish truth from falsehood—that the honest man and the downright villain are equal when their lips have pressed the same volume—that in the eye of the law they both stand on the same footing—and that the ends of justice are, by this means, too often defeated. True enough, this is far better than it was in the time of the Saxons—then, justice decided in favour of the man who could bring forward the greatest number, and the wealthiest witnesses; and how the poor man stood beside the rich, needs no sage

to guess. And long after the Norman Invasion, things were but little better; for the poor were then chained to the soil, and were slaves indeed. The Judgment of God (as the Ordeal was called), and savage combats in the lists, were the means resorted to for justice. History records the rest.—And here we again own that we have been dabbling in waters too deep for us; and, to save others the trouble, confess the truth of the stern old adage, that "Fools will be meddling."

Jael knelt down, and with her eyes uplifted towards heaven, pressed the Holy volume to her lips. It was the daughter of the lowly Roper who first directed her attention to its sacred truths; for when Jael lay alone in her camp, writhing beneath the ravages of a dreadful fever, Ellen Giles was her "ministering angel." And many a happy hour did those beautiful girls spend together on the lonely heath, until Jael, who had long been a worshipper of the beauties of nature, now worshipped Him by whose hand "all things were created." Before then, she had looked on the sun as God, for she had seen how the flowers bloomed beneath his genial warmth, and

Watched the hawthorn every day
Making *some little show of May.*

But we are now too near the end of our work to dwell upon this subject. Well done! it might be useful, if published separately as a tract, and distributed gratis among the gipsies; first supposing that some kind missionaries are sent out into their wild encampments to teach them to read,—for we have heathens at home as well as abroad, and we drop the hint for the perusal of those who are too ready "to look abroad first." This is another digression; but our readers must bear with it.

Both the Baronet and Justice Bellwood further interrogated Jael, and from her learnt the plans laid by Banes to get Ellen Giles into his power, and how he had been instrumental in procuring Gideon's discharge from the ropery; Banes had not kept secret his plots from Black Boswell, and it was only during his brief illness that the gipsy had divulged these things to his daughter; for, as the old man had said that morning when he lay groaning in his tent, "I have done injury enough in this world, Jael, and it may go easier with my pains, if I try to make amends before I go out of the world, and I do think I feel better since I have made a clean bosom of these matters: it's of no use waiting until it's too late."

Sir Edward Lee's first act was to order his steward to discharge

Brown from the ropery. Justice Bellwood's, to issue a warrant for the apprehension of Banes. The next morning, bills were placarded in the neighbouring villages, offering one hundred pounds for the discovery of Walter Northcot; for a man and horse were that night dispatched with all speed to Gainsborough. A messenger was also sent to find Squire Bellwood.

"It will be a hard matter," said the old Justice, while a tear stood in his eye, "to be compelled to accuse my only child, of such villanies as in my whole career as a magistrate I have never before met with. But this is the last tear I will shed for him," said the old man, dashing the bright drop suddenly from his cheek, and heaving a deep sigh as he spoke; then adding, "I am glad, Sir Edward, that we have made this discovery in time. But where is Amy? I must see her before I depart. I envy you of nothing but the possession of such a daughter." And he took the Baronet's hand within his own, and pressed it with all the warmth of true friendship.

"You shall see her," said Sir Edward, "for she has many a time spoken of you, and even wished us to send for you. But now you know why I refrained."

"True, true: alas, that I should ever have lived to know what I now do!" said the old man. "But you did wrong to keep me from Amy. I had made provision for her, in case this marriage might not take place; now I will give her all, just leaving sufficient for *him* to live upon, and no more—no more!"

The Baronet spoke warmly in Squire Bellwood's defence, bidding him remember he was his own son; then adding, "You have pardoned me my follies, why should you be more severe with his?"

"You meditated not MURDER!" said the old man sternly.

"MURDER!" exclaimed Black Boswell, springing up from the seat in which he seemed to have been dozing, "who charges me with MURDER? Who dares to say I murdered her?"

His eyes rolled with savage fury as he spoke, and there was a baleful and searching look about his countenance, as he stood gazing fixedly on the Justice, as if ready to spring upon him. Then he sat down, as if suddenly remembering himself, and said, "I am not well, Jael; let me be removed to my camp."

"He has been subject to these fits ever since my mother died," said Jael. "Do render me some help in removing him to his tent; he will be better there, and I can watch over him."

"Murder!—they talk of murder!" muttered Black Boswell to

himself, "there was only one knew of *it*, and she is dead:" and he sat with his head bent and his eyes closed, and spoke not another word, until he was placed in the light cart which was brought for his removal; and when Jael took hold of his hand as she helped him to ascend, she shuddered as she felt of it, for he was burnt up with a fever.

"There is some mystery about this," said the Justice. "I remember there was a stir made about his wife's death. But before any investigation took place, the whole tribe had struck their tents; and seven years elapsed before they again appeared in the neighbourhood. It was never known where she was buried. But these things seem to have been forgotten, and the man now looks as if he was dying. I remember he was ill some time ago, and refused to see either a doctor or a clergyman; so I know not what can be done for him. His daughter is worth her weight in gold. Well, well! I fear it would be useless to try to reclaim her from this wild life. If her father dies I will offer her a home."

The Baronet stated that his lady had long since made her the same offer, but that no promises could induce her to leave her father, as she seemed wedded to her wild woodland life, finding more pleasure and comfort under the shade of a green tree, than beneath the proudest roof that was ever erected.

Just then Lavinia came in to say that her sister would be glad to see Justice Bellwood, and, shewing the way with a light, she conducted them up stairs.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHICH THE READER WILL FIND FULL OF STRANGE MATTER, AND BE EITHER VERY MERRY OR VERY SERIOUS, JUST AS IT HITS THE FANCY.

RETURN we to Ellen Giles. She was liberated from the chamber, and brought down stairs by the aid of Banes and Mrs. Brown; and the Keeper succeeded in hushing all the jealous qualms of the master roper's wife, by telling her that the Baronet had given him orders to keep her prisoner until such time as he could visit the Grange. This Mrs. Brown believed; for Sir Edward Lee's attachment to Ellen was no secret in the village of Burton Woodhouse. Nor did Mrs. Brown know how great a change had taken place in the Baronet.

With hands bleeding, through the effort she had made to escape, the poor girl was laid senseless upon the floor, the very image of death; and so alarmed was the Keeper, that he hastened up stairs, and brought down Mary Sanderson, to aid in her recovery. Nor did Mary pause to upbraid Banes with his brutal conduct, when she witnessed the state of Ellen; she felt such an affection for her as she had long been a stranger too. Banes knew not now what course to take. He walked up and down the room, while the women were endeavouring to restore Ellen; and once or twice he thought of packing up what little money he had, and leaving the neighbourhood for ever. After a time the two women succeeded in getting Ellen up stairs, and placing her on the bed in which she had slept on the previous night.

"I don't think yon poor creature will iver recover," said Mrs. Brown, as she came puffing and panting down stairs. "I niver saw anybody in such a 'taking' in my life. Her arms are black and blue, and there are marks about her neck and bosom that look as if she has had some rough treatment. How she came by 'em, God only knows; but I'm sure if she dies, and a corner's inquest was to sit over her, you would be hanged!"

"Hanged, should I?" said the brutal gamekeeper, pausing in the middle of the room. "The hemp was never sown yet that's to hang me. If she will struggle and knock herself to pieces when nobody's with her, and try to get away when no one molests her, I can't help it. Though, to speak the truth, I wish I was fairly out of this mess. I was just thinking about bolting,—what say you, will you go with me?"

"Hey, to the world's end!" said Mrs. Brown, "if you'll promise to make a honest woman of me! Let's be off now!"

Banes stood and looked at her for a moment, then broke out into an affected laugh, as he said, "But I should have to give up my goods and chattels, besides a year's wages that the Baronet owes me. Altogether it would be a loss of above a hundred pounds! And then there are your trunks and things—you would not like to leave those behind?"

"Not for all the world!" said Mrs. Brown, looking at the huge load. "Though I might manage to make up a bundle of some of 'em. There's a silk gown I've niver hed on but once—cost me four guineas,—and a new shawl I wouldn't part with for any price,—and two stuff dresses hardly the worse for wear,—and a muslin delaine I hevn't hed made up yet,—besides my merino cloak, and lots more things that I couldn't think of leaving."

"Well now," said Banes, "if you could but manage to carry the trunks a bit at first, I might jog on with the bundle and basket, beside taking what I should want for myself. You could go on slowly, and I should overtake you before you reached Willingham—you know the road. We might stop there, and then take coach for Nottingham in the morning."

"That we might!" said Mrs. Brown, putting on her bonnet and shawl, while Banes tied a strong rope to the handles of the two trunks, and slung them across her shoulder.

"I'll be with you in a minute or two," said he, as she crossed the threshold with her heavy load; and scarcely had she got outside, before he took up the bundle and the basket, and, throwing them after her, closed, and locked the door, adding, with a loud laugh as he shut her out, "I hope you'll be in time for the coach!"

Mrs. Brown's first exclamation was, "Oh! my best delaine—you brute, there's my lace collar in that basket!" But Banes made no reply. She then rid herself of the trunks, and, picking up the largest stones she could find, commenced breaking his window—abusing him all the time, with such sentences as—"Take that, you thief!—I'll sue you for damages—I'll appear as evidence, I will, you villain!—I'll swear she was black and blue, and all colours!—I wish it may hit your head! — I saw the marks, and will swear to 'em!—I'll not leave you a whole pane!—I'll get the bellman to go round and tell where she is, you bad, designing rascal!—You've ruined my peace of mind for iver!—But I'll hev an action for breaking your promise!"—and smash went two more panes,—and then there was a loud scream, as she exclaimed, "Do open the door!—somebody's tecken away my trunks and everything."

The only answer was a loud, deep laugh, and a threat to set the mastiff on her, if she didn't "walk her chalks."

While she was busied in breaking the window and abusing Banes, the two robbers, Tom and Jack, who were on the look out, chanced to be within hearing, and, sheltering themselves at the end of the house, managed to steal her luggage, and to get safe off into the wood with their booty.

Without regarding Mrs. Brown, the robbers made off with their prize, taking a circuitous path through the wood and across the fields, which, after an hour's walking, brought them to their own cottages. Jack went on first to see that all was right, and giving the signal to his companion, trunks, bundle, and basket were soon

deposited on the cottage floor. Their wives threw down the black, strong pipes they were smoking, when their husbands entered, and were now eager to inspect the booty.

The room in which the robbers and their wives were assembled, had a melancholy look. It bore the marks of negligence — the appearance of waste and want, so strongly characteristic of its occupants. There was none of that "tidiness" which forms so great a feature in the dwellings of the poor industrious English cottagers; though, even in its ruin, it told a tale of "better days." The chair-bottoms, which had once been covered to preserve them, still retained vestiges of the care bestowed upon them in former days; but now, the coverings were ragged and dirty, and seemed to be in admirable keeping with the worn "spindles," that bore traces of filthy footmarks—masses of dirt which had dried thereon, as if they had been used for scrapers; legs and backs were also broken, and only kept together through the aid of unsightly pieces of twine. The table was no better: on it stood a large bottle of gin — beside this, a teacup, the handle broken off—loose tobacco —a rusty candlestick—the mangled remains of a boiled leg of mutton, on a dirty dish—its supporters, two pipes, one of the heads on the dish, with the ashes of the tobacco falling among the meat. The fender was bent in at the middle, as if some one had fallen upon it in a quarrel; the looking-glass was broken to atoms, only a small portion remaining in one corner of the frame—those countenances needed no mirror. On the mantelpiece stood the image of what had once resembled a parrot—but the head was wanting; this was matched by a dog, which had only one leg to stand upon. A rusty grate—a tinderbox — a broken china-cup—made up the rest of its ornaments, with the exception of half a raw onion. On the wall hung a sampler which had been worked with great care at the village-school: the hand which formed those pointed trees—which had woven that curious cottage—and put in the red thing called a bird—and beneath, marked "NANSEY WIITE, AGEHED HELLEVEN YEERES"— was, at that moment, raising a cup full of neat gin to her shrivelled lips; and when she set it down, swearing, in broad Billingsgate, that she would see Bet in that place which is thought to be the antipodes of heaven, before she should have the silk gown; and their husbands were smoking, drinking, and laughing at the quarrel which had arisen between the two women over dividing the plunder.

"Well then," said Betty, putting on Mrs. Brown's best shawl and

E. Lambert.

The fate of Mrs. Brown's finery.

[illegible]ndon: H[illegible]yward & [illegible] Paternoster Row, [illegible]41.

tuscan bonnet, with fly-away-cap to match, "if you will hev the gown, why I shall hev these here. Shan't I cut a dash in the parish?" said she, stepping mincingly across the room, with a short pipe in her mouth. "Your eyes, Jack, somebody 'ill run off with me now. If I meet Squire Bellwood, in this dress, I shall tip him the wink, and carry him off like lightning!" She then made an attempt to dance, chanting, meantime, the classical air of "Jump Jim Crow," the words and music of which were at that period so highly appreciated, and drew, nightly, greater houses than the "vulgar nonsense of William Shakspeare, whose plays," as Mrs. Brown once said, after having visited the Gainsborough theatre, "are now hardly iver heared of in Lunnun; and indeed, for my part, I think a body might as well stop at home and read their Bible, or goe to church and hear a good sarment."

Read this, honest Rumball, and grin!—Mrs. Brown was a woman of taste, as times go; and Betty Blewitt, in the shawl, bonnet, and pipe, no bad emblem of ———— I leave thee, my fine old fellow, with thy John Bull prejudices, to finish the sentence; conscious that it will begin with a broad D———, and end in that good old word which no one can pronounce like thyself—and which is, "Humbug."

"I wish," said Jack, blowing out a huge volume of smoke, "Bellwood would teck you to Beelzebub, and leave you there till you were done brown."

"I think I've done Brown as it is!" exclaimed Bet, half-choked with the teacup of gin, through laughing at the first pun she had ever attempted. "And I think I'm doing White as well!"

Nancy also laughed—so did Tom; but Nancy laughed to think how well the silk gown became her—over her other clothes.

Then they stooped down quite amicably over the huge trunks—Bet seizing a pair of stockings—Nance a pair of slippers; Bet a turn-over—Nance a lace collar; again, a cap, counterbalanced by a wreath of artificial flowers, which Mrs. Brown had destined to match; then a pair of stays were checked off by a skirt; and so on with numerous unmentionables.

Poor Mrs. Brown!—Little did Mrs. Lee, the mantua-maker, dream, when she was so careful to fit thy fat form, that all her labour and all thy care would be divided over gin and tobacco, amid washer-women and robbers! Reader, here is a moral, though we cannot at this moment see it.

And where is Mrs. Brown? Dear woman! she had found her way

home, and was knocking at her husband's door; while, in her heart, she cursed the Gamekeeper, and very properly bemoaned her own folly. And her husband was not yet in bed, but sat up, looking over the discharge he had received from the Baronet, and which told him his rent was doubled unless he quitted the ropery on the morrow. But he heard the loud knocking, and, poking out his head, inquired "Who's there?"

"Your own wife!" answered Mrs. Brown; "the woman that was faithful and true, and loving and affectionate. The woman that rubbed your shoulder when you had the rewmatticks—that got up in the night and gave you your parry-gorrick when you coughed—that niver would let you put your things on, on a Sunday morning, till they were aired—that waited on you if only your little finger ached"——

"Gammon!" exclaimed her husband, and slapped down the window, though his heart ached while he did it; for he knew his wife was only—"a fool."

Mrs. Brown knocked again, and up came the window. "Dear Brown!" were her first words, "I know I've done wrong; but you know you vexed me. I said what I niver meant; but you know you made me; and I allos hed a spirit. Come down, or I shall throw mysen in the well, I shall, and then I'll haunt you iver after while I live."

"Go to Banes," said the stern husband, his limbs trembling while he spoke.

"Oh you heard-hearted villian!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, "and sich an affectionate wife as I've been—to your rewmatticks and your bad cough. But I'll haunt you. I'll come ivery night, in sky-blue flame, and scream round your bed." And, as if practising for the occasion, she shrieked like a very woman: then Brown heard a deep sullen plunge in the well—the water plashed—and all was over.

Brown rushed down stairs—he held his candle over the well—below all was deep, dark, and silent—then he screamed, he roared, he yelled, he bawled, he ran round and round the well, crying out, "Oh my dear wife! I'm a villain! I can niver rest again! Oh, oh! I will jump in and join her. I'm damned—I'm haunted—I'm cursed —I'm a monster—a hideous hound—a devil, a beast—Beelzebub—Banes—my rope-walk—my wife—my well—Gideon—my discharge —the Baronet—I'm mad—mad—mad—Get her out—Oh! help—help—help!"——

His neighbours came out—breechless, hoseless, shoeless, stayless, capless—men, women, children, dogs, lights. "Oh Lords!"—"Oh dear-me's!"—"Bobs, Dicks, Toms, Nells, Bets, Nans, Billies!"—ropes, ladders, oaths, tears, shrieks—"Poor woman!"—"Poor Brown!"—mingled like hail, rain, thunder, water, fire, engines, robbery, murder, sudden deaths—or Thiers leading on the French, and in the middle of Fleet-street before we knew he had come. It was the very devil himself, but without his presence to call a fiend to order.

Ghost of Rabelais! thou couldst describe it, shaking thy hearty sides in thy easy chair; but we cannot. Tag-rag and bob-tail—thou wouldst have drawn: how the lights glanced, and the drapery fell, as figure after figure looked into the deep darkness, proving Fuseli's theory, "that shadow is the absence of light," to be true. Fielding or Smollett would have chuckled over such a scene. Old Sterne have rubbed his hands, and thrown in his wig for the pleasure of looking upward, as he fetched it out. But we live in another age, an age of discovery, in which all that the above-mentioned writers would have done in describing it, will be imagined without our aid.

Meantime, the search continued: a long ladder was carefully lowered down into the well, it struck the hard sand bottom firmly, and was clear of the remains of Mrs. Brown—two men descended. The well was not very deep, and after a careful search, the men re-ascended the ladder, and vowed with deep oaths, that, excepting a huge stone or two, there was nothing at the bottom a tithe of the bulk of Mrs. Brown. The poor husband was carried fainting to his own threshold, and great was the surprise of the people when they found the door locked. It was plain enough that some one had entered amid the confusion, and locked themselves in, and a loud knocking ensued.

"What do you want?" inquired the voice of a woman, as she threw up the window.

"Oh the ——!" shrieked out Brown, recognising the voice in an instant, "it's my wife, and we've had all this trouble for nothing!"

It was the veritable Mrs. Brown herself, who, too wise to throw her own fat form into the well, had rolled in a huge stone as her proxy, and amid the uproar, entered the house unperceived. There was a long parley before she would unlock the door, and poor Brown was in his turn compelled to promise and vow many most unreasonable things, before he was allowed to enter. But when he got up stairs he again made use of the rope's-end, and many a man without

cried, "Go it Brown!" while the women exclaimed, "O the brute!" The next day, Mr. Brown made preparations for quitting his ropery, and began to wish he had a good situation as journeyman; for his wife's extravagance had left him but little beforehand.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A SPECIMEN OF "FINE WRITING," DESCRIPTIVE OF AMY LEE AND LOVE—AND HOW MRS. BROWN UNEXPECTEDLY PAID A VISIT TO MRS. GILES—AFTER WHICH THE CHAPTER ENDS IN A LOUD NOISE AND A PROFOUND SECRET.

Amy Lee was a timid and retiring creature; and when she heard that the kind-hearted Justice was waiting below to see her, she begged of her sister to help her to arise, for she felt ashamed of her weakness—was fearful lest the old man should perceive the change that a few hours had made in her, and should attribute it to its true cause, her sorrow for the absence of Walter Northcot, which, she thought, seemed like doubling her dislike to the Squire. A great alteration had taken place in that beautiful girl since the night her lover was missing, though she was now much better; her mind had been haunted by only one horrid thought—she believed Walter was murdered. One of the men sent out in quest of her lover had discovered a pool of blood near the woodside, and in his interview with Amy had mentioned the fact, nor did he see her again after the skin of the sheep which had been slaughtered was found in an adjoining ditch; a common trick with sheep-stealers, lest some mark on the fleece might be sworn to, and lead to detection if found in the possession of the culprits; and many an alarm of murder has startled the solitary hamlets in that wild district, which ended in a similar discovery. The dark hints which from time to time were given by Jael, warning him of danger, the fact that no further trace of him could be found after he left the gipsy camp, and the threats Walter had uttered if Black Boswell refused to make full confession of his share in the plot, led her to the conclusion that he had met with the gipsy unknown to Jael, had fallen in the quarrel, and found a grave amid the dark solitudes of the wood.

With these thoughts alone her mind was haunted; and the strong outline she had drawn in the day, was at night filled in with gloomier

colours; her very dreams were sprinkled with blood; her slumbers broken by fancied shrieks; in every sound was the blow repeated; every word of comfort seemed uttered in his own ebbing voice, growing fainter, until it seemed to die away for ever. For twelve long hours did Amy Lee remain in this dangerous state, her sweet thin lips baked dry and hard, while her beautiful frame was scorched up with fever. Her thoughts were wild and incoherent; the love of madness --a discord of all sweet sounds that came gushing forth without order, yet telling how pure was that heart, even when its floodgates were burst open, and the current left to leap forth unguided. Though the even course of the channel was broken,—though the winds blew and beat about it, the crystal purity was still there; there was no sully in "the loosened silver of the fountain;" its babblings were ever of love; its very fears were love; all the tossings and heavings of that gentle heart "were love, still love." Then came a change, a sullen settling down of the storm, the deep lull of despair. Sorrow had no more tears to shed. Grief had sighed herself into silence. Madness had slept, and shuddered as it awoke into reason. Death, the cold comforter, was all that now remained; there was still the chilling river of Death between them,—that once passed, then they might meet again on its dreary, distant, and icy shore. There was still the marble meeting of love—Pygmalion struck into stone with his arms enfolded around his sculptured beauty just as his lips felt the cold marble breathing. Memory moved by in melancholy weeds, kneeling like a lone widow at the altar, her wedding favours overshadowed by dark plumes, decking Hope in a sable pall, and gathering her "golden hair" beneath the black funeral hood.

Resignation came at last, with clasped hands and subdued sighs, a calmness in her eyes more eloquent than love; her thoughts were of another world; all she had loved had flown thither; sorrow and fear seemed dead; no sound could move her, until the muffled wheels of the chariot of death dinted the black velvet on which she had sunk down.

"She seemed an angel newly dressed, save wings, for heaven."

Another and a more favourable change succeeded this fit of melancholy, for love is a hard death to die of; and if the winged urchin wounds deeply, he but seldom kills; he feathers his shafts with phœnix plumes. When her sister came up stairs with the tidings that Black Boswell and Jael were below, hope returned—love revived—and by some strange power, which is said to be only in the

possession of woman, all thoughts about dying vanished. It seemed like a dream suddenly forgotten, for the form of the gipsy had so interwoven itself with all her thoughts of the murder, that to hear he was even then under her father's roof, was to think of him as the herald come to announce the return of her lover.

It would have made a pretty picture, Amy Lee dead, "and all for love;" Lavinia stretched senseless on the floor; Lady Lee weeping, yet still holding the pale cold hand of her daughter; the Baronet burying his face in snow-white cambric; old Justice Bellwood with his eyes bent on the floor; Amy's harp near at hand, with the strings broken; her birdcage hung in crape; a landscape half finished on the table—subject, a young tree broken down in a churchyard, the sun half-risen, the first beams falling on a newly-made grave, a river half in shade, flowers withering, etc. etc. But ours is another scene. Amy Lee seated in an easy chair, her head supported by a pillow, her countenance very pale, but looking more lovely than ever, her mother smiling while she sits by her side; the Baronet looking on in silence; her sister resting on the back of the chair, and leaning fondly over her; and honest Justice Bellwood, with Amy's hand clasped within his own, and swearing in broad English that he will see his son hung on the highest oak in the park before he shall ever marry her.

"You feel better now," said the kind old Justice, helping himself to a pinch of snuff with one hand, and spilling half the contents of his box on the carpet.

"Yes," whispered Amy, and a faint smile lighted up her wan but lovely countenance, the first that had beamed there for many hours.

"I knew you would when I came," said the fond old man releasing her hand, and he rose up and kissed her forehead; then fumbling in his pocket, he took out a large roll of paper, and thrusting it into the fire said, "There, Sir Edward, is the end of our marriage articles—should I die to night, you owe me nothing!"

What he burnt was nothing but a roll of blank parchment, for his son had possessed himself of the real bond, and left the bundle now destroyed in its stead. The old man took it from the secret drawer without unrolling it.

Here drop we the curtain over this chamber-scene, leaving our readers to imagine the deep gratitude evinced by Sir Edward Lee, and the burst of joy which escaped his lips; and was so startling, that even the enfeebled Amy raised her head, and in silence clasped the warm hand of Justice Bellwood.

Pass we to another scene, the cottage of the Roper; in which Mrs. Giles sits weeping, surrounded by her children—two nights and days having elapsed since she last parted with Ellen—her husband still in prison.

Poor woman! she had inquired of every one she saw, if they knew anything of her daughter, but had heard no tidings. Such a carrier had seen a young woman, but her shawl was red, Ellen's was green,—another had met a person on that evening, but she seemed to be between thirty and forty,—a third remembered a girl running down by Fillingham on that very night, but she was going to look after the cows which had strolled too far away. No one had seen Ellen, for the doings in Banes' house were as secret as the dungeons in the Inquisition of old Goa. Mrs. Giles had, however, learnt that Ben was in prison along with Gideon, and that Ellen had set out alone to return home, but beyond these facts she knew nothing.

While she sat brooding and weeping, and wondering what had befallen her daughter, who should enter the cottage but Mrs. Brown. "The last person upon earth," as Mrs. Giles afterwards said, "that she should expect to see."

"Well," said Mrs. Brown, for it was the evening after the scene we have described in our last chapter. "Well Mrs. Giles, I dare say you're astonished to see me!"

"I am," answered the poor Roper's wife, "and can only say that if you're come to make a mockery of my troubles, you have chosen a cruel time, for I'm well nigh distraught."

"Troubles," exclaimed Mrs. Brown, "Laws yours are nothing compared to mine. Here did I last night lose every thing I'm worth, and have nothing in the world left but what I stand up in. I've lost every thing Mrs. Giles—my best tuscan bonnet, cost a guinea when new; two shawls, one a real merino; a silk gown nearly new—two of stuff; three lace collars; a beautiful cloak, fit for any lady; five turn-overs; boots and shoes in abundance; two pair of stays made to measure; a coral necklace; and a brooch that looked like gold for all the world, and the jeweller at Gainsbro' said he niver saw one better gilt; seven pairs of stockings—three of 'em hed niver hed a darn, though I must own there were two pair going into holes. My caps, my fronts, my sandals, my gloves, and no end of skirts and petticoats. Oh, it would break any heart but mine to tell you all I've lost! smelling-bottles and keepsakes that I hed when I was single—all, all gone! Never talk of troubles:

if my husband was to stay in prison seven years, I should niver fret half so much for him as I hev done for the loss of my good clothes. Oh! wheniver shall I hev sich again. No poor soul has so much trouble as I hev!" and fat Mrs. Brown wept; then reviving again, said, "but I came to tell you that your daughter 's up yonder at that villain Banes's; and I've a strong suspicion that he's ruined her, if he's done nothing no worse, for she looked like death when I saw her. But don't be alarmed, I hope you'll find her alive yet, though its almost more than I expect. How she fell into his clutches the Lord above only knows, I'd a very narrow escape myself. O the villain! I hope he'll be hung yet! if he is, we'll hev a good cup of tea together, and be merry for once in our lives."

Mrs. Brown had to pause for breath, nor will our readers marvel at it, when we tell them that without once pausing, her speech would have made four of these pages; three-and-a-half on her own misfortunes, and the remainder taken up with the tidings she brought of Ellen Giles: for thrice over did she bemoan her loss; and every time the catalogue increased, until neither a checked apron, a pocket-handkerchief, nor the quilted petticoat which her grandmother had left her, were forgotten. Poor Mrs. Brown, she believed the sufferings of Ellen Giles and the imprisonment of Gideon, were but trifling misfortunes compared to her own: and there are many such characters as Mrs. Brown in the world.

Mrs. Giles heard her patiently to the end, then said, "Whativer am I to do, I'm afraid that without a strong force, I can niver get her out of yon villain's clutches!"

"I'm sure I don't know how to devise with you for the best," said Mrs. Brown, "I've seen Mrs. Lawson, but she says her husband can't act without a legal warrant of supenea. But laws what's that?" added she pausing and running to the door. The loud huzzas were repeated, amid the trampling of horses and the roll of carriage-wheels—for all the village was now alive; but what with we must for a time keep secret.

LEONARD BARGAINING WITH THE CAPTAIN.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CONTAINS THE LAST PLOT LAID BY SQUIRE BELLWOOD TO GET RID OF HIS RIVAL—AND HOW GIDEON GILES AND BEN BRUST WERE LIBERATED FROM PRISON.

No sooner had Squire Bellwood secured Walter Northcot in the Hall of the old Manor House, than he began to have sundry misgivings about the safety of his rival; he remembered that too many were in possession of his secret, for beside Leonard the gipsy, Banes, and the two robbers, there was also a rascally servant belonging to Justice Manning, who as Bellwood said "knew what o'clock it was when it struck." Further, a new thought had flashed across the mind of the Squire; he had heard that a brig lay ready for sailing at Gainsborough, and as he had had sundry little transactions with the Captain on a previous occasion, such as shipping off numberless sacks of corn unknown to his father, and consigning them to a ready agent, who to use his own phrase, "came down with the dust,"—why, he thought it would be his wisest plan to make Walter a part of his present cargo. The first thing to be done was to bribe old Manning's servant, to make no mention of the prisoner, and as the Hall was only used on rare occasions, he knew this could be easily managed. This once accomplished, he next sought out Leonard the

gipsy, and through his agency soon came to an agreement with the Captain; the conditions were, that a certain granary door was to be left open, and as many sacks of beans as a lighter could carry off, were to close the bargain. These the Captain well knew would soon find a "respectable" customer in some corn dealer, who stood not too much upon particulars, for as Bellwood said, "the robbery need not be discovered until some days after the ship has sailed, then there can be a few handbills printed, and stuck up about home; a reward offered, too trifling to be worth the trouble of looking after, and in a day or two all will be blown over."

This matter once arranged, the Squire had only to get the old Justice drunk as quickly as possible, which was no difficult matter, as Bellwood contrived to mingle water with his own wine, and to give old Manning the same proportion of strong brandy in what he drank, which made the old boy's red nose glisten like Bardolph's, as he exclaimed—"Curst fiery port this!" Bellwood swore he had never tasted its equal, not even at the several lords he named. The hour was now appointed in which Walter Northcot was to be carried aboard the brig, and landed on some solitary spot along the coast, or thrown into the sea, if such was the Captain's pleasure.

Meantime Walter remained a prisoner within the Hall, the doors and windows of which were so strong, that he had no chance of escaping. And during the last day and night, he was kept there without once tasting food, for the Squire had given orders that he should be kept fasting, in order as he said "to make him less dangerous," for he had heard that hunger tames the hyena.

It was again evening, the sunbeams falling on the ancient bay-window, which was guarded without to a considerable height by a strong wire screen, when Walter threw himself on the oaken settle, which fitted to the form of the windows; and wearied with shouting, hunger, thirst, and feverish excitement, was inhaling the cool evening air which rushed in through the numerous panes he had broken, in his attempt to escape, when a voice called out, as if at his ear, "Ship-a-hoy! what cheer mate?" Walter raised his head and saw the brown weather-beaten face of a sailor peeping through the screen. The man was strong and square built, dressed in a duck-frock and canvass trousers, with a common flat-topped blue cap on his head, the border of which circled his swarthy brow, and still shewed signs of the gay chequered red-and-white plaid, though now somewhat tarnished by grease and tar. There was something so frank and

open about the honest tar's countenance, that Walter felt assured he had come there only with a friendly intention, and he said, "Can you procure me a draught of water my good fellow, I am well-nigh suffocated with thirst?"

"I have brought you a bottle of rum," said the honest sailor, thrusting in a flat-sided stone bottle between the strong wires, which his hard tarry hands made to give way with ease.

"Let it be water for God's sake," said Walter, pushing back the bottle, "and for every mouthful I will one day pay you gold."

"Well, well!" answered the sailor, "I will make it three-quarter grog then; but d—n me if I would do more for my own mother." He lifted the bottle (which did not hold more than a pint) to his lips, and at two "pulls," drank three-fourths of the fiery spirit, then stepped to a fish-pond which lay before the window, and again filling it, thrust it in between the wires.

Walter Northcot emptied the bottle at a draught, then begged of the sailor to fill it again.

"Avast heaving mate!" said the tar, thrusting his hard hand into the side pocket of his dirty jacket; "all suction and no grub, as the shark said when he had followed a ship five days, is rather hard lines; here, try your hand at this," and he pulled out two hard ship-biscuits, between which was placed a thick slice of salt beef. Walter needed no second invitation, and by the aid of another bottle of water, made as he afterwards said, "the sweetest meal he had ever eaten in his life." The truth is, Walter had never before felt the gnawing pangs of hunger and thirst. While the young gentleman was enjoying his homely meal, the honest sailor apprised him of the plot which was laid for carrying him off at midnight, and which he had overheard in the cabin while taking his "afternoon's snooze." "I also heard," said the tar, "that they had kept you without biscuit and water for a day and a night, so I dipped into the locker before I slipped my cable, and now my boy I'll be your friend, come aboard when you will. Once get you there, and we'll treat you like a shipmate. But hark you! we never meddle with the Captain's matters on shore, for after all he's not such a bad fellow. On board we do our duty, while he does his, and not a minute longer—once clear of the Humber we'll know all about you; or round with the ship's head and back again to port."

Walter tried in vain to persuade him to apprise either his uncle, or Justice Bellwood of the plan laid for his removal at midnight; but the sailor would not hear a word of it.

"I am a native of this village," said the tar, "and will do owt for you in a fair way, but it's on ship-board, and not here, that I've a right to interfere. I'm paid for being faithful to my owners—for bringing the ship safe into port; and when the anchor's weighed, if there is anything against sailing articles that isn't right, then it's my time to interfere. I shall have no hand in removing you. It's when you come on board that I mean to speak, for I'm mate, and if owt happens wrong, hev a right to tell the owners if the Captain doesn't. When he forgets what's his duty, then it's my place to tell him what I think. If he's had too much grog, and the sky looks rather 'dirty' at night-fall, I tell him we'd better drop the anchor, but I always give him 'good time first.' Rest easy, I'm your friend. I've heard enough to make me like you, but curse me if I interfere until my duty calls on me to do so."

This was what the honest sailor called in his odd way of reasoning "fair sailing," for the Captain had not asked his aid in the removal of Walter, nor would he for the wealth of England have interfered until it came under the head of what he termed his "duty." A similar instance happened a few years back, when the captain of a vessel was attempting to "clear out" with two notorious "house-breakers," the mate, a courageous fellow, refused to obey his orders until the men were either set on shore, or given up to justice, but although he well knew they were on board, he took no note of it until, when in the German ocean, the captain gave orders for the removal of the hatchway to give the robbers a little air. Be it remembered that Gainsborough was not at this time a port, and the vessel we are describing seldom carries more than six hands, including the captain and cabin-boy, these being generally the mate, the man-before-the-mast, the cook, and another; the latter of which, our ignorance of even "river-craft," prevents us from rating rightly.

Walter had then no alternative but to abide his time, and trust to the friendship of the honest sailor to do the best to liberate him when once on board the brig. He had, however, the precaution to tear a leaf or two from out his pocket-book, which he hoped to find an opportunity of dropping on the road, and which stated that he had been carried off in some vessel bound for London, that lay near Morton, and was expected to sail about midnight. For these few facts he had gathered from the sailor, although he refused either to mention the name of the ship, or to give up that of the captain.

Here then we must leave him to count the hours, and watch the twilight deepen in the Old Hall, until such time as the boat arrives which is to bear him below Gainsborough bridge, where the brig awaits the turning of the tide, before she can commence her voyage. He did not, however, spend his time idly, for after the refreshment he had received from the honest tar, the young man seemed possessed with another spirit, and he at once resolved that his capture should be no easy one. To prepare himself, therefore, for the expected rencounter, he "arm slung" an ancient high-backed chair, taking care to possess himself of the strong oaken backs, which formed no despicable bludgeons, and thus armed, he stood ready listening for the opening of the iron-studded door, determined that who ever first entered should measure his length on the Hall floor. And heartily did he wish that the first head which presented itself might be Squire Bellwood's. But it is high time we accounted for the noise which so suddenly called out Mrs. Brown at the end of our last chapter.

Ben Brust and Gideon Giles still remained in the House of Correction, and they never seemed to have felt the pains of imprisonment severely, until the previous evening, when the tidings arrived that Ellen Giles had not been seen, since the night she left her father within those walls.

"This is the heaviest blow of all," said Gideon, as they met in the yard on the next day—the poor Roper had never once slept all night long. "I thought the bitter cup was before filled to overflowing; but I drank it, and scarcely murmured. Ben, we must leave this place, though we have to fight our way out of it. If I stay here much longer I shall go mad. I care not for the coarse food and hard couch. But my daughter—my only comfort—Heaven, amid all its trials, might have spared me this last blow!" And he grasped the iron bars of the palisade until they shook again beneath the might of his muscular arms.

"I niver cared about getting out of this cursed place until now, Gideon," answered Ben; "but be comforted, my lad. I dreamed about driving three fat bullocks last night, an' I niver hed that dream wihout summut good happening after it. Once I foun' a sixpence, an' another time an ounce of 'bacca, an' the third, met wi' an old friend as I hedn't seen for years, and he stood a dinner an' two quarts of ale. I no', as well as can be, summut good 'ill follow this dream. I'd bet five pints to two on it. I wish the Governor would

but let us out for twelve hours. Dang me if I wouldn't come back again after that time, and eat oatmeal-porridge all next week wi'hout so much as swearing once. I no' we could find Ellen, if she is to be fun' anywhere on God's earth. Lors, wouldn't I fetch Banes a wack or two ! I would meck him think it was a double-barrelled gun going off. Didn't I say my dream would come true about the three fat bullocks?—Look here, you old hemp-spinner, look here! How are you, mester? God bless you, mester! Give us your hand. I knew my dream would lead to summut."

Gideon did look, and beheld the honest landlord of the Fallow Deer shaking hands with Ben Brust between the palisades of the prison-yard. The worthy host held out his other hand to Gideon, and ran on with a long tale, of how he had come to Girton to draw a large sum of money for malt (for he was the owner of an immense malt-kiln), owning, however, that he had come a few days sooner than he usually did, through having heard that they were in prison. "Which," said he, "I might niver have learnt a word about, hedn't Gideon here sent me back part of the money I lent him, and I knew he couldn't spare at a worse time, as he was in prison, so I just doubled it, and sent it back to his wife, and if he iver offers to pay me again until he's a hundred hard sovereigns in his purse—why, look you, Ben, I'll teck it; but, hang me if I iver speak to him again."

"Nor more will I," said Ben, squeezing the Host's hand, and shaking it heartily, "nor more will I, if I do, may———" and Ben finished the sentence in rough old-fashioned English.

Gideon spoke not, but "his eye discoursed," and the old Host returned his mute eloquence by a long, warm, silent pressure of the hand; and when his own eyes began to fill, said, "Curse this gout; it has as bad an effect on my eyes as onions."

"It isn't for mysen I care a straw," said Ben, twisting his honest face into all kinds of queer forms, for he had much ado to keep from crying outright. He then went on to describe, in his own homely way, how much he felt for poor Ellen Giles, and how uneasy he had been ever since Walter Northcot was missing, and whom he had never heard of since he quitted the encampment of Black Boswell. "It isn't for mysen I care," continued Ben, "but I'm so savage to think I should be here, when I might be helping to find 'em, or else breaking the bones of the thieves that hev tecken 'em away."

"Walter Northcot missing!" exclaimed the Host in astonishment,

"I wouldn't for five hundred pounds owt happened to him. I don't know how it is, Ben, but somehow I've tecken a strange fancy to that young man. He was so homely, so well-behaved, and so very different to your stuck-up gentry, that I'm sure I feel as fond on him as if he was my own lad. If owt was to happen him I would spend the last penny I hev in the world, but what I would hev justice done to the villain that only injured a hair of his head. And Ellen Giles—poor dear bairn! What can I do, Ben? only tell me—and hang the money; and I'm sure my niece would say the same if she stood here and heard what you've telled me."

"I don't know what can be done," said Ben, "though I could soon tell you, if we were once out. But I don't think Gideon will be here much longer; for Justice Bellwood said he would pay half the penalty to get him out; for the old man was heartily ashamed of sich a cursed law as put him in. But he says," says he, "I'll hev him out, if I hev to pay it all, or the devil teck me." And if it wasn't for his villain of a son draining him so, I believe he would hev paid the whole of the fine before now."

"Did he say he would pay half?" inquired the Host. "If he will then I'll be the remainder, any hour he likes. But about yoursen, Ben. How much would it take to get you out? I should like to hev you with me to hunt after Walter. I wouldn't hev owt happen him for all I'm worth."

"I don't know," said Ben, "I did nowt but fetch the turnkey a wack of the head for pushing Ellen Giles down, and for wanting to hinder me frae coming into prison. I did hear that some magistrate had called and talked to the Governor, and said they would set me free to-morrow or next day. But I'm d——d if I go wehout Gideon."

"I'll hev you both out before another hour, by heaven I will!" said the Host, stamping down his stick, and striking his gouty foot. "I will, my lad, depend upon it. I've got the money in my pocket, and we'll all go back together."

"God bless you for it!" exclaimed Ben, seizing the old landlord's hand, while a tear stood in his eye. "I do wish I was out for their sakes."

"There now, let me go," said the Host, deeply moved, "or I shall be making a fool of mysen before all those fellows who are looking at us. I'll hev you all out, if it costs me a hundred pounds. If I don't may the ———" and he hobbled across the yard at a wonderful

pace for a person troubled as he was with the gout, then knocked at the Governor's door, like a man who has some right to demand admission; for he knew he had the money in his pocket.

He knocked at a lucky hour; for only a few minutes before, the Governor had received a letter from Justice Bellwood, ordering him to set both Ben and Gideon at liberty; the honest Justice holding himself responsible for the penalty, which he said he had no doubt would be mitigated when he came to consult with one or two of his brother magistrates. But lest the Governor should feel a doubt about the matter (as he alone was now responsible for either the prisoner or the money), the kind Justice had enclosed him a check for the full amount of the fine; advising him, however, not to forward it to "head-quarters" until he heard further from him.

"As to Ben Brust," said the Governor of the prison, "he is a fine fellow, though he has played off one or two of his tricks upon us while here. But he shall go with you, for his attachment to the poor Roper is what we seldom meet with in these days. I sent him word indirectly that he might expect his freedom to-morrow, but he refused to accept it, unless Gideon Giles was liberated at the same time."

The Host then told him that Ellen Giles had never been heard of since she last saw her father in prison. He also gave him an account of Walter Northcot, narrating as much of the plot laid by Bellwood and others, as he was acquainted with, and which he had gathered from his brief interview with Ben; and having taken a glass of brandy, without much pressing, they both left the house to liberate the prisoners.

Ben gave up what beef and bacon there was left, as he said, "for the good of the ward;" and having shaken hands with all the prisoners round, took up his porringer and spoon, which the turnkey told him must be delivered up at the lodge, and, followed by Gideon Giles, was soon without the gates of the prison.

The man who let them out was the same person that Ben had struck down on a former occasion; nor would the honest drover depart until he had shaken him by the fist; and as the Host was the last out, he thrust a broad silver crown into the turnkey's hand, bidding him at the same time "Never to attack a woman again; although," he added, "I know you but did your duty, and I forgive you; but next time have a 'tussle' with the man."

The poor fellow promised he would; said he did not push her down on purpose, and was so pleased with the crown he had received

The return from Prison.

and Ben's forgiveness, that he procured leave from the Governor, and treated Ben with a pot of ale, and shook his hand a dozen times before they separated.

"Time is precious," said the Host, "and as it has cost me nowt to get you out of prison, we'll go to Burton Woodhouse in grand style."

He entered the head inn, and ordered a postchaise and four horses; and while it was getting ready, Ben Brust went into a draper's shop, and bought three yards of blue ribbon, which he pinned in bunches on his hat. Gideon and the Host squeezed inside, while Ben mounted the dickey, and waving his hat as they started, they set off amid the loud huzzas of all the urchins in the neighbourhood. Gideon Giles was very much cast down, for the thought that Ellen could nowhere be found weighed heavily on his heart. It was evening when they reached home, and the mysterious noise which called out Mrs. Brown at the end of the last chapter, was occasioned by the loud huzzas of the villagers, as they welcomed back the prisoners to Burton Woodhouse. So now, kind reader, thou art in possession of a most important secret.

CHAPTER XL.

HOW SQUIRE BELLWOOD WAS IN HIGH GLEE AT THE SUCCESS OF HIS DEEPLY-LAID SCHEMES—HOW HE AGAIN VISITED THE ENCAMPMENT OF BLACK BOSWELL, AND MET WITH AN ADVENTURE, WHICH WILL SOMEWHAT STARTLE THE READER.

Squire Bellwood was now in high spirits at the thoughts of having his rival so securely in his power, and he cracked his riding whip in delight as he walked along, and chuckled again at the remembrance of what he had done. He had of late kept away from his father, for he dreaded an interview with the old man, lest he should be too closely interrogated regarding his late conduct; as to any process of law, he had the prospect of being one day wealthy, and defied it, for he well knew that if even he was suspected of having "played foul" with Walter Northcot, and a warrant was issued for his apprehension, there was no one daring enough to deliver it, for those whose duty it was to do it no doubt thought that the honest Justice could not live long, and then the Squire would be in full power.

While Bellwood walked along musing to himself, and wishing it was night, and Walter safely lodged in the hold of the brig, he came to a sudden turning in the road, and at the end of a large barn, where a posting-bill was stuck up which at once arrested his attention, and pausing full before it, he read as follows: —

ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.

MISSING.

"From the Rectory of Burton Woodhouse. Walter Northcot, " a young gentleman about 21 years of age. He is rather tall and " well-proportioned; eyes, hazel; hair, dark-brown; features hand- " some, and fair complexion. Had on when last seen, a dark claret- " coloured frock-coat, figured black satin waistcoat, fawn-coloured " trousers, and Wellington boots. Any person who can give tidings " of him after he left the encampment of 'Black Boswell,' the well- " known gipsy, shall receive the sum of Fifty Pounds on apply- " ing to Sir James Bellwood, Bart., Justice of the Peace, residing " near Burton Woodhouse, or by making application to Sir Edward " Lee, Bart., also residing in the aforesaid village. And further, " any one who aided in his removal, after confessing the same, and " giving all the information they can respecting him, shall receive " full and free pardon, together with the sum of FIFTY POUNDS " current coin of this realm, and the full sum of ONE HUNDRED " POUNDS if they restore him uninjured, to either of the persons " above-named."

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed Bellwood with an affected laugh, as he took down the bill (which was not yet dry), "I will hand this over to the captain, and bid him read it over to Master Walter when they are out at sea. The devil seize the soul of the fellow who invented printing; and may a curse light on the ass who first started Sunday schools, and taught every fool to read. But I must go up by the wood-side and hunt for that thief of a gipsy, Leonard, for if he should have seen this bill, he may give me the slip before night, pocket the reward, and leave me to get rid of yon cursed fellow as I can." So saying he struck up a path along the hill-side, and walked slowly along in the direction of the gipsy-encampment.

Meantime Jack and Tom, the two robbers, had turned out of the miserable dwelling we have before described, having drunk out all their gin, and smoked the last remains of their tobacco, and were on their way to the Blue Bell to lay in a fresh stock for the night.

They halted before the blackmith's shop, and asked the old smith if he "would cool his iron," for what with the sum they had received from Squire Bellwood, together with the booty obtained from Mrs. Brown, they felt that they could afford to "stand treat."

"Besides," as Tom once said, "if they should ever be taken up, and chance to escape with the handcuffs on, it was worth while keeping in with the blacksmith, as he was a handy man with a file."

"I'll be with you in the cooling of a spark," said the swarthy smith, spitting on his buck-horn fist, and dealing his blows more rapidly on the red-hot horseshoe he was just finishing, then passing his hard hand across his brow, to wipe off the perspiration, he added, "Just read the bill on my shutter while I'm ready, fifty pounds reward offered to anybody who saw Mr. Northcot after he left old Boswell's camp, and a hundred if they can tell where he is now. I was just saying to our Sam, I only wish I'd helped to take him, or knew where to find him, I would leave either the devil or St. Dunstan to shoe all the horses for the next month to come, for the devil a nail would I drive, till I'd spent twenty pounds in ale at the Bell."

"I can't read," said Tom, giving a deep-meaning look to his companion. "I've often said, I wish there had been a Sunday school in our village when I were a lad; I believe I should hev made all the better a man if there had, and I'd gone to it."

"I've often wished the same," said Jack, looking at the bill, and rubbing his hands as he thought of the rich reward offered for Walter Northcot. "I did go to a dult school, as they call it, five or six years ago, and got as far as H in my letters. But they turned me out, 'cos a cummittee of ladies and gentlemen happened to come to see how we got on, an' the teacher picked me out, and said I had been the greatest drunkard and poacher in Burton Woodhouse, but now I was steady, and could say as far as H. So they all looked at me, and got round to hear me first. They stuck a book in my hand, and I got on well awhile; then I stuck fast, though I knew the letter as well as I do the sign of the Blue Bell. "G, John," says the teacher. "D——n me, so it is!" said I, fetching the book a wack wi' my fist, "I knew the thief as well as could be by sight, but I couldn't call him to name." Well, some of 'em laughed at me, for saying what I did. But I couldn't help it; for I knew the G as well as I do you, but couldn't remember just then. But I niver went to school after."

The blacksmith laughed, hutched up his leather apron, and came

out to have his glass with the two robbers; but before setting off to the public-house, he read the bill twice over at their request.

"Keep squat," whispered Tom, as they lagged behind for a moment. "We'll make sure of that sum before midnight, or we'll try for it."

"Fifty pounds a-piece for us!" replied Jack, nudging his companion. "We'd better not let the grass grow beneath our feet, for fear Leonard the gipsy should be the first to peach."

"We'll just have a glass or so," said Tom, "then see what's to be done." And they entered the public-house, each keeping a sharp look-out on the other, and each alike jealous lest one should try to give the other the slip, and be the first to seize the reward; for no doubt there is more suspicion than "honour amongst thieves."

Outstepping the slow, moody pace, at which Squire Bellwood ascended the hill-side, we must again conduct our readers to the gipsy encampment, to where Black Boswell, now half frantic through fever and pain, was stretched in his camp, with Jael watching beside him; for so harrowing were the curses the old man had uttered in his delirium, and so awful had the scene been in the early part of the day, that even the hardiest gipsy of the tribe preferred retiring to the loneliest recess of the wood, rather than witness such a scene any longer. Jael was then alone, kneeling beside the death-bed of her father; for even her lover Ishmael, had deserted her, though he still remained within call.

The sun was by this time bending towards the west, and throwing that deep orange light among the mossed branches of the forest, which is so much richer, deeper, and more solemn than the pale yellow that flickers amid the thick-set foliage in a morning. Not a bird raised its voice within hearing of the camp; nothing, saving the brawling of the brook, and even that was sometimes deadened beneath the deep curses of the dying gipsy. The covering was half removed from the roof of the tent in which Black Boswell lay, and the rich bronzy light fell full upon his figure, tinging the green foliage overhead with dusky gold, and flashing on the massy boles of the huge trees. Beside the athletic form of her dying father knelt Jael on the dark green moss, her hands clasped, and the tears streaming down her cheeks, while the sunbeams fell around her long dark hair, not unlike the glory which the old masters have thrown around the head of the Virgin Mother. But oh! how unlike the God-born child was the form she watched over! That swarthy countenance, which seemed

to lay open like a volume that records only crime, and on every page bears hideous illustrations that make us shudder, without even venturing to unravel the yet more hideous text. The sunken cheek, the deep-set, fiery and blood-shot eye, the burning hand which grasped and tore the coverlet that was half thrown over him, the muscular limb drawn up in convulsive agony, and the set teeth muttering a curse at every pang,—told that the end of that man would be the very opposite of "peace."

"Jael, Jael!" said he, breathing heavily and lolling out his white tongue, "give me drink—the last was hot as hell—it burnt my throat like flaming brimstone. Off, hell-cat!" added he, waving his hand, as if he saw some one approaching; "we shall have light enough to talk by there below--your sulphurous breath chokes me—Poh, poh! take off your burning lips, there is blood on them—Jael, her fingers are at my throat—I will come soon, soon! Go, muster your friends to make me welcome!"

"There is no one near," said Jael, offering him drink, while her hand shook as she raised the jug. "Oh! talk not so wildly, or you will make me afraid! think of that book I have told you of, in which it says that there is pardon for all, even the very worst of sinners."

But the dying man regarded her not, as with straining eyes he half emptied the jug at a breath; then again threw himself down on his straw pallet, while his evil conscience once more held hideous revelry, as strange forms flitted before his diseased vision, and horrid fancies chased each other across his heated brain. "There she comes again," exclaimed the gipsy, pointing with his finger to where the red sunbeams flashed full upon the stem of a large birch. "But she angered me—I dealt her the death-blow in my rage. I was mad when I did it—mad! Her eyes looked on me while I dug her grave; they looked on me, and on the moon; and when I wrapped her up in my old coat, her eyes still pept out upon me. Well—I have felt sorry for it, and that is what they tell me gets us into a better camp, in another wood—in a world where they say there is no winter. I was sorry, Jael, that I shot the poor dog; but he went every night and lay howling upon her grave; they would have found me out had they followed him. He went bleeding to her grave after I had shot him, and there he died. Next year the tree withered, Jael; they said the lightning had struck its branches—they knew not that the blood of your murdered mother blackened its roots

—they knew not that a deed which now scorches my soul with fire, dried up all its sap. I would have given myself up to justice, but they would have hung me; they would not have shot me, as I did my dog,—they would have gibbeted me on the heath. In sight of the very spot where I married her—where I murdered her. Where she first came to my arms with the flowers of summer in her dark hair—where she lay with those very locks clotted with blood. Where you was born, Jael, where you first run to gather the early flowers of spring, and the ripe berries of autumn. But I shall be buried in the same grave, and her eyes will no longer be turned upon me as they were in the cold moonlight. Avaunt—avaunt!" exclaimed he, half-rising from his couch and supporting himself on his elbow; "did you not see her, she beckoned me to come, and there was an old man with her; but *his* blood is on Bellwood's hands. It was in his quarrel he fell. Poor old man! he was frantic because of his daughter; but the river swept over mother and child. He wanted justice—he obtained death. His hair was very white until it lay in the red pool of blood, and he clasped his hands and said something as he died. He talked about his daughter, and heaven." He then broke out again into loud curses too shocking to be recorded; and when this awful outburst was over, sunk down with closed hands and turned his eyes towards Jael. The beautiful gipsy looked like a "ministering angel" beside the couch of her dying father. She talked of mercy and forgiveness, called him her kind father, her only friend, and bade him take comfort, for heaven would deal mercifully with him were it only for his kindness to herself.

"True, true!" said the old man, again becoming a little calmer; "I never went to a fair without bringing thee something to the camp. But I have being afraid of thee of late, thou hast so much the look of thy mother—so like what she was when I married her. When thirteen tribes were assembled on yonder heath, but not one amongst the youngest, and the most beautiful, could match with her. But her mother fomented quarrels between us—she made me jealous—she drove me to drink, to murder—to madness. Oh, that I should be doomed to linger here in this pain! I who might ere now have spilt my blood in some brawl, and died as I have lived, reckless and unthinking, fearless and bold—Oh curse"——

"What! laid up like an old hound that is at last forsaken by the pack," said a voice near at hand, and in another moment Squire Bellwood stood beside the tent. "Well, old fellow, how do you like

the prospect, pretty warm look-out in the distance, I guess, no fear but they'll keep your camp-kettle boiling old boy?"

The old gipsy gazed on him with set-teeth, and a look of bitter hatred, which was rendered more hideous by the change that had already taken place in his countenance; and there was an awful depth in the tones of his voice as he said, "I needed you not at this hour; had I never have known you, the spirit would have passed from me more freely: leave me, leave me! I would sooner keep company with the devil himself than such as you. Remember the old man whose grave you helped to dig!"

"Hey well!" said Bellwood, gazing on him with a look of savage mockery, "I am glad you can so readily shoulder that deed from off your conscience. Perhaps you can manage to thrust the murder of your wife on me as well. But that happened I believe somewhat before my time—at least I must have been very young."

"Who said I murdered her?" exclaimed the gipsy, the hard cordage of his countenance twitching up as he spoke: "Villain! would you betray me after all I have done for you?"

"Not I," replied the Squire, with an apparent carelessness. "It is not worth while to hang a dying dog, though there is no harm in shewing him that I have power at any moment to throw a rope round his neck. But I come here to seek Leonard."

"A dying dog!" muttered Black Boswell, the dark veins of his swarthy forehead swelling with passion, "at any other time you would have trembled had he but shewn you his teeth; but begone! begone! before his last act is to bite you—coward! cur! begone!"

"Oh leave him," said Jael, again imploring him to depart, as she had before done. "Do not anger him; you see the sand of his life is fast flowing. It is but the trick of a coward to taunt a dying man," added she with more energy, for the spirit of her father, though subdued by her gentleness, was nevertheless within her.

"Nay, I may as well wait until the old hound has given his last growl," said the brutal Squire, "then take you with me, you would be a bonny little cub to kennel with, sleek, warm and round-sided." And Bellwood began to handle her rudely as he spoke, never seeming to regard for a moment the dying gipsy, whose eye had for the last few moments flashed ominously on the Squire, as if he meditated some desperate deed, and was summoning up all his enfeebled energies to accomplish it. Thrice did he mutter the invective of "dying dog" between his teeth; his look every moment growing more fierce;

and when he saw the Squire throw his arms around Jael, he sprang up, half naked from his pallet with such force as tore away the hoops which formed the roof of his tent, and made one desperate spring at Bellwood.

Had it not been for the momentary warning given by the loud crashing of the hoops, the gipsy would have borne the Squire to the earth before he had been aware of him; as it was, however, he dashed through the thick underwood in an instant, uttering such a shriek as he fled, as startled the echo of that silent solitude. Stedfast to his purpose as death, did Black Boswell pursue Bellwood, giving a loud yell, as with outstretched arms he rushed into the underwood, neither feeling nor regarding the sharp bramble, nor the prickly furze, although his legs and feet were naked, his only covering being a coarse woollen shirt. His huge mastiff gave a deep bark, and bounded after him.

One look only did Bellwood cast behind; with head averted, as he still hurried on, his countenance pale with affright, and every limb trembling, and during that brief look he saw what made his blood chilly in an instant—it was the form of Black Boswell fast gaining upon him,—his eyes gleaming like fire, as his face was half revealed behind a branch of hazel, his arms thrown forward, and his long fingers bent like the sharp claws of an eagle, in the act of pouncing upon its prey. He gave another piercing shriek and hastened on.

Jael stood for a moment speechless, her hands clasped, and her eyes turned towards heaven, when, as if instantly remembering herself, she dashed into the thicket and followed her father. The yielding branches had scarcely closed over the figure of Jael, when a pistol-shot startled the silence of the wood, and was echoed throughout its gloomy avenues; this was followed by a hollow, moaning sound, like to a man dying. Jael felt the blood driving back to her heart; a trembling came over her, she was unable to proceed a step farther, and, uttering a loud shriek, she fell senseless amid the wild underwood.

CHAPTER XLI.

A NEW CHAPTER—CONTAINING A RESCUE—A MEDITATED SUICIDE—WITH A BRIEF REPENTANCE—A NEW CHARACTER—A DREADFUL FIRE—A CHASE—AND ANOTHER MYSTERY, WHICH WE BEG OUR READERS NOT TO UNRAVEL.

WHEN Gideon Giles and Ben Brust arrived at the village of Burton Woodhouse, the first act of the poor Roper was to rush into his cottage, and embrace his wife and children; while Ben, even before he alighted from the postchaise, called to Mrs. Brust, and ordered her to fetch as much beef from Butcher Hyde as she could get on trust; for said Ben, "I've got a lot of that skilly-go-lee stuff in my inside yet, and I 'no that nowt but plenty of good beef and ale will set me to rights again."

Gideon re-crossed the threshold of his cottage as soon as he heard that his daughter was in the hands of Banes, and with a cloudy brow said, "For God's sake come along with me this instant, Ben—Ellen is in the power of Banes!"

"Is she?" exclaimed Ben, jumping from the dickey in a second, "then d—n the beef till I come back again. I'll bang Banes as a cook does a tough steak." And he took up a thick wooden lever, such as Gideon used as a purchase when stretching his thickest ropes. Several of the villagers who were present also volunteered to accompany the Roper; and amongst the number were old Brown the roper, and Cousin William. Gideon and Ben Brust led the way with rapid strides; the Roper armed with his strong walking-stick, the rest carrying hedge-stakes, rails, or whatever they could lay hands on; and even the ragged urchins of the village picked up huge stones and followed in the rear, "to have," as they said, "a shy at Banes's windows." The Host kept company with Mrs. Giles until they returned; for, as he said, "the gout prevented him from walking far." Ben kept trying the weight of his weapon as he hurried along, until he ascertained to an inch which was the best place to lay hold of to strike the most effective blow.

"I shouldn't like to kill any man," said Ben, "though dang me if I won't give him sich a whacking as he shall remember the longest day he has to live, if he's as old as Methusealem."

The sun was setting as they struck up the hilly lane which led to the heath. But it is necessary, to keep up the chain of events, that we should carry our readers to the residence of the Gamekeeper before the arrival of Gideon and his followers.

From the time that Mrs. Brown left the house, Ellen Giles had made no attempt to escape, nor had Banes offered her any further insult; and for the remainder of the night the gamekeeper sat up, devising in his own mind what course to pursue; nor were his meditations at all cheered by the loud sobbings of Ellen, and the low murmurings of her companion, who from time to time attempted to comfort her, or broke out into bitter invectives against Banes.

All night the Keeper sat up alone beside his solitary hearth, and a miserable night he passed; for he remembered that Mrs. Brown was a likely person to blaze abroad all she had seen, and he began to wish he had treated her more kindly; but he knew it was then too late to reflect upon what was now beyond his power to recal, so he determined to abide by the worst. He even began to regret that he had so deeply injured the daughter of the poor Roper; wished he had rested contented with giving her a lodging for the night, when she lost her way by the woodside, and then allowed her to return home unmolested the next morning. He felt that this would have been making amends for the injuries he had done to her family, and if he had met with no other reward, his mind would then have felt more at rest.

He remembered how kindly he had always been treated by Sir Edward Lee, and how when the Baronet was deeply grieved at his own misconduct, and had resolved to make restitution for the injury he had attempted on a poor but virtuous girl, he himself had linked together a long chain of falsehoods, solely to get Ellen Giles into his own power.—She was then under his roof, and what had he gained? —misery! only misery! What injury had he done to Walter Northcot! he had attempted to ruin his character in the eyes of the Baronet, had been instrumental in severing two happy hearts, and what had he gained?—misery and deep remorse! He had all but broken up the home of the poor Roper, had caused him to leave his family and go in quest of employment, had been the chief agent in putting into effect an oppressive and unjust law, and finally obtained his imprisonment —and all this because he had once loved the Roper's daughter—ay, with a pure and virtuous love! and had he then married her, our readers would have been spared this simple narrative. For Banes

at that period looked upon his union with Ellen as "the tide in the affairs of men" which alters the after-current of life, and he made ready to sail with it, heart and hand; but fate ordained otherwise, and he became what he then was—he had not always been—a villain.

While he reflected on these things he felt truly miserable. He that night drank double his ordinary quantity, but it scarcely affected him; his senses seemed so numbed and wrapt up in wretchedness, as to deaden all he swallowed; he would have given all he possessed could he have made himself stupidly and senselessly drunk. He paced up and down the room for hours, waving his arms, and accusing himself of all he had done; and at last he resolved upon committing suicide. With this intention, he took out a pistol from the drawer, loaded it with powder and two bullets; he felt in his pocket for some wadding, but found none; he then again had recourse to the drawer, tore out a leaf from the first book his hand alighted upon, and was about to roll it up—when the handwriting struck his attention. He had torn the title-page out of the Bible his mother had given him on her death-bed—it was her own handwriting—the last lines she had ever written—"a dying gift to her beloved son!"—both her name and his own were there written in the same trembling hand——

He threw down the pistol, and falling into his chair, sunk with his head upon the table, and wept like a sinner.

The morning light broke in upon him, but he regarded it not; and when he again paced the floor, it seemed as if ten years had passed over his head, so haggard and care-worn was that wretched countenance. But still he was unresolved what course to pursue; and without either liberating Ellen, or once crossing the threshold, he wasted the whole of the next day, still undecided whether to shoot himself or make his escape. Neither did Ellen or her companion taste food all the day; and saving brandy, nothing passed the lips of the Gamekeeper—his faculties seemed stunned; he wished he were dead, yet feared to destroy himself; he thought of the present, and shuddered at the future; for he knew he was as unfit to die as to live. Still the hour of true repentance had not yet come—he clung to life—he wished to see Bellwood—he listened for every footstep—and thought at last that he might die in defending his own house; but before these thoughts passed through his mind, he had drunk above a pint of strong brandy, and after long fasting the liquor at last began to have an effect. It was again evening, and Gideon had

before this time reached home, and was even then on his way to the Gamekeeper's residence.

It chanced on this very evening, that farmer Kitchen, accompanied by his lodger William Manning, who now makes his first appearance on our stage (and who was the son of the drunken old Justice), were returning from a long ride; for they had been visiting some fields which lay at a considerable distance from the village, and were now almost ripe for the harvest; for the time was fast approaching when that most soothing of all rural sounds, the "rustle of the reaped corn," was soon to be heard.

"I have mended yonder gap at least a dozen times," said farmer Kitchen, as they entered the heath, "and that thief of a fellow Banes is constantly breaking through it, and trampling down the corn, because he saves some five or six hundred yards when he goes his rounds. My shepherd saw him break it down only last Monday. I will call and give the fellow a good blowing up, and if he is very saucy, prosecute him for trespassing on my fields; for I have now a witness."

"It is very annoying," said young Manning (who had nothing at all striking about his appearance more than the general class of what are called 'gentleman farmers')—"I would at all events threaten to prosecute him. Though it would be best, perhaps, to let him alone; for he bears an infamous character, and might throw open your gates in the night, or do your cattle some injury. I think the less you have to do with such men the better."

"O, I care nothing for him!" said the farmer, turning his horse's head into the path which led to Banes's residence. "If he's saucy to me I'll horsewhip him; that's the only way to serve such fellows." So saying, he rode up to the door of the house, and struck it smartly with the butt-end of his whip.

"Who's there, in the devil's name?" exclaimed the gruff voice of the Gamekeeper from within; for the brandy had by this time made 'Richard himself again.' The answer of the former was drowned in the deep barking of Banes's mastiff; this once subsided, the altercation between them rose high, and on neither side was there any lack of oaths.

While young Manning sat still in his saddle, wondering what had made such havoc with the Gamekeeper's windows, he was startled by the sound of a female voice; he looked round on the heath, but saw no one at hand; until at last, raising his eyes towards the chamber-

window, he beheld the face of a woman, and listening more attentively, heard a sweet voice exclaim—"For heaven's sake, sir, do not go away until you see me safe out of this villain's hands! I am here a prisoner. I mistook my way in the wood, a night or two ago, and under pretence of guiding me home, Banes brought me to this place. It is only through God's mercy that I am now alive; for He alone knows all I have suffered. You may have heard of my misfortunes, sir; my name is Ellen Giles."

"Ellen Giles!" said the young man, who had seen her often, and thought of her more times than he could well number. "Break down the door this instant, Kitchen!" He stuck the spurs into his horse as he spoke, and the animal reared on-end, and with full force struck the door with its fore-feet.

"I will shoot you dead if you are not off this instant," said Banes, pointing the muzzle of his gun through the window. But the men regarded not his threats, as with all their might they assailed the door. The Keeper fired, and slightly wounded young Manning's horse in the flank, but did no great injury; and scarcely had the echo of the gun-shot died away over the heath, before a loud shout was heard at hand, and Ben Brust and Gideon Giles appeared before the house, followed by a score of the villagers.

"This way, this way!" shouted Ben, making for the back door; "quick, quick! if he once gets into the wood we shall lose him."

Young Manning understood Ben's signal in an instant, and again leaping into his saddle, cleared the wood-fence at a bound.

"Come on!" shouted Ben, "I saw the thief's hat, as he ran through that clump of hazels. Hilloa, hilloa! yoix, yoix!" and Ben led the way as if he was heading a fox-chase; while four or five men followed at his heels in full cry. William Manning dashed fearlessly through the underwood on horseback, and took a wider circuit, hoping to outstrip the Keeper, and either capture him, or force him back into the very teeth of his pursuers. The barking of the Keeper's mastiff for a short time kept them on the right track.

Return we now to the house, where all was in confusion; for it was some time before they could liberate Ellen Giles and Mary Sanderson, so stoutly was the door secured. The meeting between the father and daughter we shall pass over; such a scene would possess but little interest if described. It was a mingling of smiles and tears, where there was much felt and but little to tell of.

The fair prisoners once liberated, the mob began to think of mis-

chief. It might have originated in an accident—for it was now nearly dark—but the curtains of the room in which they had been confined were all at once in a blaze; and instead of attempting to put out the fire, the boys set up a loud huzza, and the men only looked at one another and laughed. In vain did Gideon Giles rush up stairs and attempt to extinguish the flames; when he came down for water, the room below was in a blaze; the screen was thrown down and set fire to, and some one had thrown the chairs upon it—the house was on fire. Scarcely had Gideon Giles got down stairs before the flames had reached a cupboard in the room he had just quitted, and a loud explosion was heard—a drawer full of powder had ignited. It was now beyond all human aid to save the old building from destruction; and the group without stood silently watching the progress of the flames, as beam after beam fell in, throwing around a shower of sparks, then again bursting out into one broad blaze. Ellen Giles leant upon the arm of her father, and gazed in silence upon the burning mansion, while she ran over in her own mind all that she had endured within those hated walls. Not a vestige did any one attempt to save from the ruins, nor was the value of a pin carried away; for so universally was Banes hated, that no one would contaminate himself by bearing off any trifle which had belonged to such a man. As for the house, Sir Edward Lee had before granted him a lease of it, which was likely enough to have outlasted the period the building might be supposed to stand, had it only been left to the slow crumbling hand of time.

As the house stood on a hill, the fire was seen far and wide, and a large crowd was soon congregated before it; and amongst those who had rushed forth out of a pure love of "seeing a sight" was our old friend Mrs. Brown, and she was in ecstasies.

"O, if they could but catch him, now, and throw him into it," said this merciful woman, "what a good thing it would be! It would save the devil a deal of trouble, for he's sure on him in the end."

"Is that all the love you have for your dear Mr. Banes, that was sich a nice man a day or two ago?" said Mrs. Lawson, the deputy's wife, who, having heard that Mr. Brown was likely to lose his ropery, now thought it time to pay court to her rival Mrs. Giles; for women are like the rest of *man*kind. "Marry, come up, to sich love, say I! and a fig for people who pretend to drown themselves, as somebody did that I know, and then hedn't the courage; throwing folks into sich an alarm for nowt at all. I wonder if I should hev done so!"

E. Lambert

Banes's house on fire.

"I don't demean mysen wi' talking to sich low people," said Mrs. Brown turning up her nose, while the blaze of the huge fire made her ruddy countenance appear more red,—"though if I did, I could say that which would shew how some people want to take the bread out of other people's mouths who have fed them; and wouldn't stick at any dirty action to get their husband made chief constable, instead of being deputy. But I name no names."

"Hush wife!" said her husband, "you've made yourself a big fool enough lately; and what between your advice and that villain Banes's, I am likely enough to bring my hogs to a pretty market at last. Keep your tongue still, will you?"

This timely rebuke had the desired effect, and peace was soon restored.

It was now dark—but still the pursuit after Banes was unabated. No one knew the ins-and-outs of the wood better than the Game-keeper, although Ben Brust had explored almost its every nook when he went out a herb-gathering.

Banes silenced the barking of his mastiff by a heavy kick, then pausing in the midst of a thick bed of underwood, hastily loaded his gun, muttering between his teeth, "They shall catch a Tartar if they will have me." Then he listened, and heard the tramping of horses' feet in the distance, and the voices of his pursuers in a wrong direction. "I am safe here for some time," muttered the Keeper. He was scarcely five hundred yards from his own house. Presently he heard the loud shouts of those who had stormed his dwelling; then he saw a strong reflection of light, and by degrees the blaze went, reddening, far into the solitude of the wood. "They have set fire to my house," said Banes, placing his gun on full cock, "but the hand that did it shall have fire enough." He stole unperceived to the wood-side. He was the best shot in the county. He came up just in time to hear Gideon Giles call on the crowd to aid him in extinguishing the flames. "That call has saved your life, Master Gideon," said he, rearing the gun leisurely on end, for the moment before he had taken his aim through the hedge; had he but pulled the trigger, Gideon would have been a dead man. "There is no one there worth shot and powder," continued the Keeper, as he surveyed the group at his ease, "though I have half a mind to have a pop at Ellen, for I would rather that she were dead, than another should possess her." He took up his fowling-piece once more, and aimed at the heart of Ellen Giles, for she stood at the angle of the

building, then he struck the butt end on the ground again, and said "I am bad enough, God knows! why should I commit murder? Ellen, I still love you: had you been my wife, I should have been innocent of many an evil deed. But the old place blazes away merrily," continued he, looking calmly on and talking to himself; "they little think I am so near. Many thanks for your kindness," added he, as he overheard Mrs. Brown's proposal for throwing him into the fire if he was caught. "If I could but just manage to pepper your legs my fine madam, without doing you further injury, I would fire at once; but you are only a fool after all. Well, they will leave me nothing; all I ever valued will perish to night. So much the better, I shall have the less to look upon—the less to regret. There is a lock of my poor old mother's hair stowed away somewhere in the Bible she left me. I wish I had that book—I care for nothing else. — But they are gone amid the explosion, powder and all. I wish those who first lit the blaze were in it. And why should I care for either a lock of her hair or her Bible?—I who regarded her not when living. I have never looked into the book since she died, until last night, and wish I never had then; I should have been dead before now. Be still, Tiger," added he, speaking to the dog, "surely if I see my old house blaze away so quietly, you may put up with the loss of your kennel, though its hard to look on such a scene. In that house I was born—there my father lived and died, honoured and respected. In that back-chamber I slept when a boy —the floor has fallen in—on that very floor I knelt and said my prayers to my mother—and what better am I for having prayed at all? No one will care for me when I am dead. Not a hand is raised to save a single thing from the flames: but I am no worse than Squire Bellwood. The Baronet first made me what I am—I but grew more evil in my endeavours to overreach him. I wish I were either better or worse—memory and conscience only make me a coward. I will seek out old Boswell, for there still is fellowship in villany." He struck fearlessly through the wood, in the dark, neither seeking nor avoiding his pursuers; and before he had gone many yards he fired off his gun, then threw it into the midst of a furze-bed, adding, "I am guilty of everything but murder, and that I will die innocent of, though I killed a man in defence of my own life. But it was all owing to the Game Laws, and I did not make them—I only did my duty." He gained the wood-side, struck across the fields, passed a wild waste covered with sloe-bushes, stunted

thorns, rushes, bogs, and black moss; and at length he entered Lea Wood. He went on his way, fearlessly, in the direction of the gipsy-encampment, until at length he saw a light glimmering through the thicket in the distance—it was the fire from the gipsy-camp, and as he made towards it he stumbled over a dead body.

CHAPTER XLII.

HOW WALTER NORTHCOT WAS CARRIED OFF BY THE CAPTAIN OF THE BRIG—WITH THE STRANGE DISCOVERY MADE BY WILLIAM MANNING—WHICH PROMISES TO BRING THE WORK NEARER TO A CLOSE.

At the appointed time a boat drew up beyond the park-wall, from which three men landed, who followed the Captain across the field, and stationed themselves beside a dark high hedge, there to await the approach of Leonard, the gipsy, and Squire Bellwood. The church clock had already struck eleven, and great was the astonishment of the Captain when he heard the hum of voices in the village-street, mingled with loud huzzas and merry laughter, instead of that silence which at such an hour generally reigns over an English hamlet. The Captain knew not that those were the sounds of triumph welcoming home Gideon Giles and his daughter to Burton Woodhouse, and the exulting shouts which were raised over the ruins of the Gamekeeper's mansion.

At length footsteps were heard in the distance, and Leonard crossed the stile.

"All right," said the gipsy, "follow me!" and he led the way, taking the most circuitous path, that they might avoid meeting with any of the villagers on their return from the fire.

"About our cargo," said the Captain. "I sent Arnall up with his lighter at sunset, and bid him moor her below the Stumps."

"Three cart-loads have gone down already," replied the gipsy; "listen!" They heard the rumbling of wheels in a lane which led down to the river-side. "Yonder goes the last load," said Leonard, "but where the devil can the Squire be? he said he wanted to have a word with you before you sailed; he should have been here before this time, but we can do our business without him. I told you he is but a rusty customer. How do you propose to manage with him?"

"Clap a pistol to his ear," said the Captain, "and shoot him dead if he either raises his voice or offers any resistance, that's the way we

treat all who sail under the black flag. If he behaves himself like a man who finds he must lower his colours and make the best of it, why, d—n me, I'll treat him like a shipmate, and he shall just have a pleasant cruise for a few weeks, then come back and do as the devil directs him. But here we are," said he, "halting beside the large gates. Shall we go in, or how?"

"Things are better managed than that," said the gipsy; "but wait here until he comes out. Old Manning has a servant who knows how matters stand. I will hasten in and just give him the signal to set my gentleman at liberty. Keep a bright look-out."

Walter Northcot was still alone in the old hall, which echoed his slow measured footsteps as he paced to and fro, silent and dejected. Sometimes he halted before the deep bay-window, and looked out upon the tranquil night—the blue sky studded with its thousands of stars, and the bright moon, which was just heaving her silver disk above the dark brow of the wooded hills, catching the eastern angle of the window, and throwing a pale streak of light on the oaken floor. Walter felt a strange sickening sensation about the heart while he thought of what he was doomed to undergo, for he was fearful that the sailor who had so boldly declared himself his friend, might be overpowered by the crew if he attempted his liberty. He felt how useless it would be to struggle against superior numbers, unless he could come upon them unawares when they entered the hall, and by some sudden movement lessen their force and escape; and he had long listened, that he might be in readiness—but they came not—the weariness of waiting had somewhat subdued his spirit. Then he thought they might perchance stumble upon some late wanderer before reaching the river-side, and he yet be rescued. He only wished that Bellwood might appear amongst his capturers, and he grasped the strong oak-stave firmly in his hand as he thought of the parting blow he would deal him. Then came other thoughts—might they not murder him?—there were many deep and dark beds in the river—once in their power, they need but bind his hands and feet together, throw him over the edge of the boat, and all would then be over—and in a few hours he might be a corpse in some of those dark pits between Knaith Reach and Ashcroft Deeps—spots where the huge pike and the sullen barbel swim, and from which no human form was ever known to reach the surface if once drowned in those depths. Then came the image of Amy Lee, perchance he might never again see her—or if he did, it would be as

the wife of Squire Bellwood. While such thoughts as these passed through his mind, he heard the key turn in the massy lock of the old hall door. Walter approached with his weapon uplifted, and no sooner was the door opened than with one blow he prostrated the man upon the floor. Great, however, was his astonishment when he perceived that this was his only opponent; and the thought instantly came across his mind, that he might have struck some honest person who had come to set him at liberty; and now he exerted all his power to recover the man, whom the blow had left senseless. The gipsy, who overlooked the scene from an angle of the building, no sooner saw Walter bending over the villain he had so justly punished, than he stole a tip-toe up to the gate, and beckoned the men to follow him, and before Walter had time to arise from the position in which he knelt, he heard the sharp stroke of a pistol as it was set on full cock, and instantly two men seized him by the collar, while the Captain planted the weapon close to his ear as he said, "Speak but one word and you are a dead man." And the grim look the Captain assumed as he spoke, told in spite of the threat, that he was a man likely to keep his word. Walter made a desperate effort to liberate himself, but it was useless, for in an instant the Captain seized him behind the neck, and said, "Spare your strength young gentleman, it is the fortune of war, and four against one are sure to win the day."

Walter was compelled to admit the truth of this argument, and so went on without offering any further resistance, contriving, however, to drop one of the leaves he had torn from his pocket-book as they crossed a lane, and struck down an opposite field beside the high hedge.

They had scarcely entered the field before they heard the sound of voices, as if behind them. The Captain called a halt, and while they listened, they heard the tramping of horses' feet—then the footsteps of men seemed drawing nearer.

"No resistance, or you are a dead man," said the Captain, taking off his black silk neckerchief, and tying it round Walter's mouth to prevent him from calling for help. "It is your duty to escape if you can," added the Captain, "and mine to prevent you, because I am well paid for it. Hush! they are coming."

The party, however, struck down the next field, the hedge only dividing them, and Walter heard the voice of Ben Brust as they passed, talking to young Manning; they were returning from the

pursuit of Banes, their search having been useless. Walter raised his voice, although the Captain stood with the pistol in his hand; but the noise of the horses' feet, added to the clamour made by the men, all talking at once, and the handkerchief being tightly bound over his mouth, prevented him from being heard, saving by those who surrounded him.

They waited until the sound of the last footstep had died away, when the leader took off the bandage and said, "It's all fair sailing, my fine fellow, and you but did as I would have done, and if it had not been for my clapping this muzzle on you, we should have had a fight before we could have got afloat. Some poor devil might have had a bullet for supper, and likely enough it would have been yourself."

Walter made no reply, but again contrived to drop a paper as they crossed the high-road a little above the village of Burton Woodhouse, for he well knew that another field would bring them to the river-side. He turned his head to look in the direction of the village, it might be, he thought, for the last time; and he saw a light streaming across the road—it came from the Roper's cottage, the door of which was wide open, for the old Host had made provisions for all comers, and at that very moment William Manning and Ben Brust were within those walls, together with Gideon and Ellen Giles, and poor Mary Sanderson, all now apparently happy; while Walter—was going he knew not whither.

He took his seat in the boat when bidden, a man had been left behind to keep her afloat, and the Captain having pinioned his arms, sat facing him, they were now "going-a-head" at a rapid pace, the current in their favour, and four strong men pulling at the oars.

"D— you, you seem a fine fellow," said the Captain, after having looked fixedly at the features of Walter, on which the full moonlight streamed. "And I half wish you'd escaped me; give me your word you'll not try to get away, and I'll free your arms; but why should I fear you?" added he, unloosing the handkerchief, when they were fairly on their way in the middle of the river. "You would have to swim for it, and we could row over your head in an instant." He then offered him some brandy from a flask, but Walter refused to drink, saying, "Land me in any of these fields and I will forgive you, nor mention a word of this night's work to a living soul; you are but serving a villain, who I am sure you must in heart despise."

"I do despise him, and be d—— to him," said the Captain, hesitating a moment; then shaking his head as he added, "but I must not break my promise; a few days' voyage will do you no harm, and I will share my cabin with you. Within a week you shall be free, providing you don't like your accommodation. B——t me, I like you, for trying to bring about that infernal rascal of a servant, who was only letting you out of your own trap, as they do a rat when there are three or four terriers on the look-out for him." Walter felt his mind a little more at ease when he heard this, for he believed the man had come to set him at liberty, and his last words were to entreat the gipsy to look after him.

Onward went the boat, cleaving the clear crystal of the Trent, and dashing through the ribbed silver of the waves, for the moonbeams threw their rich quivering lustre on the broad bosom of the river, and not a sound awoke the surrounding silence, saving the measured dipping of the oars. Under less painful circumstances Walter Northcot would have enjoyed the beauty and tranquillity of the scene; as it was, his eye wandered to other objects—the images that thronged his brain. He regarded not the steep hill-side by Burton, where tree after tree hung over, and went dipping down the steep precipice to the very margin of the river. He had no eye for the rich meadows on the opposite shore; the vast osier-holts they passed, where the young willows rose from the massy stocks like a fairy forest—the beautiful scenery of Knaith—the picturesque bends of what Milton has happily called the "hundred-armed Trent," were all lost upon Walter; he was like the lover whose journey is so finely described by Crabbe, and who, labouring under vexation and disappointment, saw, in the scenery which he had in a different mood of mind so much admired, nothing

> ———— But eternal green,
> Woods, waters, meadows.

Leave we them to pursue their silent voyage along the beautiful river in the moonlight, while we return to the cottage of Gideon Giles.

Chairs had been borrowed from a neighbouring house, and Gideon's cottage was now filled with guests, for Ellen had returned home with her father, had embraced and wept upon her mother's bosom, and now all smiles, was attending to the wants of Ben Brust and young Manning; the latter often sighed heavily as he gazed upon Ellen's beauty, and thought he had never seen a woman he should like so

much for a wife as Ellen Giles. Farmer Kitchen, and the Host of the Fallow Deer, were also present, and a few others, who had aided in the pursuit of Banes, until, as Ben said, they were "as thick as bees in a hive." And Ben took out his huge clasp knife to help himself from the large piece of beef the Host had provided against their return, for many more were in the same condition as Ben, and "hungry as wolves."

"You have dropped a piece of paper on the floor, Ben," said young Manning, stooping to pick it up, while Ben was cutting a slice from the beef above an inch thick. Having picked it up, he laid it on the table beside Ben.

"O, it's nowt," said Ben; "I fun (found) it as we were crossing Caistor-wood lane, and thought happen it might be a five-pound note, but its nowt only a bit of a scribble as nobody can read," and he again threw it on the floor.

Once more William Manning picked it up; it might have lain there unnoticed all the night, had he not perceived that Ellen Giles blushed when she saw his glance riveted upon her, so he picked up the paper and looked at it, for he knew not at that moment where to turn his eyes, saving towards the floor. He looked at it without reading a word; his thoughts were with Ellen Giles; and when he raised his eyes again, her back was towards him. He was twisting the paper round his fingers, when he chanced to see the word "NORTHCOT;" he unfolded it in an instant, and read it through.

"Where's my horse?" exclaimed he, springing up. "Kitchen, leap into your saddle this instant. This paper was dropped to-night by Walter Northcot; it is scarcely wet, although the dew is falling heavily; it must have been in his hand within these few minutes. To the rescue! to the rescue! every man of you. They have carried him off to-night in a boat. The ship lies below Morton; the distance by land is not half so much as by water. Some of you hurry down to the point of Lea Marsh, others to Gainsborough Bridge. Ben, seize the first horse you can lay hold of: d—— the saddle! up! quick! We will have Walter, or sink the boat."

Just then Sir Edward Lee came up to the door at full gallop. The robbers, after having made themselves truly drunk, and thus wasted the whole evening, had confessed where Walter was kept prisoner; but when they went, with the Baronet, to the hall, he was gone. They, however, arrived in time to seize the gipsy and the servant, who told the whole truth. The Baronet had ridden at full

speed into the village without calling on Justice Bellwood. That night the old Host forgot his gout.

Neck to neck did William Manning and the Baronet ride, for the young man lost not a moment's time in gaining his saddle; and although his good horse was jaded through the long chase after Banes, still, by the aid of whip and spur, it tore along the heavy sand road at a rapid rate. It was fortunate that the sailor had told Walter where the brig was anchored, and both Manning and the Baronet decided in an instant, that the best plan would be to reach the vessel, and dodge its course down the river until they could board it, in case it had weighed anchor. They shot through Knaith, and Lea, without slackening their reins, galloped through the ill-paved and stony streets of Gainsborough, disturbing its drowsy inhabitants, posted through the market-place, past the church, and on by Morton, their horses smoking like furnaces, for theirs was the longest ride. Where was Ben Brust? bare-headed in the village-street, his clasp-knife in one hand, a huge mountain of bread and beef in the other, running he knew not whither; behind him was Gideon, with a strong walking-stick in his hand; after him came the Host, hobbling in the best manner he could, and shouting "Fifty guineas to the man who first enters the boat! I'll pay it as freely as I would a penny."

Onward ran Ben, beef and knife in hand, with Gideon close to his heels, until they came to the front of the Blue Bell, where a drunken farmer, with his horse's bridle slung over his arm, was knocking to obtain entrance. Ben threw the beef one road, and the knife another, and swung his heavy carcase into the saddle, just as Gideon came up. "Jump on behind," shouted Ben, "we may break his back before we've done, but here goes!"

Ben snatched the stick from Gideon, and although the first blow struck the Roper's legs, the next caused the horse, which was very strong, to set off at full speed, and farmer Kitchen, though well mounted, had enough to do to keep pace with them. They were followed by Brown the roper, Cousin William, and half-a-score others; two mounted on cart-horses without either saddle or bridle, and the remainder on foot. The farmer, who was knocking at the public-house door, scratched his head when he saw his horse vanishing as by magic, and exclaimed, "Well, I'm dommed if that ain't summut!"

That night the villagers thought the very devil had broken loose

in Burton Woodhouse; Mrs. Brown's adventure at the well was, as Mrs. Lawson afterwards said, "a flea-bite to it." Oram and Lawson ran nine ways at once, and then they stopped to tell the crowd what they would do when Walter was rescued. Walter was a great favourite in Burton Woodhouse; his gentlemanly and generous habits had endeared him to every one. There was scarcely a soul in the whole village that did not wish to see him united to Amy Lee. And many that night prophesied that if such a marriage did take place, "the Giles's would be somebody yet." And this opinion strengthened when at midnight a carriage drove up to the Roper's cottage, and Amy Lee, "pale and wan, fond lover," together with her mother and sister, alighted at the door. Hope had that night made Amy strong, she could not rest after she heard the tidings brought by the robbers. She sat by the fire, and was so very kind as to insist that the honest Host of the Fallow Deer would not lay aside his pipe on her account, for she had no objection to the smell of tobacco. The truth was, Walter Northcot sometimes indulged in a cigar, and kept a meerchaum and a case of Kanaster. Lady Lee was too full of hope to mind the smell, and Lavinia handed the honest landlord a light when his pipe went out, and laughed and said a hundred "pretty things." Mrs. Giles was full of apologies "hoped her ladyship would excuse this, that, and the other—and if she had but known that her ladyship intended her such an honour, why her ladyship would have found her in a different "pickle," for her ladyship, she was convinced, was her ladyship, and nothing but her ladyship." The old Host spit in the fire, and made a regular hiss on the bars, as he said to Ellen, "Nelly, my love, bring me a little more cold water; this brandy's too strong, and this conversation makes my head ache. Lady Lee's a good sort of a body, I dare say, and knows that poor folks can't always be in apple-pie order."

Lavinia laughed outright, Amy smiled, and Lady Lee said something in a very low tone of voice, while Ellen Giles whispered to Amy and said, "You know my mother—she has strange ways!" Mrs. Giles went into the kitchen to put on a clean cap and apron, and the Host drank to the safe return of Master Walter, saying, as he had beforetime done, "I love the lad, somehow, as dearly as if he was my own son!" and he made Amy wet her beautiful lips to the pledge; while Lavinia drank as much as a bird would from a brook, and Lady Lee declined with a sweet smile, for she felt a

liking towards the honest old Host, in spite of his pipe. Ellen Giles sat beside Amy, and they had a long conversation; as for poor Mary Sanderson she had gone to bed—to her alone all the promised happiness brought no hope.

Now change we to another scene—sorrow, repentance, and remorse; for the curtain must soon fall, and our tale have an ending.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A MOST MELANCHOLY CHAPTER, INTENDED AS A KIND OF FUNERAL SERMON TO MAKE THE READER VERY DULL, AND BRING HIM STILL NEARER TO THE CLOSE OF THIS "EVENTFUL HISTORY."

WE left the Gamekeeper in the wood, prostrate beside the dead body he had stumbled over; one hand resting on a riding-whip, the other, nerveless and chilly, had fallen on the boot-top of the dead man—he knew it was the corpse of Squire Bellwood. With trembling limbs, quivering lip, and haggard countenance, he hurried on to where the firelight streamed between the trees, and reached the gipsy-encampment. There he beheld Jael kneeling and weeping over the dead body of her father. A wound in the gipsy's breast wa all that told of the struggle—the pistol was not found until many weeks after, when a peasant picked it up in the underwood, the lock and barrel covered with rust. It bore the initials of Squire Bellwood.

By the aid of a labourer or two, assisted by the gipsies, the dead body of the Squire was removed to the gipsy camp. The features were almost black, and, by the strong reflection of the firelight, almost too horrible to look upon. Ishmael the gipsy told all "there was to tell;" for, as our readers are aware, Jael fainted before she reached the scene of the struggle.

"I had much ado," said Ishmael, "to get Boswell's finger from the Squire's throat; for his knuckles were fastened like a vice within Bellwood's neckerchief, and he retained his hold after death. The old man bled a good deal from the pistol-wound in his breast, and I should think the Squire fired at him while they struggled together. I looked round, but could not find the pistol. The gorse and fern were beaten down and broken in every direction. It must have been a savage tussle. Bellwood was quite key-cold when I came up—the old man was still warm, but I think it was only his fever, for he neither moved hand nor foot; and when I held a

blade of silk-grass over his lips, it never stirred—so I knew he was dead."

It was an awful scene to behold the two dead bodies stretched beside the camp-fire — Jael weeping over the lifeless form of her father, and Banes, with the tears streaming down his bronzed cheeks, pressing the cold hand of Bellwood—for the hardened Gamekeeper now wept aloud. The gipsies stood round the fire with folded arms and bent brows, sullenly looking on the corpse of their leader, and more angry than sorrowful at his death — for they thought they should now be compelled to join some other tribe. Two or three labouring men who had long known Black Boswell stood by, silently surveying the scene. They had come to see a dead gipsy more out of a motive of curiosity than anything else. They looked on, but offered no consolation. Ishmael was the only one who seemed to sympathise with the sorrows of Jael, and he sat beside the fire, with his head bent, and his face buried in his hands.

Black Boswell's favourite mastiff lay beside the fire, every now and then giving a hideous howl, which rang through the deep solitudes of the wood. By this time the moon had risen, and seemed to contend with the red blaze of the fire, as she darted down her bright rays upon the scene. And Jael knelt there, regardless of the cold night-dew which gemmed her dark hair: she felt neither heat nor cold; the warmth of the fire, which her red cloak reflected back—the pale moonbeams streaming on her bare neck as she bent her head over the dead body, were alike disregarded. She felt only the cold cheek on which her own rested—on which her tears fell; and she wished that she were also dead.

Banes remained until nearly midnight beside the corpse of the Squire without once uttering a word. At length he arose, and prevailed on four of the men to bear the dead body home to Justice Bellwood's; and, without either bier or covering, they carried the corpse through the wood. Banes went foremost until they cleared the thicket, removing every overhanging bough or entangling branch which obstructed their path, with as much care as if they were carrying home a sickly man, which every rude shock might injure. But the cold dew that fell, and the green leaves which swept over that blackened countenance, affected it not. The Squire had run his last course—he had hunted after evil, and found death. Those green alleys would never again echo back his loud 'whoop' and 'halloo.' Although he left hearts aching and breaking in many

Squire Bellwood brought home.

a quiet home, on earth their griefs could never more affect him, for he was then but "a clod of the valley."

It was past midnight; and, ruminating over the events of the day, Justice Bellwood was still seated in his own parlour (he had never felt a less inclination to retire to rest), when he was startled by a loud double knock at the door. His faithful old servant, who was still up, answered the summons. The old man heard an altercation in the passage; and when he arose, he beheld four men bringing in the dead body of his son. As the parlour door was open, the men entered, without waiting for instructions, and placed the corpse on the carpet. The old Justice followed them almost mechanically, and, without speaking, sunk into his seat; nor did he observe Banes.

"Here is a paper," said one of the men, "which fell out of *his* pocket," pointing to the dead body. "I picked it up, not knowing what use it might be, as it is parchment."

Justice Bellwood drew his hand from his eyes, as if to command silence, or bid them begone, when the document, which the man held open, arrested his attention; and he saw it was the bond which consigned the property of the Baronet into his hands, and which he believed he had burnt.

"Leave me! leave me!" exclaimed the old man. "To-morrow I will reward you."

Deep sorrow seldom fails in commanding respect, if not sympathy; and the men left him; although one, with less feeling than the rest, "hoped his honour would give them some refreshment, as they had carried him a long way."

"Yes! yes!" was all the answer the old man made, as he pointed to his servant. He then locked the door, and gave vent to his feelings; but before sitting down again, he threw the document into the fire, adding, "This is the severest blow of all. I knew he" (glancing at the corpse) "was guilty of many follies, but never thought that he would have deceived me. I did not deserve it. I have been a foolish and a fond old man—and should again—for with all thy faults I loved thee. Bless God! thy mother is not alive to witness this scene. It will kill me—but I am very old; her, it would have driven mad. Oh! my dear boy!—what have I done to deserve this blow? I had looked upon thee as the prop and comfort of my declining age!—had fondly dreamed how I should sit in the sunshine beside my own porch, and hear the

prattle of little children who would call thee father, as years ago thou didst me!—that Amy would be to me as a daughter, and that on my death-bed I should clasp thy hand in mine, and feel the little heads that would kneel around their poor old grandfather's bed, and just pass from them to other such faces, as would welcome me into heaven! Now I am left alone in my old age—like a lonely tree, the last of the forest—not a shoot to tell of what has been—nothing that I care for—but poor Amy Lee!—the only branch that grew on my old withered trunk is dead. I have nothing left me now but to die—oh! that it had been earlier!—I should have carried a less load to my grave. But why do I reproach thee, when I ought to accuse myself? I alone have thy untimely end to answer for. I laughed at thy youthful follies, without checking them—I loved to see thee happy, without thinking of the end to which pleasure leads! I pointed out no course by which thou wert to steer, but launched thee into the world without either guide, or object, end, or aim—as if thy life were only to be one round of pleasure! O God! pardon me! My over-fondness hath been his ruin—his death! I taught him not the lessons of virtue—I brought him not up in Thy fear, but let him live up to his own inclinations; for to see him happy was all I coveted. If he rushed into sin, or did injury, I made reparation with gold; deeming that years and experience would make him wiser. The seed was thrown in, but I regarded not its growth; and now I come to reap the harvest, find only blight and death.—I alone have brought him to this!" And the old man was about to throw himself upon the dead body of his son, when he was startled by a loud sobbing in the room; and, looking round, he beheld Banes clasping the cold hand of the dead man, and bathing it with tears.

The Gamekeeper, who had followed the corpse home—the only mourner, had entered the room with the men who bore in the body, and remained there unperceived, until that moment, by the old Justice.

"I am alone to blame," said Banes, looking up in deep contrition, "and am more deserving of death than he is. I first instructed him to deceive you, led him on from evil to evil, and when he would have halted, laughed at his weakness; I alone formed the plot for siezing Walter Northcot, advised him to steal the bond, taught him how to assume penitence before you—I am the villain! and, after having been an unwilling witness of your sorrow, regret only that I lay not dead in his place, and that the tears I now shed over him,

were by himself dropped on my lifeless corpse! O God! has thy justice no remaining bolt left to pierce this roof, and lay me stiff and blackened beside him?"

Banes threw himself again upon the dead body of the Squire, and shed such tears as can only stream from the eyes of the greatest of sinners; for his repentance was sincere.

The old man spoke not, for his heart was too full—but, with clasped hands, knelt in silence beside the corpse of his son; and while his head rested on the dead body, he grasped the hand of Banes within his own, and they remained, kneeling in mournful silence, side by side.

Although Banes was a downright villain, he was not insensible to the reproaches of conscience; and our readers must have remarked, that during the night, and when alone, he was often compelled to drown his senses in drink, to stifle the whispers of that "silent monitor" which, at such hours, never failed to accuse him of his misdeeds. As we have before shewn in the progress of this work, he more than once resolved to alter his course of life and become better, but then the thoughts of what people would say about him overthrew all his good resolves. It was pride alone which, in a great measure, caused him to retain his evil habits, and he knew that, do what he might, his character could stand no worse than it did, for he thought if he became a better man, the change might be attributed to cowardice. He therefore resolved to repel scorn with scorn, to return hatred with hatred; he had obtained the name of an oppressor and tyrant, when, considering the unpopularity of his situation, which was to uphold the odious Game-law, he did not much deserve it; but then he knew he was in power, and he did as many others have done and still do. He saw the Baronet plunge fearlessly into vice, and attempt the seduction of a virtuous girl, and he thought it would be a "feather in his cap" to outplot him. He became acquainted with Bellwood, and his active mind and daring spirit outstepped the weaker plans of the Squire, and he was soon the great deviser of all his schemes. Still he was unhappy!—he saw plan after plan succeed, but the pleasure it gave him weighed but lightly in the balance, when compared to the remorse he felt afterwards. He would fain have become better, but he was ashamed of attempting the change; had he written the letter to Gideon, and the Roper received it favourably, his evil career might that night have ended; but he had no one to encourage him to proceed in that moment of brief repentance.

Since the death of his mother he had scarcely had any one to converse with, but was left alone; and shortly after her death he shot a poacher, though, to do him justice, he did it in defence of his own life, for the man aimed a blow at him with a heavy bludgeon loaded with lead, and had it struck him he would have received his quietus. After this he was called a MURDERER; if he only entered a public-house he was asked, "if the ghost of Bob Shaw haunted him yet," and he now felt that he was feared as well as hated, the spirit of the tyrant began to possess him, and he bore down all who dared to oppose him; he sought every opportunity to persecute those who, by either word or deed, offended him. This, for a time, afforded him a kind of savage pleasure, and on more than one occasion did he risk his life—nay, he was often heard to boast, that he did not value it a straw, and many, from his daring deeds, believed him. Then a change took place; for he was sincere when he first paid his addresses to Ellen Giles, and for some weeks did nothing that deserved a word of reproach.

But still the old character stuck to him—no one would give him credit for meaning well, and the ears of Gideon were incessantly dinned with the question of "why ever do you allow such a rascal as that to cross your threshold?" The pride of the Roper was at last wounded, and the courtship broken off. It would have been all the better if Gideon had paid no attention to these remarks, for there was nothing in the conduct of Banes at that time deserving of censure; the gentleness of Ellen Giles had wrought a great change in him—but he was repulsed, and then the old devil raged in him more strongly than before. Ellen left home, and went to live at the Hall of Burton Woodhouse, where her beauty soon attracted the attention of the Baronet: until that time Banes had never entertained an evil thought towards the girl, but he no sooner heard the Baronet's proposal for getting possession of her, than he determined to win her for himself. What little there was of good still left in the character of the Gamekeeper every day became less, after he got connected with Squire Bellwood. But still, amid all his vice and villany, there was one spot sacred—a little cone, that threw up its healing waters, however muddy and corrupted the spring might seem; neither drink, crime, nor pleasure could stop its working—though hidden for days and months, it was still there, attempting, though unseen, to work its way through, and purify the corrupted waters. That little spring was the remembrance of his mother—her image bending over him in

tears and prayers,—sometimes appearing as when she sat with her Bible before her, sometimes as when he heard her praying by his bedside, or when she watched over him in his long illness. She alone had loved him,—had watched and wept over him, and many a time when he was assailed with harsh words and received with cold looks, when he met with hatred and defiance on every hand, he would return to his desolate dwelling, and, sitting beside his solitary hearth, recal her words and looks, and think how long a time had passed away since such words greeted his ears, since any one welcomed him with a smile. Then he drank himself into forgetfulness, then he began to hate his fellow-man: but her dying gift had saved him from committing suicide.

Shakspeare, that great unraveller of the human heart—he to whom the very inmost workings of our nature left no clue that he could not unwind, assigns no other motive for the villany of Iago, than that he was jealous of Othello being too familiar with his wife. Iago's description of jealousy tells too well how much he felt it, although the great Bard makes no mention of his early attachment to Emilia, nor could Shakspeare have given him a greater motive for revenge. A few dashes from the pen of the mighty poet would have caused us to have sympathised with Iago; we want but a confirmation of his jealousy, and such a love as a villain so gifted must have felt for his wife before she fell, and then we should pity him, in every pang which he inflicts upon Othello we should endeavour to trace out what he himself had once felt. But Shakspeare never outraged human nature, when developing the working of a ruling passion, and in the description of jealousy as given by Iago, it is our sincere belief that he intended to impress his readers with the truth, that Iago felt what he gave utterance to, though it was necessary, in depicting his villany, not to let this feeling predominate. We may be alone in this opinion; nay, altogether wrong; but, nevertheless, we believe it. Again, in Richard the Third, out of deformity springs unsatiated ambition. He cannot be loved, so makes himself feared; even when the weak Lady Anne falls before his flattery, it but yields him a brief triumph—his great theory would fall to the ground if he could persuade himself that she was sincere. So in Lear—excessive fondness for his children leads to madness; in every instance in Shakspeare, reason is made to leave the helm, and blinded passion take charge of the bark, before it is wrecked on the awful rocks which he erected for the display of his own majestic ruins.

Hamlet alone remains a puzzle. The superstition of Macbeth, the influence of his daring and bloody-minded wife, hanging eternally like a spark ready to fall on ncovered powder, are so blended with supernatural agency, that we look around the world in vain for a resemblance.

But with Banes the matter was different—all that was good had long ago forsaken him, or if aught was left, it was but the shadow of Banquo, usurping the seat in which he was preparing to sit down, and leaving him alone the melancholy consolation of exclaiming: "Thou canst not say I did it!" "The Baronet and Bellwood first guided me to the precipice on which I now stand." And what was Bellwood then? Banes knelt beside his cold corpse. He felt the stiff, icy hand of the Squire within his own,—he felt every groan the old Justice uttered. Let us leave him to weep:—if God alone demands true repentance for the forgiveness of a sinner, our readers ought not assuredly to require more. To hang Banes for "poetical justice" would be a farce; the pangs of remorse and repentance are more severe than the brief agony of death.

There lay the Squire! all his intrigues were over—hearts might ache and break, he had never felt their pangs, he could never feel them then—the great game was played out. And what had he won?—Death! and what had he lost? Banes shuddered as he summed up the game. There lay the clay-cold body of his friend, the man whose laughter had, a few days before, rung through his house—what was he now? Of what advantage were his youth, his apparent health, his prospect of immense riches, his power, his name? what could he have done more, had he lived, than impregnated the air around him with his little breath—have tyrannised for a brief space, then left all around him just as if he had never had a being!

But Banes felt that he had been instrumental in bringing the young Squire to so untimely an end, and that he had deserved death as much as Bellwood. Why then was he spared? He knew not; all he knew was, that he had never felt what he then did since the hour he clasped the cold hand of his dead mother, when she died suddenly in the night, and there was no living soul beside himself in the desolate old mansion.

He recalled his past life—he shed tears at the thoughts of the evil he had done—he wished he were better. There was a low resignation about his heart; he felt humbled with misery; he had no pride left;

he never once thought of the world's opinion—what men might say or think, at that moment concerned him not; between him and the presence of an offended God was stretched a brief barrier—the body of Bellwood—the narrow plank of death.

He tried to pray—but he knew not how; the remembrance of his many sins came across his mind and impeded the flow of his thoughts. Hell seemed to demand so much, that he had nothing left for heaven. Still he felt comforted by the thought that he yet remembered heaven. He was like a man desperately in debt, who pays those first who are most clamorous in their demands, trusting after all to the clemency of the friend who has done the most for him, and whom he knows will willingly wait that day of payment when the sum is paid down with every feeling of gratitude and love, who receives only as he lent, in pity, kindness, and mercy. Justice waiting with a smile, and making no mention of her claim, and only frowning, as with her hand she waves back Fear. That night, almost the last words his mother uttered seemed as if pealed into his ear, as when he knelt beside her deathbed, and heard her exclaim with her parting breath —"Weep not, my dear boy! if you love me as I do you, we shall meet again ere long in heaven."

"In heaven!"—Where were the lock of hair and the Bible she had left him?—scorched—burnt—blown up with gunpowder! The very chair in which she had nursed him, where was it now?—her portrait?—the Prayer-book in which his father had read?—And why were they consumed? He felt that he had nothing that he could call his own in this world but an accusing conscience.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE CHASE CONTINUED—AND THE ESCAPE OF WALTER NORTHCOT—WHICH ENDS THE LAST CHAPTER BUT ONE OF, GIDEON GILES THE ROPER.

The boat was by this time gliding around the huge arm which encircles Lea Marsh, one of the largest bends in the river Trent, since the "cranking elbow" which Hotspur and Glendower quarreled about, in Shakspeare's Henry the Fourth, has been cut off. Leading from the village of Lea up to this point is a long, weary lane, impassable in winter when the marshes are flooded, but now, in the height of summer, knee-deep in rich grass. Old floodgates, worn by the weather and battered by many a fierce torrent, still mark the mouth

of the huge dyke by which the marshes are drained. The spot is well-known to every angler in that neighbourhood; for here the finny tribes enter with the tide; in those dykes the voracious pike basks in the sunshine, or lays with his enormous jaws ready to devour his prey at the entrance of the gates when the water ebbs. To ourselves, it has always been a "solemn spot;" the worn and wasted arch through which the water issues, the green decaying gates, the deep gulf that seems to yawn beneath as you look down from the brow of the arch, the old willows, hung with weeds, that dip and tremble in the current, and the remembrance that we once had a narrow escape from being drowned in that very spot,—makes it to us a solemn place; for there is no sign of human habitation at hand; nothing but the desolate marshes and the melancholy murmur of the river.

Up the solitary lane, and towards this very point, galloped Ben Brust and Gideon Giles, both mounted on one horse, like living images of the old Knight Templars; they were followed by farmer Kitchen, who had been compelled to halt to extricate his nag from a dyke; horse and rider bore marks of the muddy ablution they had so unwillingly performed. They managed, however, to reach the bank just as the boat hove in sight.

"Hilloa!" shouted Ben, in a voice which might have been heard at Bole or Sawnby, though the villages lay at the very extremity of the opposite marshes: "Hilloa, Walter! cheer up, my lad! we're here—Ben Brust, and Gideon, and a score or two more of us, all ready to fight for you. Cheer up!"

"Ride down to the bridge," shouted Walter, "I'm here."

"That's his voice," said Ben. "I wish I could swim, Gideon; I would jump in, and go sink the boat and drown every thief in it, and bring Walter ashore on my back. Lors, I niver felt in sich trim for fighting in my life!"

"We might as well be fifty miles off as here," answered Gideon. "Just look how those fellows handle their oars! were it not for the huge cranks of the river they would find us work enough, mounted as we are, to keep up with them. Did you ever see such rowing!"

"Let us hurry down to the oil-mill," said farmer Kitchen, "and there collect our forces; then cut the ropes of the lighter, and lay athwart them—there's no other chance."

There was no time to be lost, and they hurried over hedge and ditch; those on foot who had come up throwing the gates off the hinges where the hedges were too high. On they rushed, down

Humble-Carr lane, and reached the oil-mill in much less than half the distance they must have traversed if they had followed the course of the river. One or two, however, ran beside the banks all the way, that they might dodge the movements of the boat.

"You had better put me ashore," said Walter, addressing the Captain, "the alarm will soon reach Gainsborough—the river will be lined with boats, I shall escape, and all you will get, if you persevere, will be imprisonment. I may yet do much for you. I will see you safe out of their hands, if you will land me on yonder chalk jetty. You may, perchance, be the death of some honest fellow who is too venturesome in my behalf, and I believe you would regret it afterwards. Pause ere it be too late," continued Walter, for he saw his remarks had an effect on the Captain. "Unless you take away my life, I shall be out of your hands within the hour. I care not for myself; for if I escape, it will only be to remain miserable; and I would rather perish than that some poor child should be made fatherless, some fond wife a widow. Yonder is the jetty—land me there, and I will see that no harm befals you."

"I'll tell you what it is," answered the Captain, taking the tobacco-pouch from his pocket, and thrusting a large quid into his cheek, for he felt the force of Walter's argument,—"I don't like to be forced to do a thing. To give you up now would look as if I was afeard. Now d— me if I know what fear is. I've been in battle, and seen my shipmate's head shot off beside me. I've seen it rain bullets, and expected the next would make me sausage-meat for the sharks; but I never was afeard. Do you think, then, I'll heave too for such lousy land-lubbers as go shouting and mud-shoving among these banks?—No! shiver my skylights if I do! Here's my hand; I'll not harm you: if they board me and win, all's fair; and I'll save you though the ship was sinking. I never yet gave up a prisoner until I was made one myself. As to killing any poor devil, why I don't think there's one amongst them ever smelt powder. Side by side, and oar to oar; let them come on; I'll take no advantage, by G—!" He jerked the pistol over the stern of the boat, and it was lost in an instant amid the "loosened silver" of the spray.

"I believe you are a brave man," said Walter, "and under any other circumstances I should respect your valour; but remember what you told me awhile ago—that numbers are sure to carry the day! You will do no more than I have already done. You overpowered me by superior force, and I gave in without a murmur."

"But we won the victory first," rejoined the Captain; "and when beaten I will also give in."

"You did," answered Walter, "and I envy you not your triumph, five to one, and that one unarmed, is not much for a sailor to boast of." The hot blood of Walter was in the ascendant, or he would not have made the latter remark.

"You mean then," said the Captain, his shaggy eyebrows lowering, "that if I had been alone, I should have found you a fair match for me?"

"I mean," answered Walter, "that it is no credit to a man to boast that he captured another, by the aid of four men beside himself, and he armed at the same time."

"Hark you!" replied the Captain, now in a towering rage, "although I have thrown away the pistol, I have another brace with me at this moment; hey," added he, raising his voice, "and powder and bullets beside, and will readily lend one to the man who dare use it, and has the courage to accuse me of cowardice."

"Look you, friend," said Walter, who was as brave a young fellow as ever trod English ground, "below us lies the oil-mill, two boats are afloat, the larger one contains half-a-dozen strong men. We shall soon be up with them. They have come to my rescue—if you offer any resistance, and I have the chance, I shall heave you over the gunwale of the boat into the river, sink or swim I care not. I offered you fair terms if you would land me awhile ago; as to giving you that satisfaction which one gentleman requires from another, I here ask you if you have a right to demand it? Have I not met with you to-night in the character of a hireling, of a ruffian, one paid to do the revengeful work of a man who refused the challenge I gave him, and who for the reverence I had for his father, I offered what is called satisfaction: although I hate the system of duelling, I in that instance acceded to, believing it more honourable to do so, than to bear unmanly spite, malice, and revenge."

"Back-water," said the Captain speaking to his men, "pull up under the shade of those willows. You have read me a lesson that makes me ashamed of what I once was. I will land you here, on condition that you leave me to deal with yonder fellows who are making ready to board me, as I best may, promising you beforehand, that I will use no weapon but such as you now see, boat-hook or oar, and which are such as they are already armed with—you have shewn me that I have no claim to honour, leave me still courage and chance,

and if to-night I find my bed in the bottom of this river, it will be a grave that becomes me. To you I apologise, and am sorry for what I have this night done; but to yonder lubbers, I will yet shew, that although I have no longer any claim to the character of a gentleman, I can still die as becomes a sailor."

"I will consent to nothing of the kind," answered Walter firmly; "I regret that I said what I have. Nor will I now go ashore on any other conditions than that you will remain here until I walk on and hail the boats. If they refuse to hearken to me, I will come back and assist you in defending yourself against them. Here is my hand, I feel certain that one who possesses such feelings as you still do, will never again be found engaged in a business like this, which makes you set less store by your life than your honour."

"Never, by G—d, never!" said the Captain, clasping the hand of Walter Northcot. "Yet I am glad that I have met with you to-night. I but wanted to see a man like you years ago, to make me what I ought to have been, and should be now, had it not been for such as Squire Bellwood. By Heaven, I would die for you, if I could but serve you in so doing!"

"You can serve me better by waiting here until I return," said Walter, grasping the Captain's hand with a friendly feeling, while the boat floated on with the current; "one thing more you can only do to oblige me, and that is, to go back with me to Burton Woodhouse and stay a day or two there, that I may convince you of the truth of my forgiveness and the sincerity of my friendship."

"That I will do," answered the Captain, "if it be only to account to Justice Bellwood, how I have, by the assistance of his son, so long dealt with him wrongfully. But I should like to see these poor fellows safely aboard to-night, and to-morrow I will shew you that I can either enter a prison without complaining, or be grateful to the friend through life, who reclaimed me again to the true colours I had so long deserted."

By this time the boat was drawing near to the lighter, and the small fishing-cobble which they had unmoored; in the latter were two men, who seemed to understand as much about rowing as two bears. Gideon and Ben Brust were in the lighter, and what they could not do by art, they accomplished by main strength. A smile passed over the swarthy features of the Captain, while he watched their manœuvres, which did not pass unobserved by Walter, who said, "You would find no difficulty in passing them."

"I should just like to run between," said the Captain, "without either hailing them, or laying-to."

"Then do it," replied Walter, who with all his respect for his friends, could not resist having his joke.

The men rested on their oars for a moment, while the Captain shipped the rudder, then took his seat in the stern. "Steady boys!" said he, "and we'll walk round them."

"Come here, you thieves!" shouted Ben Brust, as he stood with a boat-hook uplifted in the moonlight, "let me once get hold of any of you with this, and I'll land you here as easy as I would a roach. Hard-over with the helm, Gideon—lay-to," continued he, calling to Cousin William. "Now farmer Kitchen, one good pull, and I shall hook that thief of a Captain. Why dom 'em, they're making fun on us," said Ben, staring in astonishment at the hardihood of the Captain, who had by this time rowed round the heavy lighter, and came so near as to touch their oars.

"Pull a-head," said the Captain, the men lay-to with all their strength, and the boat shot forward like a race-horse.

"We shall lose him, we shall lose him!" shouted Ben, "O! if I had but those thieves ashore. But see, they're coming back, they mean shewing us fight after all," and off went Ben's jacket in an instant. "Now," said Ben, "just shew me which is the thief of a Captain, and leave me to deal with him!"

"Lay down your boat-hook, Ben," said Walter, when they came alongside, "and lend me your hand to mount this clumsy craft—these are all friends of mine," added he, pointing to the crew.

"Are they?" said Ben, scarcely believing his eyes, "then give us your fist my hearties," continued he, seizing the hand of the Captain, while he added—"two minutes ago, I would have given all I'm worth in the world to have broken your head; but if I'd known you'd been a friend of Master Walter's, I would sooner have eaten my hand than I would have hurt you."

Walter soon ascertained that the Baronet and young Manning had ridden down to Morton, and as the distance was not above ten minutes ride to a practised horseman like himself, he mounted farmer Kitchen's bay galloway, and set off at full gallop, ordering Ben, and the whole party to proceed onward to Burton Woodhouse, and promising to overtake them before they reached the village. The Captain requested permission to accompany him, which was readily granted, and Walter marvelled to see with what ease he sat in his

saddle, for he was mounted on the horse which had before borne Ben and Gideon.

"I have followed many a tiger-hunt abroad," said the Captain, in reply to the compliment Walter paid to his good horsemanship. They reached Morton, and found Sir Edward Lee and William Manning in their saddles, looking out on the bank, opposite to which the brig was moored, and anxiously awaiting the approach of the boat. Pass we the meeting of Walter Northcot and the Baronet. The Captain hailed the brig, and the mate came ashore; he whispered something in his ear, which caused the honest sailor to put out his tarry hand, and grasp the Captain's. The Captain and mate talked together for a few minutes, and then approached Walter, who recognised in the honest sailor, the friend who had visited him when he was a prisoner in the Hall of Justice Manning.

It was broad daylight when they reached the village of Burton Woodhouse—the noise they made was heard a mile off. Ben Brust shouted and danced about like a madman, and knocked the Host up at the house where Gideon was taken up for hawking his goods. That night Ben got drunk.

CHAPTER XLV.

LAST SCENE OF ALL—ENDING IN A SERMON, WHICH IS VERY OLD, AND VERY ORIGINAL.

More than twelve months have passed away since we last visited the village of Burton Woodhouse, and above three years have elapsed since the events took place which we have recorded within this volume, and great are the changes that have taken place in the village during this brief period of time.

Honest Justice Bellwood is dead!—he did not long survive his son; he left the whole of his property to Walter Northcot and Amy Lee. Amy has long been married to Walter; they have a son, a fine little fellow, a handsome likeness of his mother; he is called James Bellwood Northcot—a name long enough for any lord in the land. Walter has erected a beautiful marble monument to the memory of the worthy Justice. The tribute he has paid to the old man's many virtues pleased us so much that, we made a copy of it, which we here present to our readers:—

Sacred to the Memory
OF
SIR JAMES BELLWOOD, BART. J.P.
AGED 79.

A TRULY GOOD AND HONEST MAN:
HE WAS BELOVED BY ALL WHO KNEW HIM,
AND RESPECTED BY ALL,
EVEN THOSE WHO FEARED
HIS HONESTY, UPRIGHTNESS, AND INTEGRITY,
IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE:
HE LOVED HIS COUNTRY;
WAS A FRIEND TO ALL MANKIND:
HE HATED ONLY VICE;
ALTHOUGH TO THE POOR AND WEAK HE WAS EVER MERCIFUL,
TO THE RICH AND POWERFUL ONLY SEVERE:
HE LOOKED ON POVERTY AND WANT
AS THE PARENTS OF CRIME,
AND PITIED THEIR OFFSPRING:
HE NEVER SWERVED FROM JUSTICE, UNLESS LOVE, PITY,
AND MERCY PREVAILED,
EARTHLY FAILINGS, WHICH ARE PARDONED IN HEAVEN.
"HIS END WAS PEACE."

The old Justice is buried in the family vault, beside the remains of his beloved wife. The body of his son lies in a separate grave; next to Mary Ann Wainright—a young woman who died broken-hearted, —the only one he ever truly loved. A memorandum was found in his pocket-book, in which he expressed a wish that, if he died unmarried, he might be laid beside his "first love."

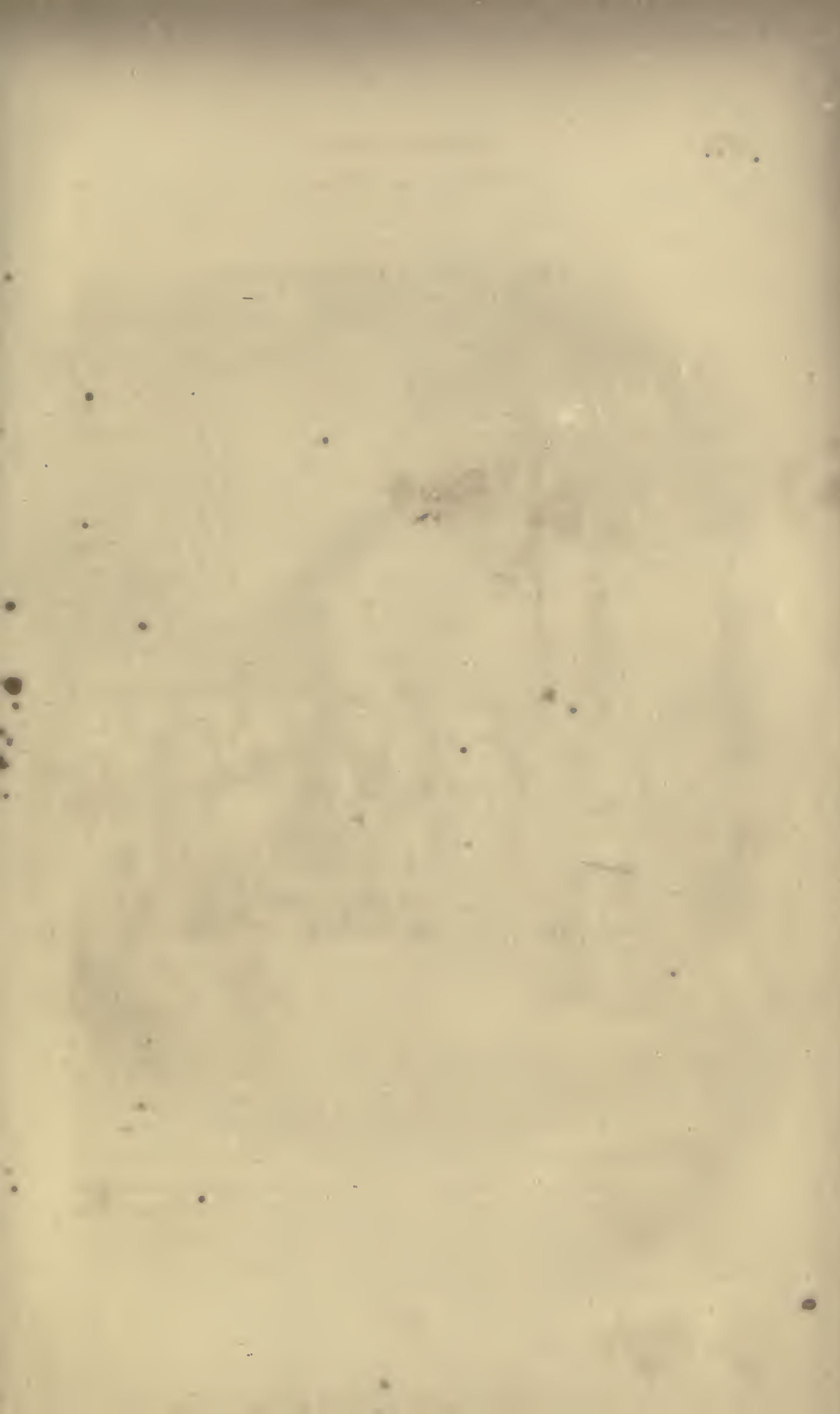
Black Boswell was buried on the heath, beneath the blasted tree that hangs, blackened and withered, over the grave of his first wife. But few are bold enough to approach that spot after dark; for the place bears an "evil name."

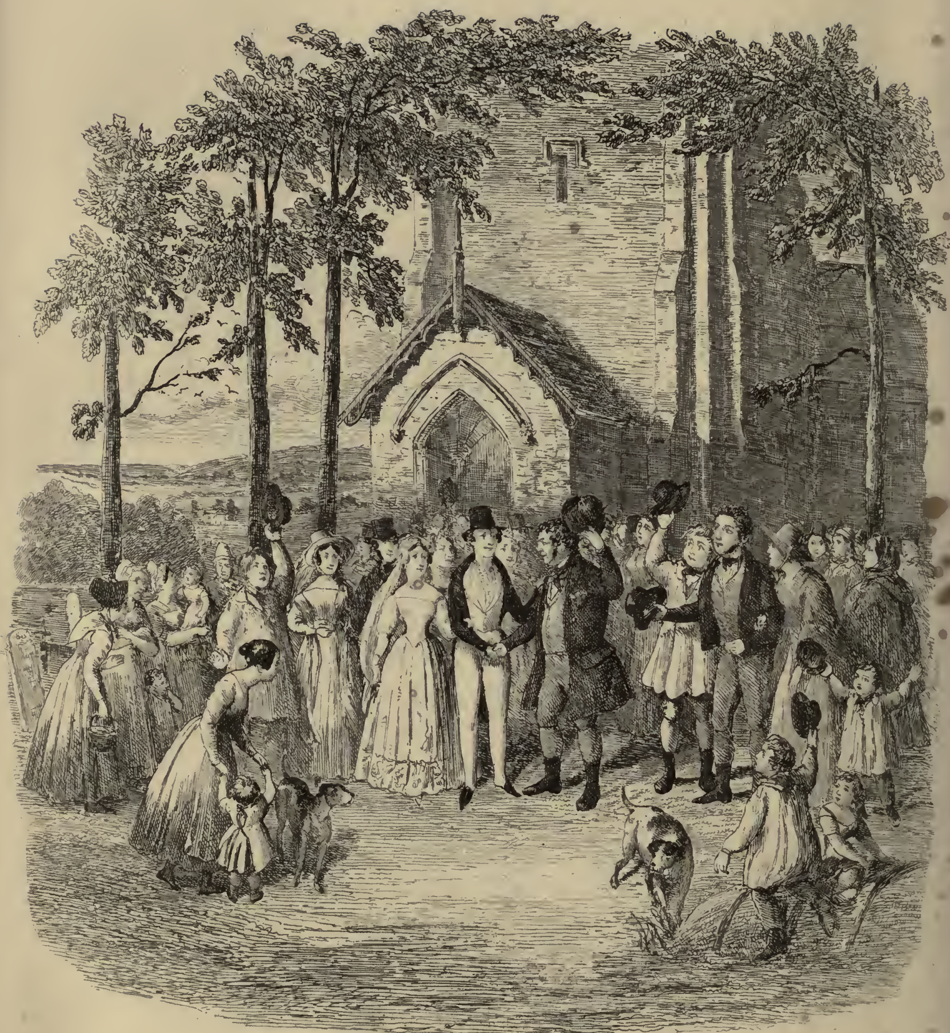
Jael is married to Ishmael: the last tidings we heard of her were, that she had given birth to a daughter in a wild place near Ingham; and that three days after, the encampment was broken up; Jael having budged off along with the rest of her tribe, with "brat on back." *

As for Ben Brust—

> "He just does nothing all the day,
> And soundly sleeps the night away."

* This occurred at a gipsy encampment near the village above named, little more than a year ago. Within three days the gipsy-mother had decamped with the young child at her back. A friend of the author's went early the morning after the birth, to make her a present of a packet of tea, and found the "child-bed woman," as the old ballad of Bateman has it, eating a beef-steak, which she washed down with a horn of strong ale!





The Marriage.

Walter Northcot, when he took up his residence in "Bellwood Hall," offered to make Ben gamekeeper. But Ben, at first, declined the situation.

"I'll tell you what it is," said Ben, neither abashed by the presence of Amy nor the Baronet, "I don't much like the Game-laws; though if I saw a man trespassing in your woods, and trying to live by selling your game, I wouldn't mind fetching him a whack o' th' head; but if he took a hare or a rabbit becoss he wanted a dinner, d—n me if I wouldn't sooner help him to catch 'em than hurt a hair of his head."

"You are the fitter man for the office," said Walter. "If after the plans I have laid down for the employment of every peasant in the village, there is one found willing to work, who cannot even then maintain his family comfortably—lend that man your gun, Ben, and let him shoot wherever he likes. But first send him to me; for I will neither hunt, nor keep a hound, while there is a soul in Burton Woodhouse that wants either employment, or bread to eat.

Amy placed her hand on her husband's shoulder while he was speaking, and cast on him such a look, that Ben afterwards confessed 'he niver saw owt half so sweet as that look in his life.'

So Ben became gamekeeper; and the baker in Burton Woodhouse said he did not know how to account for it, but that there was hardly a poor family in the village, that in winter had not, on Sundays, either a roasted hare, or a big rabbit-pie. And since Ben has been in office, Walter Northcot has been compelled to re-stock the rabbit-warren with fresh bucks and does:—the breed makes the best of pies. Ben has only as yet taken up one poacher, on whom he found seven hares; which, as Ben said, "shewed him to be a greedy thief, for they were more than I could have eaten mysen while they would have kept good. I wouldn't hev minded three, if he'd been civil; but dom him—seven was too much of a good thing." It is said in the village, that when Ben gets into the parlour of the White Swan, and has swallowed his sixth pint of ale, on an evening, he is then safe for the night; which accounts for so many roasted hares, rabbit-pies, etc. at the bakehouse;—that Benjamin has watched at the bakehouse door on a Sunday, and counted up twenty of the aforesaid dishes, and said, with an oath, "I think our warren 'ell soon want stocking afresh." They do say also, that Ben gets so fat, he cannot now reach the woods, unless on horseback; and some of the wags in the village swear that Ben is in partnership with the

baker, and winks at the slaughter of Walter's game, while he shares in the profits of the bakehouse. Ben says "it's a lie; and that some day or other he'll drop on 'em, when he's worked a little of his fat off." He has increased three stone in three years.

Cousin William has removed to Burton Woodhouse. He likes rabbit pies; and Ben finds him in bacon and flour gratis.

Gideon Giles is carrying on "a roaring trade" in the rope way. He has made Mr. Brown his foreman. Gideon now keeps seven journeymen. He has all the work for miles around the neighbourhood. Lately, they say Gideon does but little more than look over his ledger;—that if the morning is cold or rainy, he seldom visits the rope-walk until after breakfast;—that when he pays for a wagon-load of hemp, he writes a check on the Gainsborough bank. Farmer Kitchen also says that he's not the man he was;—that although he yet smokes his pipe with Ben Brust at the White Swan, he now argues that property must be protected;—that if the wealth of England was equally divided to-morrow, a year hence there would be found hundreds of men as poor as they are now;—that the law cannot make provision for idleness, drunkenness, and extravagance;—that the dishonest and the lazy only require to be kept in subjection, and that laws were first made by good men, to keep evil men in awe. Still he says that the law of License, so far as it hinders an industrious man from selling the goods he himself manufactures, is, in every sense of the word, unjust, foolish, tyrannical, and bad;—that bread has no right to be taxed to the extent it is. And Ben Brust agrees in everything Gideon says; and when Ben gets drunk, he shakes Gideon's hand, and says, "Hey, my lad! does thou remember when we were in prison together, and they gave us nowt but oatmeal porridge?" and Gideon squeezes Ben's hand in his own, smokes away, and says nothing.

Mrs. Brown helps Mrs. Giles to wash and clean, and goes to chapel every Sunday. She wears a very plain bonnet, and has no flowers in her cap, but now confines herself to a narrow screed. She has left off all flounces, both upper and lower; her collar is just passed over the Italian-iron, but not plaited,—for she now "abominates pride." She wears her false front plain, and never in curls. The last time we heard of her, she was attending a row of little girls to chapel—she is now a teacher in the Sunday School; and has given two caps, four aprons, and two pairs of stockings of her own knitting to the "Dorcas Society." She thinks Mr. Tong, the local preacher,

"a much nicer man than Mr. Banes." She has twice proposed herself as a deliverer of tracts, and is likely to become useful as she grows older. Mrs. Lawson says she is a great hypocrite, and never goes to Gainsborough without purchasing a pint of brandy of Burton, at the Black's Head. Barnes the watchmaker says he has seen her pay for it; and will swear it. Mrs. Brown declares it to be false, and wonders how people can give credit to such reports, when they know she joined the teetotallers above a year ago. Ben Burst says nothing, only that she one day left her basket in the carrier's cart, when she was going to Gainsborough,—that there was a pint bottle in her basket,—that he took the cork out, lifted the bottle to his lips, and, after holding it a long time, tasted—brandy!

William Manning is often a visitor at the Hall of Burton Woodhouse, and an especial favourite with Lavinia Lee. It was thought that he had formerly some notion of Ellen Giles; but the news soon reached the ears of his father, who sent for Gideon, and the affair ended; nor is it known to this hour what transpired between the old Justice and the Roper.

The honest host of the Fallow Deer has given up the inn to his niece, and she is now married to John the ostler; while the old landlord has taken up his residence at Burton Woodhouse—Gideon having added two more rooms to his cottage, for the accommodation of the worthy landlord. Ben and the old man are great cronies; and Ellen says it is sometimes twelve o'clock before she can get to sleep, owing to Ben and the Host, when they are "fou," singing "Auld lang syne," "Come fill this brown jug," etc. The landlord may sometimes be seen smoking his pipe on a bench beneath the old oak tree which overhangs Gideon's cottage.

Banes is now an altered man, and, strange as it may seem, a great favourite with Gideon Giles; and rumour does say that he stands high in the estimation of Ellen, and that Walter Northcot never passes him without shaking hands. There was a clause in Justice Bellwood's will respecting the Gamekeeper, but what it was we have never been able to ascertain; but true it is that he remained an inmate of Bellwood Hall until the worthy Justice died. Sometimes he drops into Gideon's cottage on a night, and reads the Bible to the family. A public-house he never enters; and Mrs. Giles says, that "since it has pleased the Lord to cast out the devil which was within him, he is now as gentle as a lamb, and seems only to take a delight in making everybody happy." Added to this, a wealthy uncle died, and

Banes is now heir to the whole of his property. It is said that he has purchased a farm of Sir Edward Lee, which, when we were down last, he was engaged in stocking. Ellen Giles had walked out with him that evening, to look at four beautiful cows which Farmer Kitchen had for sale.

Cousin William is now courting Mary Sanderson; and Ben has offered to stand a large leg of mutton towards the wedding dinner; Butcher Hyde, a sirloin of beef; and Farmer Kitchen, two couple of fine pullets, and bacon; the Host, as much ale as they can drink. And Cousin William thinks it worth while having her, if only for the sake of such a dinner.

Tom and Jack, the two robbers, escaped with a short imprisonment, and are now gardeners, one in the employ of Walter, and the other with Sir Edward Lee. The cottages they formerly lived in are pulled down, and new ones erected on the spot; which, although the thatch is not yet overgrown with that rich moss and lichen which composes so beautifully with a rural landscape, nevertheless have a snug English look. They are much better off than if they had been sent to Botany Bay; for as Jack one day said, when he had had a drop more than usual, "though we make but indifferent Gardeners, we should have made worse Botanists." Their wives do all the washing for Bellwood and Burton Halls; and those who lay some claim to being judges, declare, that they "get up their things beautifully." Mrs. Northcot presented Nancy with a new glass and frame for her sampler, and paid Mrs. Brown double the value of the things she was robbed of. Burton Woodhouse is now a really happy village.

As for the Baronet, he is again the noble-hearted English gentleman; and it is rumoured that he and Walter Northcot together, furnished the capital which enabled Gideon Giles to carry on his business on so large a scale. Sir Edward is now one of the best of husbands and the kindest of fathers; and in company with Lady Lee, he has several times visited the cottage of the Roper. He has also promised to stand father at the wedding, when Ellen Giles is married to Banes, and Ellen has accepted the offer.

The Baronet is now a grandfather; and our last account of him is from a friend, who, a few Sundays ago, attended service in the picturesque old church of Burton Woodhouse, and noticed the profound attention paid by Sir Edward and Banes to a sermon on old age, which was preached by Walter's uncle. So delighted was our friendly correspondent with the quaint style of the discourse, the peculiar and

antiquated turn of the sentences, and the original manner of treating the text, that he took down in short-hand the following portion, which we here present to such of our readers as delight in "old-fashioned stuff, choicely good," as Isaak Walton has it.

A PORTION OF PARSON NORTHCOT'S SERMON,

AS PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF BURTON WOODHOUSE, A. D. 1840.

Text:—The first seven verses of the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher.

"From that beautiful, fair, and fruitful tree, the Almond, which flowereth betimes and beareth a beautiful blossom, doth Solomon take a notable metaphor in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, wherein he useth so many darkly-translated terms, and so many intricate and metaphorical speeches, that, without some familiar exposition, carry no small difficulty and obscurity.

"In all which chapter, by fetching comparisons and similitudes from common and well-known things, he putteth man in memory of his duty, and that he ought to remember God, and take care of his soul's health while he is yet young and lusty, and not to defer the same till age and decrepitude come.

"And by a most elegant paraphrase or circumlocution he showeth, how man, being in his best flourishing time, doth, by little and little, decay, and, as Job witnesseth, vanishes away like a vapour. So that every moment he draweth nearer and nearer unto his end, he groweth daily weaker and weaker, and in short space loseth the use of his limbs, and is deprived of the functions of all his members.

"And in process of years and continuance of time (for Solomon prosecuteth and goeth through all the members of the body), the eyes wax dim, the ears grow thick of hearing, the tongue fumbleth in pronunciation, and faltereth in speech; the nose is not so perfect in smelling, the hands shake and tremble, the legs and feet shrink, the shoulders stoop, the back bendeth, and finally, each part of the body, by little and little, is brought to decay and dissolution.

"With these words, therefore, beginneth he his discourse:— '*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*' That is, before sickness, disease, and the discommodity of old age catch hold on thee. '*While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the*

rain.' That is, before dimness, daziness, dropping, and blearedness of thine eyes come upon thee. '*In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble.'* That is, when the hands, which be the keepers of the body, operating, feeding, and defending it from inconveniences, do shake. '*And the strong men shall bow themselves.'* That is, the legs and feet, which bear up the body. '*When the sound of the grinders is low.'* That is, when thy teeth shall be rotten, blunt, and fall out, so that thou canst not grind nor chew thy meat. '*And they that look out of the windows wax dark.'** That is, the eyelids, which are as the windows, and the eyes looking out at those windows. '*And when the doors in the street shall be shut.'* To wit, the lips and mouth. '*When the voice of the millers shall be laid down.'* That is, when the passage by which the meat should descend into the stomach shall scarcely be open. (Rather far-fetched, Parson Nothcot, but the next is better). '*And he shall rise up at the voice of the bird.'* That is, when thou shalt sleep so little, that the crowing of a cock or the chirping of a small bird shall awaken thee. '*And all the daughters of music shall be brought low.'* That is, when thine ears shall be dull and 'dunch,' and not able to hear or discern the harmony of tunes. '*Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way.'* That is, when they stoop down, as though they feared lest something should hit them, and (are giddy) be afraid to climb for fear of falling. '*And the almond tree shall BLOSSOM.'* That is, when thou shalt be grey-headed, for by the almond tree is meant the head, and by its blossoms, grey hairs. '*And the grashopper stick up.'* (Qr. though literal). That is, the shoulders; for as the legs of the grashopper stick up, and appear above the body, so do the shoulders of lean and aged persons.

" '*Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl* (caul) *be broken.'* That is, before the sinews, which be white like silver, and which stretch out in length at the time of death; and before the thin skin which encloseth the brain, and is yellow like gold do decay. '*Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain.'* That is, before the veins and arteries (by which be conveyed from the fountain, or well, being the heart, all the vital spirits into the body) be perished; and before the liver wax faint, and unable to do its office. '*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.'*

* What old edition of the Bible did Parson Northcot take his text from? We have neither this passage nor the two which follow, marked in italics, in our modern version of the Scriptures of the present day.

That is, the body, consisting of flesh and bones, shall die, and rot in the earth; but the soul shall incontently go either to joy or torment.

"By these speeches being partly allegorical and partly metaphorical, Solomon awaketh and stirreth up the drowsy minds of men, being careless of their salvation, to remember their Lord and Creator, and not to defer their repentance until they arrive at old age; but to do it even in their best prime, and flourishing youth. He vehemently and pithily, therefore, calleth upon them to begin this, their godly exercise, from their first and tender age; before old age draws on, and evil days, full of griefs, troubles, and afflictions, come upon them.

"For when a man is stricken in years, the delights of this life become burthensome and unpleasant unto him. Pleasure, dancing, laughing, pastime, feasting, merry-conceits, and dalliance, be gone; yea, all delicate dishes, curious banquets, daintie junkets, and costly viands, are loathed. Finally, all former jollities, disports and recreations of rustic youth, are utterly forsaken and abandoned. This occasion, therefore, taketh Solomon, to stir them up out of their natural sluggishness and ordinary forgetfulness, wishing all men not to 'forslow' and let slip, opportunity being offered; for that, in decrepit and stooping age, not only the body, but the mind also, is impaired, and reason, memory, understanding, with all the inward faculties, overclouded.

"For then do the eyes dazzle, become dim-sighted and bleared, so that they can scarcely discern the sun and moon. Then the hands—whose agility and ministry we necessarily use in exploiting our business—become trembling, shaking, unable and unfit for any handy labours. Then do stitches and coughs grow upon us; while the legs and feet—which, as bases and main-pillars, underprop and bear up the weight of the whole body—shrink, and double under us, so that we be not able to go without the aid of a staff. Then are the teeth—which grind, break, and, by the help of the jaws, champ, mince, and shred our meat—either blunted and dulled, or else loosed and fallen out.

"Then doth sight fail, and the eyes, which look out of their holes, as it were out of two windows, become purblind, and, through weakness of the muscles and lids, do see very little, and, as it were, through a cloud—scarcely able to discern who they meet in the street. Then is the throat scarcely able, without much ado, to swallow down any food, by reason of its dryness. Then is sleep very little and short,

by reason of the dryness in the brain, insomuch that a man or woman in that age are easily awakened, even with the chirping of a little bird. Then is the voice squeakish and whining, and utterly unfit to sing. Then is he ready to startle and fear at every wagging of a leaf, fearing, as it were, lest something should fall on him; insomuch that many times, walking alone in the streets, he looketh back, for fear of danger.

"Then doth the almond-tree flourish; that is, the head is then hoary and white, and may, a great way off, be perceived and espied, even as the almond-tree beareth white flowers and blossoms in the top, which may be seen a great way off. Then will the wheel be broken at the cistern; meaning thereby the head, which, in men drawing near unto death, inclineth, and falleth down upon the shoulders; for the head is round, turning and moving each way like a rolling wheel, now on the right side, now on the left; now upward, now downward. The head thereof, first of all commonly droopeth, shrinketh, and hangeth down; carrying with it, for company, all the members to apparent ruin; and overthroweth the state of the whole body—even as a chariot cannot but fall, when the axletree is broken," etc.*

* Alas! for the fame and originality of Parson Northcot! We have picked up an old book, which was printed in London by Edward Bollifant, nearly three hundred years ago, and found in it this very sermon, which, at that remote period of time, was translated from the Latin of Lemnius, by one Thomas Newton. The work is dedicated "to the Right Honourable, my Verie Good Lord, Robert, Earle of Essex," etc.; and is dated from "My poor House at Little Ilford, in Essex," etc. Alas! for the fame of Parson Northcot. The aforesaid Thomas Newton published another work in 1557, which is entitled "The Touchstone of Complexions," and is dedicated to "My singular good Lord, the Baron of Cobham."—T. M.

FINIS.

Manning and Mason, Printers, Ivy Lane, St. Paul's.

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