The Amateur Gentleman

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THE AMATEUR GENTLEMAN

BY

JEFFERY FARNOL

AUTHOR OF "THE BROAD HIGHWAY"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

HERMAN PFEIFER

TO MY FATHER WHO HAS EVER CHOSEN THE "HARDER WAY,"
WHICH IS A PATH THAT CAN BE TRODDEN ONLY BY THE FOOT OF A MAN

CONTENTS

CHAPTER

ILLUSTRATIONS

Barnabas frowned, tore the letter across in sudden fury, and looked up to find Cleone frowning also.

"Man Jack, 't is proud you should be to lie there."

"Oh, sir, I grieve to disappoint you," said she, and rose.

"Let me pass, I warn you!" For a minute they fronted each other, eye to eye.

"But this is murder--positive murder!" cried Mr. Dalton.

Sir Mortimer paused, and with a sudden gesture tore the rose from his coat and tossed it away.

"So you meant to buy me, sir, as you would a horse or dog?"

All at once, Sir Mortimer was on his feet and had caught up a heavy riding-whip.

Barnabas espied a face amid the hurrying throng

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH BABNABAS KNOCKS DOWN HIS FATHER, THOUGH AS DUTIFULLY AS MAY BE

John Barty, ex-champion of England and landlord of the "Coursing Hound," sat screwed round in his chair with his eyes yet turned to the door that had closed after the departing lawyer fully five minutes ago, and his eyes were wide and blank, and his mouth (grim and close-lipped as a rule) gaped, becoming aware of which, he closed it with a snap, and passed a great knotted fist across his brow.

"Barnabas," said he slowly, "I beant asleep an' dreaming be I, Barnabas?"

"No, father!"

"But--seven--'undred--thousand--pound. It were seven--'undred thousand pound, weren't it, Barnabas?"

"Yes, father!"

"Seven--'undred--thou--! No! I can't believe it, Barnabas my bye."

"Neither can I, father," said Barnabas, still staring down at the papers which littered the table before him.

"Nor I aren't a-going to try to believe it, Barnabas."

"And yet--here it is, all written down in black and white, and you heard what Mr. Crabtree said?"

"Ah,--I heered, but arter all Crabtree's only a lawyer--though a good un as lawyers go, always been honest an' square wi' me--leastways I 've never caught him trying to bamboozle John Barty yet--an' what the eye don't ob-serve the heart don't grieve, Barnabas my bye, an' there y'are. But seven 'undred thousand pound is coming it a bit too strong--if he'd ha' knocked off a few 'undred thousand I could ha' took it easier Barnabas, but, as it is--no, Barnabas!"

"It's a great fortune!" said Barnabas in the same repressed tone and with his eyes still intent.

"Fortun'," repeated the father, "fortun'--it's fetched me one in the ribs--low, Barnabas, low!--it's took my wind an' I'm a-hanging on to the ropes, lad. Why, Lord love me! I never thought as your uncle Tom 'ad it in him to keep hisself from starving, let alone make a fortun'! My scapegrace brother Tom--poor Tom as sailed away in a emigrant ship (which is a un-common bad kind of a ship to sail in--so I've heered, Barnabas) an' now, to think as he went an' made all that fortun'--away off in Jamaiky--out o' vegetables."

"And lucky speculation, father--!"

"Now, Barnabas," exclaimed his father, beginning to rasp his fingers to and fro across his great, square, shaven chin, "why argufy? Your uncle Tom was a planter--very well! Why is a man a planter--because he plants things, an' what should a man plant but vegetables? So Barnabas, vegetables I says, an' vegetables I abide by, now an' hereafter. Seven 'undred thousand pound all made in Jamaiky--out o' vegetables--an' there y' are!"

Here John Barty paused and sat with his chin 'twixt finger and thumb in expectation of his son's rejoinder, but finding him silent, he presently continued:

"Now what astonishes an' fetches me a leveller as fair doubles me up is--why should my brother Tom leave all this money to a young hop o' me thumb like you, Barnabas? you, as he never see but once and you then a infant (and large for your age) in your blessed mother's arms, Barnabas, a-kicking an' a-squaring away wi' your little pink fists as proper as ever I seen inside the Ring or out. Ah, Barnabas!" sighed his father shaking his head at him, "you was a promising infant, likewise a promising bye; me an' Natty Bell had great hopes of ye, Barnabas; if you'd been governed by me and Natty Bell you might ha' done us all proud in the Prize Ring. You was cut out for the 'Fancy.' Why, Lord! you might even ha' come to be Champion o' England in time--you 're the very spit o' what I was when I beat the Fighting Quaker at Dartford thirty years ago."

"But you see, father--"

"That was why me an' Natty Bell took you in hand--learned you all we knowed o' the game--an' there aren't a fighting man in all England as knows so much about the Noble Art as me an' Natty Bell."

"But father--"

"If you 'd only followed your nat'ral gifts, Barnabas, I say you might ha' been Champion of England to-day, wi' Markisses an' Lords an' Earls proud to shake your hand--if you'd only been ruled by Natty Bell an' me, I'm disappointed in ye, Barnabas--an' so's Natty Bell."

"I'm sorry, father--but as I told you--"

"Still Barnabas, what ain't to be, ain't--an' what is, is. Some is born wi' a nat'ral love o' the 'Fancy' an' gift for the game, like me an' Natty Bell--an' some wi' a love for reading out o' books an' a-cyphering into books--like you: though a reader an' a writer generally has a hard time on it an' dies poor--which, arter all, is only nat'ral--an' there y' are!"

Here John Barty paused to take up the tankard of ale at his elbow, and pursed up his lips to blow off the foam, but in that moment, observing his son about to speak, he immediately set down the ale untasted and continued:

"Not as I quarrels wi' your reading and writing, Barnabas, no, and because why? Because reading and writing is apt to be useful now an' then, and because it were a promise--as I made--to--your mother.

When--your mother were alive, Barnabas, she used to keep all my accounts for me. She likewise larned me to spell my own name wi' a capital G for John, an' a capital B for Barty, an' when she died, Barnabas (being a infant, you don't remember), but when she died, lad! I was that lost--that broke an' helpless, that all the fight were took out o' me, and it's a wonder I didn't throw up the sponge altogether. Ah! an' it's likely I should ha' done but for Natty Bell."

"Yes, father--"

"No man ever 'ad a better friend than Natty Bell--Ah! yes, though I did beat him out o' the Championship which come very nigh breaking his heart at the time, Barnabas; but--as I says to him that day as they carried him out of the ring--it was arter the ninety-seventh round, d' ye see, Barnabas--'what is to be, is, Natty Bell,' I says, 'an' what ain't, ain't. It were ordained,' I says, 'as I should be Champion o' England,' I says--'an' as you an' me should be friends--now an' hereafter,' I says--an' right good friends we have been, as you know, Barnabas."

"Indeed, yes, father," said Barnabas, with another vain attempt to stem his father's volubility.

"But your mother, Barnabas, your mother, God rest her sweet soul!--your mother weren't like me--no nor Natty Bell--she were away up over me an' the likes o' me--a wonderful scholard she were, an'--when she died, Barnabas--" here the ex-champion's voice grew uncertain and his steady gaze wavered--sought the sanded floor--the raftered ceiling--wandered down the wall and eventually fixed upon the bell-mouthed blunderbuss that hung above the mantel, "when she died," he continued, "she made me promise as you should be taught to read an' cypher--an' taught I've had you according--for a promise is a promise, Barnabas--an' there y' are."

"For which I can never be sufficiently grateful, both to her--and to you!" said Barnabas, who sat with his chin propped upon his hand, gazing through the open lattice to where the broad white road wound away betwixt blooming hedges, growing ever narrower till it vanished over the brow of a distant hill. "Not as I holds wi' eddication myself, Barnabas, as you know," pursued his father, "but that's why you was sent to school, that's why me an' Natty Bell sat by quiet an' watched ye at your books. Sometimes when I've seen you a-stooping your back over your reading, or cramping your fist round a pen, Barnabas, why--I've took it hard, Barnabas, hard, I'll not deny--But Natty Bell has minded me as it was her wish and so--why--there y' are."

It was seldom his father mentioned to Barnabas the mother whose face he had never seen, upon which rare occasions John Barty's deep voice was wont to take on a hoarser note, and his blue eyes, that were usually so steady, would go wandering off until they fixed themselves on some remote object. Thus he sat now, leaning back in his elbow chair, gazing in rapt attention at the bell-mouthed blunderbuss above the mantel, while his son, chin on fist, stared always and ever to where the road dipped, and vanished over the hill--leading on and on to London, and the great world beyond.

"She died, Barnabas--just twenty-one years ago--buried at Maidstone where you were born. Twenty-one years is a longish time, lad, but

memory's longer, an' deeper,--an' stronger than time, arter all, an' I know that her memory will go wi' me--all along the way--d' ye see lad: and so Barnabas," said John Barty lowering his gaze to his son's face, "so Barnabas, there y' are."

"Yes, father!" nodded Barnabas, still intent upon the road.

"And now I come to your uncle Tom--an' speaking of him--Barnabas my lad,--what are ye going to do wi' all this money?"

Barnabas turned from the window and met his father's eye.

"Do with it," he began, "why first of all--"

"Because," pursued his father, "we might buy the 'White Hart'--t' other side o' Sevenoaks,--to be sure you're over young to have any say in the matter--still arter all the money's yours, Barnabas--what d' ye say to the 'White Hart'?"

"A very good house!" nodded Barnabas, stealing a glance at the road again--"but--"

"To be sure there's the 'Running Horse,'" said his father, "just beyond Purley on the Brighton Road--a coaching-house, wi' plenty o' custom, what d' ye think o' the 'Running Horse'?"

"Any one you choose, father, but--"

"Then there's the 'Sun in the Sands' on Shooter's Hill--a fine inn an' not to be sneezed at, Barnabas--we might take that."

"Just as you wish, father, only--"

"Though I've often thought the 'Greyhound' at Croydon would be a comfortable house to own."

"Buy whichever you choose, father, it will be all one to me!"

"Good lad!" nodded John, "you can leave it all to Natty Bell an' me."

"Yes," said Barnabas, rising and fronting his father across the table, "you see I intend to go away, sir."

"Eh?" exclaimed his father, staring--"go away--where to?"

"To London!"

"London? and what should you want in London--a slip of a lad like you?"

"I'm turned twenty-two, father!"

"And what should a slip of a lad of twenty-two want in London? You leave London alone, Barnabas. London indeed! what should you want wi' London?"

"Learn to be a gentleman."

"A--what?" As he spoke, John Barty rose up out of his chair, his eyes wide, his mouth agape with utter astonishment. As he

encountered his son's look, however, his expression slowly changed from amazement to contempt, from contempt to growing ridicule, and from ridicule to black anger. John Barty was a very tall man, broad and massive, but, even so, he had to look up to Barnabas as they faced each other across the table. And as they stood thus eye to eye, the resemblance between them was marked. Each possessed the same indomitable jaw, the same square brow and compelling eyes, the same grim prominence of chin; but there all likeness ended. In Barnabas the high carriage of the head, the soft brilliancy of the full, well-opened gray eye, the curve of the sensitive nostrils, the sweet set of the firm, shapely mouth--all were the heritage of that mother who was to him but a vague memory. But now while John Barty frowned upon his son, Barnabas frowned back at his father, and the added grimness of his chin offset the sweetness of the mouth above.

"Barnabas," said his father at last, "did you say a--gentleman, Barnabas?"

"Yes."

"What--you?" Here John Barty's frown vanished suddenly and, expanding his great chest, he threw back his head and roared with laughter. Barnabas clenched his fists, and his mouth lost something of its sweetness, and his eyes glinted through their curving lashes, while his father laughed and laughed till the place rang again, which of itself stung Barnabas sharper than any blow could have done.

But now having had his laugh out, John Barty frowned again blacker than ever, and resting his two hands upon the table, leaned towards Barnabas with his great, square chin jutted forward, and his deep-set eyes narrowed to shining slits--the "fighting face" that had daunted many a man ere now.

"So you want to be a gentleman--hey?"

"Yes."

"You aren't crazed in your 'ead, are ye, Barnabas?"

"Not that I know of, father."

"This here fortun' then--it's been an' turned your brain, that's what it is."

Barnabas smiled and shook his head.

"Listen, father," said he, "it has always been the dream and ambition of my life to better my condition, to strive for a higher place in the world--to be a gentleman. This was why I refused to become a pugilist, as you and Natty Bell desired, this was why I worked and studied--ah! a great deal harder than you ever guessed--though up till to-day I hardly dared hope my dream would ever be realized--but now--"

"Now you want to go to London and be a gentleman--hey?"

"Yes."

"Which all comes along o' your reading o' fool book! Why, Lord! you

can no more become a gentleman than I can or the--blunderbuss yonder. And because why? Because a gentleman must be a gentleman born, and his father afore him, and _his_ father afore him. You, Barnabas, you was born the son of a Champion of England, an' that should be enough for most lads; but your head's chock full o' fool's notions an' crazy fancies, an' as your lawful father it's my bounden duty to get 'em out again, Barnabas my lad." So saying, John Barty proceeded to take off his coat and belcher neckerchief, and rolled his shirt sleeves over his mighty forearms, motioning Barnabas to do the like.

"A father's duty be a very solemn thing, Barnabas," he continued slowly, "an' your 'ead being (as I say) full o' wild idees, I'm going to try to punch 'em out again as a well-meaning father should, so help me back wi' the table out o' the road, an' off wi' your coat and neckercher."

Well knowing the utter futility of argument with his father at such a time, Barnabas obediently helped to set back the table, thus leaving the floor clear, which done, he, in turn, stripped off coat and neckcloth, and rolled up his sleeves, while his father watched him with sharply appraising eye.

"You peel well, Barnabas," he nodded. "You peel like a fighting man, you've a tidy arm an' a goodish spread o' shoulder, likewise your legs is clean an' straight, but your skin's womanish, Barnabas, womanish, an' your muscles soft wi' books. So, lad!--are ye ready? Then come on."

Thus, without more ado they faced each other foot to foot, bare-armed and alert of eye. For a moment they sparred watchfully, then John Barty feinted Barnabas into an opening, in that same moment his fist shot out and Barnabas measured his length on the floor.

"Ah--I knowed as much!" John sighed mournfully as he aided Barnabas to his feet, "and 't were only a love-tap, so to speak,--this is what comes o' your book reading."

"Try me again," said Barnabas.

"It'll be harder next time!" said his father.

"As hard as you like!" nodded Barnabas.

Once more came the light tread of quick-moving feet, once more John Barty feinted cunningly--once more his fist shot out, but this time it missed its mark, for, ducking the blow, Barnabas smacked home two lightning blows on his father's ribs and danced away again light and buoyant as a cork.

"Stand up an' fight, lad!" growled his father, "plant your feet square--never go hopping about on your toe-points like a French dancing-master."

"Why as to that, father, Natty Bell, as you know, holds that it is the quicker method," here Barnabas smote his father twice upon the ribs, "and indeed I think it is," said he, deftly eluding the ex-champion's return.

"Quicker, hey?" sneered his father, and with the words came his fist--to whizz harmlessly past Barnabas's ear--"we'll prove that."

"Haven't we had almost enough?" inquired Barnabas, dropping his fists.

"Enough? why we aren't begun yet, lad."

"Then how long are we to go on?"

"How long?" repeated John, frowning; "why--that depends on you, Barnabas."

"How on me, father?"

"Are ye still minded to go to London?"

"Of course."

"Then we'll go on till you think better of it--or till you knock me down, Barnabas my lad."

"Why then, father, the sooner I knock you down the better!"

"What?" exclaimed John Barty, staring, "d' ye mean to say--you think you can?--me?--you?"

"Yes," nodded Barnabas.

"My poor lad!" sighed his father, "your head's fair crazed, sure as sure, but if you think you can knock John Barty off his pins, do it, and there y' are."

"I will," said Barnabas, "though as gently as possible."

And now they fell to it in silence, a grim silence broken only by the quick tread and shuffle of feet and the muffled thud of blows. John Barty, resolute of jaw, indomitable and calm of eye, as in the days when champions had gone down before the might of his fist; Barnabas, taller, slighter, but full of the supreme confidence of youth. Moreover, he had not been the daily pupil of two such past masters in the art for nothing; and now he brought to bear all his father's craft and cunning, backed up by the lightning precision of Natty Bell. In all his many hard-fought battles John Barty had ever been accounted most dangerous when he smiled, and he was smiling now. Twice Barnabas staggered back to the wall, and there was an ugly smear upon his cheek, yet as they struck and parried, and feinted, Barnabas, this quick-eyed, swift-footed Barnabas, was smiling also. Thus, while they smiled upon and smote each other, the likeness between them was more apparent than ever, only the smile of Barnabas was the smile of youth, joyous, exuberant, unconquerable. Noting which Experienced Age laughed short and fierce, and strode in to strike Youth down--then came a rush of feet, the panting hiss of breath, the shock of vicious blows, and John Barty, the unbeaten ex-champion of all England, threw up his arms, staggered back the length of the room, and went down with a crash.

For a moment Barnabas stood wide-eyed, panting, then ran towards him with hands outstretched, but in that moment the door was flung open, and Natty Bell stood between them, one hand upon the laboring breast

of Barnabas, the other stretched down to the fallen ex-champion.

"Man Jack," he exclaimed, in his strangely melodious voice. "Oh, John!--John Barty, you as ever was the king o' the milling coves, here's my hand, shake it. Lord, John, what a master o' the Game we've made of our lad. He's stronger than you and quicker than ever I was. Man Jack, 'twas as sweet, as neat, as pretty a knockdown as ever we gave in our best days, John. Man Jack, 'tis proud you should be to lie there and know as you have a son as can stop even _your_ rush wi' his left an' down you wi' his right as neat and proper, John, as clean an' delicate as ever man saw. Man Jack, God bless him, and here's my hand, John."

So, sitting there upon the floor, John Barty solemnly shook the hand Natty Bell held out to him, which done, he turned and looked at his son as though he had never seen him before.

"Why, Barnabas!" said he; then, for all his weight, sprang nimbly to his feet and coming to the mantel took thence his pipe and began to fill it, staring at Barnabas the while.

"Father," said Barnabas, advancing with hand outstretched, though rather diffidently--"Father!"

John Barty pursed up his lips into a soundless whistle and went on filling his pipe.

"Father," said Barnabas again, "I did it--as gently--as I could." The pipe shivered to fragments on the hearth, and Barnabas felt his fingers caught in his father's mighty grip.

"Why, Barnabas, lad, I be all mazed like; there aren't many men as have knocked me off my pins, an' I aren't used to it, Barnabas, lad, but 't was a clean blow, as Natty Bell says, and why--I be proud of thee, Barnabas, an'--there y' are."

"Spoke like true fighting men!" said Natty Bell, standing with a hand on the shoulder of each, "and, John, we shall see this lad, this Barnabas of ours, Champion of England yet." John frowned and shook his head.

"No," said he, "Barnabas'll never be Champion, Natty Bell--there aren't a fighting man in the Ring to-day as could stand up to him, but he'll never be Champion, an' you can lay to that, Natty Bell. And if you ask me why," said he, turning to select another pipe from the sheaf in the mantel-shelf, "I should tell you because he prefers to go to London an' try to turn himself into a gentleman."

"London," exclaimed Natty Bell, "a gentleman--our Barnabas--what?"

"Bide an' listen, Natty Bell," said the ex-champion, beginning to fill his new pipe.

"I'm listening, John."

"Well then, you must know, then, his uncle, my scapegrace brother Tom--you'll mind Tom as sailed away in a emigrant ship--well, Natty Bell, Tom has took an' died an' left a fortun' to our lad here."

"A fortun', John!--how much?"

"Seven--'undred--thousand--pound," said John, with a ponderous nod after each word, "seven--'undred--thousand--pound, Natty Bell, and there y' are."

Natty Bell opened his mouth, shut it, thrust his hands down into his pockets and brought out a short clay pipe.

"Man Jack," said he, beginning to fill the pipe, yet with gaze abstracted, "did I hear you say aught about a--gentleman?"

"Natty Bell, you did; our lad's took the idee into his nob to be a gentleman, an' I were trying to knock it out again, but as it is. Natty Bell, I fear me," and John Barty shook his handsome head and sighed ponderously.

"Why then, John, let's sit down, all three of us, and talk this matter over."

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH IS MUCH UNPLEASING MATTER REGARDING SILK PURSES, SOWS' EARS, MEN, AND GENTLEMEN

A slender man was Natty Bell, yet bigger than he looked, and prodigiously long in the reach, with a pair of very quick, bright eyes, and a wide, good-humored mouth ever ready to curve into a smile. But he was solemn enough now, and there was trouble in his eyes as he looked from John to Barnabas, who sat between them, his chair drawn up to the hearth, gazing down into the empty fireplace.

"An' you tell me, John," said he, as soon as his pipe was well alight,--"you tell me that our Barnabas has took it into his head to set up as a gentleman, do you?"

"Ah!" nodded John. Whereupon Natty Bell crossed his legs and leaning back in his chair fell a-singing to himself in his sweet voice, as was his custom when at all inclined to deep thought:

"A true Briton from Bristol, a rum one to fib,
He's Champion of England, his name is Tom Cribb;"

"Ah! and you likewise tell me as our Barnabas has come into a fortun'."

"Seven--'undred--thousand--pound."

"Hum!" said Natty Bell,--"quite a tidy sum, John."

"Come list, all ye fighting gills
And coves of boxing note, sirs,
While I relate some bloody mills
In our time have been fought, sirs."

"Yes, a good deal can be done wi' such a sum as that, John."

"But it can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, Natty Bell,--nor yet a gentlemen out o' you or me--or Barnabas here."

"For instance," continued Natty Bell, "for instance, John:

"Since boxing is a manly game,
And Britain's recreation,
By boxing we will raise our fame
'Bove every other nation."

"As I say, John, a young and promising life can be wrecked, and utterly blasted by a much less sum than seven hundred thousand pound."

"Ah!" nodded John, "but a sow's ear aren't a silk purse, Natty Bell, no, nor never can be."

"True, John; but, arter all, a silk purse ain't much good if 't is empty--it's the gold inside of it as counts."

"But a silk purse is ever and always a silk purse--empty or no, Natty Bell."

"An' a man is always a man, John, which a gentleman often ain't."

"But surely," said Barnabas, speaking for the first time, "a gentleman is both."

"No--not nohow, my lad!" exclaimed John, beginning to rasp at his chin again. "A man is ever and allus a man--like me and you, an' Natty Bell, an' a gentleman's a gentleman like--Sir George Annersley--up at the great house yonder."

"But--" began Barnabas.

"Now, Barnabas"--remonstrated his father, rasping his chin harder than ever--"wherefore argufy--if you do go for to argufy--"

"We come back to the silk purses and the sows' ears," added Natty Bell.

"And I believe," said Barnabas, frowning down at the empty hearth, "I'm sure, that gentility rests not so much on birth as upon hereditary instinct."

"Hey?" said his father, glancing at him from the corners of his eyes--"go easy, Barnabas, my lad--give it time--on what did 'ee say?"

"On instinct, father."

"Instinct!" repeated John Barty, puffing out a vast cloud of smoke--"instinct does all right for 'osses, Barnabas, dogs likewise; but what's nat'ral to 'osses an' dogs aren't nowise nat'ral to us! No, you can't come instinct over human beings,--not nohowsoever, Barnabas, my lad. And, as I told you afore, a gentleman is nat'rally born a gentleman an' his feyther afore him an' his grand-feyther afore him, back an' back--"

"To Adam?" inquired Barnabas; "now, if so, the question is--was Adam a gentleman?"

"Lord, Barnabas!" exclaimed John Barty, with a reproachful look--"why drag in Adam? You leave poor old Adam alone, my lad. Adam indeed! What's Adam got to do wi' it?"

"Everything, we being all his descendants,--at least the Bible says so.--Lords and Commons, Peers and Peasants--all are children of Adam; so come now, father, was Adam a gentleman, Yes or No?"

John Barty frowned up at the ceiling, frowned down at the floor, and finally spoke:

"What do you say to that, Natty Bell?"

"Why, I should say, John--hum!"

"Pray haven't you heard of a jolly young coal-heaver,
Who down at Hungerford used for to ply,
His daddles he used with such skill and dexterity
Winning each mill, sir, and blacking each eye."

"Ha!--I should say, John, that Adam being in the habit o' going about--well, as you might put it--in a free and easy, airy manner, fig leaves an' suchlike, John,--I should say as he didn't have no call to be a gentleman, seeing as there weren't any tailors."

"Tailors!" exclaimed John, staring. "Lord! and what have tailors got to do wi' it, Natty Bell?"

"A great deal more than you 'd think, John; everything, John, seeing 't was tailors as invented gentlemen as a matter o' trade, John. So, if Barnabas wants to have a try at being one--he must first of all go dressed in the fashion."

"That is very true," said Barnabas, nodding.

"Though," pursued Natty Bell, "if you were the best dressed, the handsomest, the strongest, the bravest, the cleverest, the most honorable man in the world--that wouldn't make you a gentleman. I tell you, Barnabas, if you went among 'em and tried to be one of 'em,--they'd find you out some day an' turn their gentlemanly backs on you."

"Ah," nodded John, "and serve you right, lad,--because if you should try to turn yourself into a gentleman, why, Lord, Barnabas!--you'd only be a sort of a amitoor arter all, lad."

"Then," said Barnabas, rising up from his chair and crossing with resolute foot to the door, "then, just so soon as this law business is settled and the money mine, an Amateur Gentleman I'll be."

CHAPTER III

HOW BARNABAS SET OUT FOR LONDON TOWN

It was upon a certain glorious morning, some three weeks later, that Barnabas fared forth into the world; a morning full of the thousand scents of herb and flower and ripening fruits; a morning glad with the song of birds. And because it was still very early, the dew yet lay heavy, it twinkled in the grass, it sparkled in the hedges, and gemmed every leaf and twig with a flaming pendant. And amidst it all, fresh like the morning and young like the sun, came Barnabas, who, closing the door of the "Coursing Hound" behind him, leapt lightly down the stone steps and, turning his back upon the ancient inn, set off towards that hill, beyond which lay London and the Future. Yet--being gone but a very little way--he halted suddenly and came striding back again. And standing thus before the inn he let his eyes wander over its massive crossbeams, its leaning gables, its rows of gleaming lattices, and so up to the great sign swinging above the door--an ancient sign whereon a weather-beaten hound, dim-legged and faded of tail, pursued a misty blur that, by common report, was held to be a hare. But it was to a certain casement that his gaze oftenest reverted, behind whose open lattice he knew his father lay asleep, and his eyes, all at once, grew suffused with a glittering brightness that was not of the morning, and he took a step forward, half minded to clasp his father's hand once more ere he set out to meet those marvels and wonders that lay waiting for him over the hills--London-wards. Now, as he stood hesitating, he heard a voice that called his name softly, and, glancing round and up, espied Natty Bell, bare of neck and touzled of head, who leaned far out from the casement of his bedchamber above.

"Ah, Barnabas, lad!" said he with a nod--"So you're going to leave us, then?"

"Yes!" said Barnabas.

"And all dressed in your new clothes as fine as ever was!--stand back a bit and let me have a look at you."

"How are they, Natty Bell?" inquired Barnabas with a note of anxiety in his voice--"the Tenderden tailor assured me they were of the very latest cut and fashion--what do you think, Natty Bell?"

"Hum!" said the ex-pugilist, staring down at Barnabas, chin in hand. "Ha! they're very good clothes, Barnabas, yes indeed; just the very thing--for the country."

"The country!--I had these made for London, Natty Bell."

"For London, Barnabas--hum!"

"What do you mean by 'hum,' Natty Bell?"

"Why--look ye now--'t is a good sensible coat, I'll not deny, Barnabas; likewise the breeches is serviceable--but being only a coat and breeches, why--they ain't per-lite enough. For in the world of London, the per-lite world, Barnabas, clothes ain't garments to keep a man warm--they're works of art; in the country a man puts 'em on, and forgets all about 'em--in the per-lite world he has 'em put on for him, and remembers 'em. In the country a man wears his clothes, in the per-lite world his clothes wears him, ah! and they're often

the perlitest thing about him, too!"

"I suppose," sighed Barnabas, "a man's clothes are very important--in the fashionable world?"

"Important! They are the most importantest part o' the fashionable world, lad. Now there's Mr. Brummell--him as they call the 'Beau'--well, he ain't exactly a Lord Nelson nor yet a Champion of England, he ain't never done nothing, good, bad, or indifferent--but he does know how to wear his clothes--consequently he's a very famous gentleman indeed--in the per-lite world, Barnabas." Here there fell a silence while Barnabas stared up at the inn and Natty Bell stared down at him. "To be sure, the old 'Hound' ain't much of a place, lad--not the kind of inn as a gentleman of quality would go out of his way to seek and search for, p'r'aps--but there be worse places in London, Barnabas, I was born there and I know. There, there! dear lad, never hang your head--youth must have its dreams I've heard; so go your ways, Barnabas. You're a master wi' your fists, thanks to John an' me--and you might have been Champion of England if you hadn't set your heart on being only a gentleman. Well, well, lad! don't forget as there are two old cocks o' the Game down here in Kent as will think o' you and talk o' you, Barnabas, and what you might have been if you hadn't happened to--Ah well, let be. But wherever you go and whatever you come to be--you're our lad still, and so, Barnabas, take this, wear it in memory of old Natty Bell--steady--catch!" And, with the word, he tossed down his great silver watch.

"Why, Natty Bell!" exclaimed Barnabas, very hoarse of voice. "Dear old Natty--I can't take this!"

"Ah, but you can--it was presented to me twenty and one years ago, Barnabas, the time I beat the Ruffian on Bexley Heath."

"But I can't--I couldn't take it," said Barnabas again, looking down at the broad-faced, ponderous timepiece in his hand, which he knew had long been Natty Bell's most cherished possession.

"Ay, but you can, lad--you must--'t is all I have to offer, and it may serve to mind you of me, now and then, so take it! take it! And, Barnabas, when you're tired o' being a fine gentleman up there in London, why--come back to us here at the old 'Hound' and be content to be just--a man. Good-by, lad; good-by!" saying which, Natty Bell nodded, drew in his head and vanished, leaving Barnabas to stare up at the closed lattice, with the ponderous timepiece ticking in his hand.

So, in a while, Barnabas slipped it into his pocket and, turning his back upon the "Coursing Hound," began to climb that hill beyond which lay the London of his dreams. Therefore as he went he kept his eyes lifted up to the summit of the hill, and his step grew light, his eye brightened, for Adventure lay in wait for him; Life beckoned to him from the distance; there was magic in the air. Thus Barnabas strode on up the hill full of expectancy and the blind confidence in destiny which is the glory of youth.

Oh, Spirit of Youth, to whose fearless eyes all things are matters to wonder at; oh, brave, strong Spirit of Youth, to whom dangers are but trifles to smile at, and death itself but an adventure; to thee,

since failure is unknown, all things are possible, and thou mayest, peradventure, make the world thy football, juggle with the stars, and even become a Fine Gentleman despite thy country homespun--and yet--

But as for young Barnabas, striding blithely upon his way, he might verily have been the Spirit of Youth itself--head high, eyes a-dance, his heart light as his step, his gaze ever upon the distance ahead, for he was upon the road at last, and every step carried him nearer the fulfilment of his dream.

"At Tonbridge he would take the coach," he thought, or perhaps hire a chaise and ride to London like a gentleman. A gentleman! and here he was whistling away like any ploughboy. Happily the road was deserted at this early hour, but Barnabas shook his head at himself reproachfully, and whistled no more--for a time.

But now, having reached the summit of the hill, he paused and turned to look back. Below him lay the old inn, blinking in its many casements in the level rays of the newly risen sun; and now, all at once, as he gazed down at it from this eminence, it seemed, somehow, to have shrunk, to have grown more weather-beaten and worn--truly never had it looked so small and mean as it did at this moment. Indeed, he had been wont to regard the "Coursing Hound" as the very embodiment of what an English inn should be--but now! Barnabas sighed--which was a new thing for him. "Was the change really in the old inn, or in himself?" he wondered. Hereupon he sighed again, and turning, went on down the hill. But now, as he went, his step lagged and his head drooped. "Was the change in the inn, or could it be that money can so quickly alter one?" he wondered. And straightway the coins in his pocket chinked and jingled "yes, yes!" wherefore Barnabas sighed for the third time, and his head drooped lower yet.

Well then, since he was rich, he would buy his father a better inn--the best in all England. A better inn! and the "Coursing Hound" had been his home as long as he could remember. A better inn! Here Barnabas sighed for the fourth time, and his step was heavier than ever as he went on down the hill.

CHAPTER IV

HOW BARNABAS FELL IN WITH A PEDLER OF BOOKS, AND PURCHASED A "PRICELESS WOLLUM"

"Heads up, young master, never say die! and wi' the larks and the throstles a-singing away so inspiring too--Lord love me!"

Barnabas started guiltily, and turning with upflung head, perceived a very small man perched on an adjacent milestone, with a very large pack at his feet, a very large hunk of bread and cheese in his hand, and with a book open upon his knee.

"Listen to that theer lark," said the man, pointing upwards with the knife he held.

"Well?" said Barnabas, a trifle haughtily perhaps.

"There's music for ye; there's j'y. I never hear a lark but it takes me back to London--to Lime'us, to Giles's Rents, down by the River."

"Pray, why?" inquired Barnabas, still a trifle haughtily.

"Because it's so different; there ain't much j'y, no, nor yet music in Giles's Rents, down by the River."

"Rather an unpleasant place!" said Barnabas.

"Unpleasant, young sir. I should say so--the worst place in the world--but listen to that theer blessed lark; there's a woice for ye; there's music with a capital M.; an' I've read as they cooks and eats 'em."

"Who do?"

"Nobs do--swells--gentlemen--ah, an' ladies, too!"

"More shame to them, then."

"Why, so says I, young master, but, ye see, beef an' mutton, ducks an' chicken, an' sich, ain't good enough for your Nobs nowadays, oh no! They must dewour larks wi' gusto, and French hortolons wi' avidity, and wi' a occasional leg of a frog throw'd in for a relish--though, to be sure, a frog's leg ain't over meaty at the best o' times. Oh, it's all true, young sir; it's all wrote down here in this priceless wollum." Here he tapped the book upon his knee. "Ye see, with the Quality it is quality as counts--not quantity. It's flavor as is their constant want, or, as you might say, desire; flavor in their meat, in their drink, and above all, in their books; an' see you, I sell books, an' I know."

"What kind of flavor?" demanded Barnabas, coming a step nearer, though in a somewhat stately fashion.

"Why, a gamey flavor, to be sure, young sir; a 'igh flavor--ah! the 'igher the better. Specially in books. Now here," continued the Chapman, holding up the volume he had been reading. "'Ere's a book as ain't to be ekalled nowheers nor nohow--not in Latin nor Greek, nor Persian, no, nor yet 'Indoo. A book as is fuller o' information than a egg is o' meat. A book as was wrote by a person o' quality, therefore a elewating book; wi' nice bold type into it--ah! an' wood-cuts--picters an' engravin's, works o' art as is not to be beat nowheers nor nohow; not in China, Asia, nor Africa, a book therefore as is above an' beyond all price."

"What book is it?" inquired Barnabas, forgetting his haughtiness, and coming up beside the Chapman.

"It's a book," said the Chapman; "no, it's THE book as any young gentleman a-going out into the world ought to have wi' him, asleep or awake."

"But what is it all about?" inquired Barnabas a trifle impatiently.

"Why, everything," answered the Chapman; "an' I know because I 've

read it--a thing I rarely do."

"What's the title?"

"The title, young sir; well theer! read for yourself."

And with the words the Chapman held up the book open at the title-page, and Barnabas read:

HINTS ON ETIQUETTE,

OR

THE COMPLEAT ART OF A GENTLEMANLY DEPORTMENT
BY A PERSON OF QUALITY.

"You'll note that theer Person o' Quality, will ye?" said the Chapman.

"Strange!" said Barnabas.

"Not a bit of it!" retorted the Chapman. "Lord, love me! any one could be a gentleman by just reading and inwardly di-gesting o' this here priceless wollum; it's all down here in print, an' nice bold type, too--pat as you please. If it didn't 'appen as my horryscope demands as I should be a chapman, an' sell books an' sich along the roads, I might ha' been as fine a gentleman as any on 'em, just by follering the directions printed into this here blessed tome, an' in nice large type, too, an' woodcuts."

"This is certainly very remarkable!" said Barnabas.

"Ah!" nodded the Chapman, "it's the most remarkablest book as ever was!--Lookee--heer's picters for ye--lookee!" and he began turning over the pages, calling out the subject of the pictures as he did so.

"Gentleman going a walk in a jerry 'at. Gentleman eating soup! Gentleman kissing lady's 'and. Gentleman dancing with lady--note them theer legs, will ye--theer's elegance for ye! Gentleman riding a 'oss in one o' these 'ere noo buckled 'ats. Gentleman shaking 'ands with ditto--observe the cock o' that little finger, will ye! Gentleman eating ruffles--no, truffles, which is a vegetable, as all pigs is uncommon partial to. Gentleman proposing lady's 'ealth in a frilled shirt an' a pair o' skin-tights. Gentleman making a bow."

"And remarkably stiff in the legs about it, too!" nodded Barnabas.

"Stiff in the legs!" cried the Chapman reproachfully. "Lord love you, young sir! I've seen many a leg stiffer than that."

"And how much is the book?"

The Chapman cast a shrewd glance up at the tall youthful figure, at the earnest young face, at the deep and solemn eyes, and coughed behind his hand.

"Well, young sir," said he, gazing thoughtfully up at the blue sky--"since you are you, an' nobody else--an' ax me on so fair a morning, wi' the song o' birds filling the air--we'll charge you only--well--say ten shillings: say eight, say seven-an'-six--say

five--theer, make it five shillings, an' dirt-cheap at the price, too."

Barnabas hesitated, and the Chapman was about to come down a shilling or two more when Barnabas spoke.

"Then you're not thinking of learning to become a gentleman yourself?"

"O Lord love you--no!"

"Then I'll buy it," said Barnabas, and forthwith handed over the five shillings. Slipping the book into his pocket, he turned to go, yet paused again and addressed the Chapman over his shoulder.

"Shouldn't you like to become a gentleman?" he inquired.

Again the Chapman regarded him from the corners of his eyes, and again he coughed behind his hand.

"Well," he admitted, "I should an' I shouldn't. O' course it must be a fine thing to bow to a duchess, or 'and a earl's daughter into a chariot wi' four 'orses an' a couple o' footmen, or even to sit wi' a markus an' eat a French hortolon (which never 'aving seen, I don't know the taste on, but it sounds promising); oh yes, that part would suit me to a T; but then theer's t'other part to it, y' see."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, a gentleman has a great deal to live up to--theer's his dignity, y' see."

"Yes, I suppose so," Barnabas admitted.

"For instance, a gentleman couldn't very well be expected to sit in a ditch and enj'y a crust o' bread an' cheese; 'is dignity wouldn't allow of it, now would it?"

"Certainly not," said Barnabas.

"Nor yet drink 'ome-brewed out of a tin pot in a inn kitchen."

"Well, he might, if he were very thirsty," Barnabas ventured to think. But the Chapman scouted the idea.

"For," said he, "a gentleman's dignity lifts him above inn kitchens and raises him superior to tin pots. Now tin pots is a perticler weakness o' mine, leastways when theer's good ale inside of 'em. And then again an' lastly," said the Chapman, balancing a piece of cheese on the flat of his knife-blade, "lastly theer's his clothes, an', as I've read somewhere, 'clothes make the man'--werry good--chuck in dignity an' theer's your gentleman!"

"Hum," said Barnabas, profoundly thoughtful.

"An' a gentleman's clothes is a world o' trouble and anxiety to him, and takes up most o' his time, what wi' his walking breeches an' riding breeches an' breeches for dancing; what wi' his coats cut 'igh an' his coats cut low; what wi' his flowered satin weskits; what wi' his boots an' his gloves, an' his cravats an' his 'ats, why, Lord love ye, he passes his days getting out o' one suit of clothes

an' into another. And it's just this clothes part as I can't nowise put up wi', for I'm one as loves a easy life, I am."

"And is your life so easy?" inquired Barnabas, eyeing the very small Chapman's very large pack.

"Why, to be sure theer's easier," the Chapman admitted, scratching his ear and frowning; "but then," and here his brow cleared again, "I've only got this one single suit of clothes to bother my 'ead over, which, being wore out as you can see, don't bother me at all."

"Then are you satisfied to be as you are?"

"Well," answered the Chapman, clinking the five shillings in his pocket, "I aren't one to grumble at fate, nor yet growl at fortun'."

"Why, then," said Barnabas, "I wish you good morning."

"Good morning, young sir, and remember now, if you should ever feel like being a gentleman--it's quite easy--all as you've got to do is to read the instructions in that theer priceless wollum--mark 'em--learn 'em, and inwardly di-gest 'em, and you'll be a gentleman afore you know it."

Now hereupon Barnabas smiled, a very pleasant smile and radiant with youth, whereat the Chapman's pinched features softened for pure good fellowship, and for the moment he almost wished that he had charged less for the "priceless wollum," as, so smiling, Barnabas turned and strode away, London-wards.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH THE HISTORIAN SEES FIT TO INTRODUCE A LADY OF QUALITY; AND FURTHER NARRATES HOW BARNABAS TORE A WONDERFUL BOTTLE-GREEN COAT

Now in a while Barnabas came to where was a stile with a path beyond--a narrow path that led up over a hill until it lost itself in a wood that crowned the ascent; a wood where were shady dells full of a quivering green twilight; where broad glades led away beneath leafy arches, and where a stream ran gurgling in the shade of osiers and willows; a wood that Barnabas had known from boyhood. Therefore, setting his hand upon the stile, he vaulted lightly over, minded to go through the wood and join the high road further on. This he did by purest chance, and all unthinking followed the winding path.

Now had Barnabas gone on by the road how different this history might have been, and how vastly different his career! But, as it happened, moved by Chance, or Fate, or Destiny, or what you will, Barnabas vaulted over the stile and strode on up the winding path, whistling as he went, and, whistling, plunged into the green twilight of the wood, and, whistling still, swung suddenly into a broad and grassy glade splashed green and gold with sunlight, and then stopped all at once and stood there silent, dumb, the very breath in check between his lips.

She lay upon her side--full length upon the sward, and her tumbled hair made a glory in the grass, a golden mane. Beneath this silken curtain he saw dark brows that frowned a little--a vivid mouth, and lashes thick and dark like her eyebrows, that curled upon the pallor of her cheek.

Motionless stood Barnabas, with eyes that wandered from the small polished riding-boot, with its delicately spurred heel, to follow the gracious line that swelled voluptuously from knee to rounded hip, that sank in sweetly to a slender waist, yet rose again to the rounded beauty of her bosom.

So Barnabas stood and looked and looked, and looking sighed, and stole a step near and stopped again, for behold the leafy screen was parted suddenly, and Barnabas beheld two boots--large boots they were but of exquisite shape--boots that strode strongly and planted themselves masterfully; Hessian boots, elegant, glossy and betasselled. Glancing higher, he observed a coat of a bottle-green, high-collared, close-fitting and silver-buttoned; a coat that served but to make more apparent the broad chest, powerful shoulders, and lithe waist of its wearer. Indeed a truly marvellous coat (at least, so thought Barnabas), and in that moment, he, for the first time, became aware how clumsy and ill-contrived were his own garments; he understood now what Natty Bell had meant when he had said they were not polite enough; and as for his boots--blunt of toe, thick-soled and ponderous--he positively blushed for them. Here, it occurred to him that the wearer of the coat possessed a face, and he looked at it accordingly. It was a handsome face he saw, dark of eye, square-chinned and full-lipped. Just now the eyes were lowered, for their possessor stood apparently lost in leisurely contemplation of her who lay outstretched between them; and as his gaze wandered to and fro over her defenceless beauty, a glow dawned in the eyes, and the full lips parted in a slow smile, whereat Barnabas frowned darkly, and his cheeks grew hot because of her too betraying habit.

"Sir!" said he between snapping teeth.

Then, very slowly and unwillingly, the gentleman raised his eyes and stared across at him.

"And pray," said he carelessly, "pray who might you be?"

At his tone Barnabas grew more angry and therefore more polite.

"Sir, that--permit me to say--does not concern you."

"Not in the least," the other retorted, "and I bid you good day; you can go, my man, I am acquainted with this lady; she is quite safe in my care."

"That, sir, I humbly beg leave to doubt," said Barnabas, his politeness growing.

"Why--you impudent scoundrel!"

Barnabas smiled.

"Come, take yourself off!" said the gentleman, frowning, "I'll take

care of this lady."

"Pardon me! but I think not."

The gentleman stared at Barnabas through suddenly narrow lids, and laughed softly, and Barnabas thought his laugh worse than his frown.

"Ha! d' you mean to say you--won't go?"

"With all the humility in the world, I do, sir."

"Why, you cursed, interfering yokel! must I thrash you?"

Now "yokel" stung, for Barnabas remembered his blunt-toed boots, therefore he smiled with lips suddenly grim, and his politeness grew almost aggressive.

"Thrash me, sir!" he repeated, "indeed I almost venture to fear that you must." But the gentleman's gaze had wandered to the fallen girl once more, and the glow was back in his roving eyes.

"Pah!" said he, still intent, "if it is her purse you are after--here, take mine and leave us in peace." As he spoke, he flung his purse towards Barnabas, and took a long step nearer the girl. But in that same instant Barnabas strode forward also and, being nearer, reached her first, and, stepping over her, it thus befell that they came face to face within a foot of one another. For a moment they stood thus, staring into each other's eyes, then without a word swift and sudden they closed and grappled.

The gentleman was very quick, and more than ordinarily strong, so also was Barnabas, but the gentleman's handsome face was contorted with black rage, whereas Barnabas was smiling, and therein seemed the only difference between them as they strove together breast to breast, now in sunlight, now in shadow, but always grimly silent.

So, within the glory of the morning, they reeled and staggered to and fro, back and forth, trampling down the young grass, straining, panting, swaying--the one frowning and determined, the other smiling and grim.

Suddenly the bottle-green coat ripped and tore as its wearer broke free; there was the thud of a blow, and Barnabas staggered back with blood upon his face--staggered, I say, and in that moment, as his antagonist rushed, laughed fierce and short, and stepped lightly aside and smote him clean and true under the chin, a little to one side.

The gentleman's fists flew wide, he twisted upon his heels, pitched over upon his face, and lay still.

Smiling still, Barnabas looked down upon him, then grew grave.

"Indeed," said he, "indeed it was a great pity to spoil such a wonderful coat."

So he turned away, and coming to where she, who was the unwitting cause of all this, yet lay, stopped all at once, for it seemed to him that her posture was altered; her habit had become more decorous,

and yet the lashes, so dark in contrast to her hair, those shadowy lashes yet curled upon her cheek. Therefore, very presently, Barnabas stooped, and raising her in his arms bore her away through the wood towards the dim recesses where, hidden in the green shadows, his friend the brook went singing upon its way.

And in a while the gentleman stirred and sat up, and, beholding his torn coat, swore viciously, and, chancing upon his purse, pocketed it, and so went upon his way, and by contrast with the glory of the morning his frown seemed the blacker.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE BEWITCHMENT OF BLACK EYELASHES; AND OF A FATEFUL LACE HANDKERCHIEF

Let it be understood that Barnabas was not looking at her as she lay all warm and yielding in his embrace, on the contrary, he walked with his gaze fixed pertinaciously upon the leafy path he followed, nevertheless he was possessed, more than once, of a sudden feeling that her eyes had opened and were watching him, therefore, after a while be it noted, needs must he steal a downward glance at her beauty, only to behold the shadowy lashes curling upon her cheeks, as was but natural, of course. And now he began to discover that these were, indeed, no ordinary lashes (though to be sure his experience in such had been passing small), yet the longer he gazed upon them the more certain he became that these were, altogether and in all respects, the most demurely tantalizing lashes in the world. Then, again, there was her mouth--warmly red, full-lipped and sensitive like the delicate nostrils above; a mouth all sweet curves; a mouth, he thought, that might grow firm and proud, or wonderfully tender as the case might be, a mouth of scarlet bewitchment; a mouth that for some happy mortal might be--here our Barnabas came near blundering into a tree, and thenceforth he kept his gaze upon the path again. So, strong armed and sure of foot, he bore her through the magic twilight of the wood until he reached the brook. And coming to where the bending willows made a leafy bower he laid her there, then, turning, went down to the brook and drawing off his neckerchief began to moisten it in the clear, cool water.

And lo! in the same minute, the curling lashes were lifted suddenly, and beneath their shadow two eyes looked out--deep and soft and darkly blue, the eyes of a maid--now frank and ingenuous, now shyly troubled, but brimful of witchery ever and always. And pray what could there be in all the fair world more proper for a maid's eyes to rest upon than young Alcides, bare of throat, and with the sun in his curls, as he knelt to moisten the neckerchief in the brook?

Therefore, as she lay, she gazed upon him in her turn, even as he had first looked upon her, pleased to find his face so young and handsome, to note the breadth of his shoulders, the graceful carriage of his limbs, his air of virile strength and latent power, yet doubting too, because of her sex, because of the loneliness, and because he was a man; thus she lay blushing a little, sighing a little, fearing a little, waiting for him to turn. True, he had been

almost reverent so far, but then the place was so very lonely. And yet--

Barnabas turned and came striding up the bank. And how was he to know anything of all this, as he stood above her with his dripping neckerchief in his hand, looking down at her lying so very still, and pitying her mightily because her lashes showed so dark against the pallor of her cheek? How was he to know how her heart leapt in her white bosom as he sank upon his knees beside her? Therefore he leaned above her closer and raised the dripping neckerchief. But in that moment she (not minded to be wet) sighed, her white lids fluttered, and, sitting up, she stared at him for all the world as though she had never beheld him until that very moment.

"What are you going to do?" she demanded, drawing away from the streaming neckerchief. "Who are you? Why am I here?--what has happened?"

Barnabas hesitated, first because he was overwhelmed by this sudden torrent of questions, and secondly because he rarely spoke without thinking; therefore, finding him silent, she questioned him again--

"Where am I?"

"In Annersley Wood, madam."

"Ah, yes, I remember, my horse ran away."

"So I brought you here to the brook."

"Why?"

"You were hurt; I found you bleeding and senseless."

"Bleeding!" And out came a dainty lace handkerchief on the instant.

"There," said Barnabas, "above your eyebrow," and he indicated a very small trickle of blood upon the snow of her temple.

"And you--found me, sir?"

"Beneath the riven oak in the Broad Glade--over yonder."

"That is a great way from here, sir!"

"You are not--heavy!" Barnabas explained, a little clumsily perhaps, for she fell silent at this, and stooped her head the better to dab tenderly at the cut above her eyebrow; also the color deepened in her cheeks.

"Madam," said Barnabas, "that is the wrong eyebrow."

"Then why don't you tell me where I'm hurt?" she sighed. For answer, after a moment's hesitation, Barnabas reached out and taking her hand, handkerchief and all, laid it very gently upon the cut, though to be sure it was a very poor thing, as cuts go, after all.

"There," said he again, "though indeed it is very trifling."

"Indeed, sir, it pains atrociously!" she retorted, and to bear out her words showed him her handkerchief, upon whose snow was a tiny vivid stain.

"Then perhaps," ventured Barnabas, "perhaps I'd better bathe it with this!" and he held up his dripping handkerchief.

"Nay, sir, I thank you," she answered, "keep it for your own wounds--there is a cut upon your cheek."

"A cut!" repeated Barnabas--bethinking him of the gentleman's signet ring.

"Yes, a cut, sir," she repeated, and stole a glance at him under her long lashes; "pray did _your_ horse run away also?"

Barnabas was silent again, this time because he knew not how to answer--therefore he began rubbing at his injured cheek while she watched him--and after a while spoke.

"Sir," said she, "that is the wrong cheek."

"Then, indeed, this must be very trifling also," said Barnabas, smiling.

"Does it pain you, sir?"

"Thank you--no."

"Yet it bleeds! You say it was not your horse, sir?" she inquired, wonderfully innocent of eye.

"No, it was not my horse."

"Why, then--pray, how did it happen?"

"Happen, madam?--why, I fancy I must have--scratched myself," returned Barnabas, beginning to wring out his neckerchief.

"Scratched yourself. Ah! of course!" said she, and was silent while Barnabas continued to wring the water from his neckerchief.

"Pray," she inquired suddenly, "do you often scratch yourself--until you bleed?--'t is surely a most distressing habit." Now glancing up suddenly, Barnabas saw her eyes were wonderfully bright for all her solemn mouth, and suspicion grew upon him.--"Did she know? Had she seen?" he wondered.

"Nevertheless, sir--my thanks are due to you--"

"For what?" he inquired quickly.

"Why--for--for--"

"For bringing you here?" he suggested, beginning to wring out his neckerchief again.

"Yes; believe me I am more than grateful for--for--"

"For what, madam?" he inquired again, looking at her now.

"For--your--kindness, sir."

"Pray, how have I been kind?--you refused my neckerchief."

Surely he was rather an unpleasant person after all, she thought, with his persistently direct eyes, and his absurdly blunt mode of questioning--and she detested answering questions.

"Sir," said she, with her dimpled chin a little higher than usual, "it is a great pity you troubled yourself about me, or spoilt your neckerchief with water."

"I thought you were hurt, you see--"

"Oh, sir, I grieve to disappoint you," said she, and rose, and indeed she gained her feet with admirable grace and dignity notwithstanding her recent fall, and the hampering folds of her habit; and now Barnabas saw that she was taller than he had thought.

"Disappoint me!" repeated Barnabas, rising also; "the words are unjust."

For a moment she stood, her head thrown back, her eyes averted disdainfully, and it was now that Barnabas first noticed the dimple in her chin, and he was yet observing it very exactly when he became aware that her haughtiness was gone again and that her eyes were looking up at him, half laughing, half shy, and of course wholly bewitching.

"Yes, I know it was," she admitted, "but oh! won't you please believe that a woman can't fall off her horse without being hurt, though it won't bleed much." Now as she spoke a distant clock began to strike and she to count the strokes, soft and mellow with distance.

"Nine!" she exclaimed with an air of tragedy--"then I shall be late for breakfast, and I'm ravenous--and gracious heavens!"

"What now, madam?"

"My hair! It's all come down--look at it!"

"I've been doing so ever since I--met you," Barnabas confessed.

"Oh, have you! Then why didn't you tell me of it--and I've lost nearly all my hairpins--and--oh dear! what will they think?"

"That it is the most beautiful hair in all the world, of course," said Barnabas. She was already busy twisting it into a shining rope, but here she paused to look up at him from under this bright nimbus, and with two hair-pins in her mouth.

"Oh!" said she again very thoughtfully, and then "Do you think so?" she inquired, speaking over and round the hairpins as it were.

"Yes," said Barnabas, steady-eyed; and immediately down came the curling lashes again, while with dexterous white fingers she began to transform the rope into a coronet.

"I'm afraid it won't hold up," she said, giving her head a tentative shake, "though, fortunately, I haven't far to go."

"How far?" asked Barnabas.

"To Annersley House, sir."

"Yes," said Barnabas, "that is very near--the glade yonder leads into the park."

"Do you know Annersley, then, sir?"

Barnabas hesitated and, having gone over the question in his mind, shook his head.

"I know of it," he answered.

"Do you know Sir George Annersley?"

Again Barnabas hesitated. As a matter of fact he knew as much of Sir George as he knew of the "great house," as it was called thereabouts, that is to say he had seen him once or twice--in the distance. But it would never do to admit as much to her, who now looked up at him with eyes of witchery as she waited for him to speak. Therefore Barnabas shook his head, and answered airily enough:

"We are not exactly acquainted, madam."

Yesterday he would have scorned the subterfuge; but to-day there was money in his purse; London awaited him with expectant arms, the very air was fraught with a magic whereby the impossible might become concrete fact, wherein dreams might become realities; was not she herself, as she stood before him lithe and vigorous in all the perfection of her warm young womanhood--was she not the very embodiment of those dreams that had haunted him sleeping and waking? Verily. Therefore with this magic in the air might he not meet Sir George Annersley at the next cross-roads or by-lane, and strike up an enduring friendship on the spot--truly, for anything was possible to-day. Meanwhile my lady had gathered up the folds of her riding-habit, and yet in the act of turning into the leafy path, spoke:

"Are you going far, sir?"

"To London."

"Have you many friends there?"

"None,--as yet, madam."

After this they walked on in silence, she with her eyes on the lookout for obstacles, he lost to all but the beauty of the young body before him--the proud carriage of the head, the sway of the hips, the firm poise of the small and slender foot--all this he saw and admired, yet (be it remarked) his face bore nothing of the look that had distorted the features of the gentleman in the bottle-green coat--though to be sure our Barnabas was but an amateur at best--even as Natty Bell had said. So at last she reached the

fateful glade beyond which, though small with distance, was a noble house set upon a gentle hill that rose above the swaying green of trees. Here my lady paused; she looked up the glade and down the glade, and finally at him. And her eyes were the eyes of a maid, shy, mischievous, demure, challenging.

"Sir," said she, shyly, demurely--but with eyes still challenging--"sir, I have to thank you. I do thank you--more than these poor lips can tell. If there is anything I could--do--to--to prove my gratitude, you--have but to--name it."

"Do," stammered Barnabas. "Do--indeed--I--no."

The challenging eyes were hidden now, but the lips curved wonderfully tempting and full of allurement. Barnabas clenched his fists hard.

"I see, sir, your cheek has stopped bleeding, 't is almost well. I think--there are others--whose hurts will not heal--quite so soon--and, between you and me, sir, I'm glad--glad! Good-by! and may you find as many friends in London as you deserve." So saying, she turned and went on down the glade.

And in a little Barnabas sighed, and turning also, strode on London-wards.

Now when she had gone but a very short way, my lady must needs glance back over her shoulder, then, screened to be sure by a convenient bramble-bush, she stood to watch him as he swung along, strong, graceful, but with never a look behind.

"Who was he?" she wondered. "What was he? From his clothes he might be anything between a gamekeeper and a farmer."

Alas! poor Barnabas! To be sure his voice was low and modulated, and his words well chosen--who was he, what was he? And he was going to London where he had no friends. And he had never told his name, nor, what was a great deal worse, asked for hers! Here my lady frowned, for such indifference was wholly new in her experience. But on went long-legged Barnabas, all unconscious, striding through sunlight and shadow, with step blithe and free--and still (Oh! Barnabas) with never a look behind. Therefore, my lady's frown grew more portentous, and she stamped her foot at his unconscious back; then all at once the frown vanished in a sudden smile, and she instinctively shrank closer into cover, for Barnabas had stopped.

"Oh, indeed, sir!" she mocked, secure behind her leafy screen, nodding her head at his unconscious back; "so you've actually thought better of it, have you?"

Here Barnabas turned.

"Really, sir, you will even trouble to come all the way back, will you, just to learn her name--or, perhaps to--indeed, what condescension. But, dear sir, you're too late; oh, yes, indeed you are! 'for he who will not when he may, when he will he shall have nay.' I grieve to say you are too late--quite too late! Good morning, Master Shill-I-shall-I." And with the word she turned, then hastily drew a certain lace handkerchief from her bosom, and set it very

cleverly among the thorns of a bramble, and so sped away among the leaves.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH MAY BE FOUND DIVERS RULES AND MAXIMS FOR THE ART OF BOWING

"Now, by the Lord!" said Barnabas, stopping all at once, "forgetful fool that I am! I never bowed to her!" Therefore, being minded to repair so grave an omission, he turned sharp about, and came striding back again, and thus it befell that he presently espied the lace handkerchief fluttering from the bramble, and having extricated the delicate lace from the naturally reluctant thorns with a vast degree of care and trouble, he began to look about for the late owner. But search how he might, his efforts proved unavailing--Annersley Wood was empty save for himself. Having satisfied himself of the fact, Barnabas sighed again, thrust the handkerchief into his pocket, and once more set off upon his way.

But now, as he went, he must needs remember his awkward stiffness when she had thanked him; he grew hot all over at the mere recollection, and, moreover, he had forgotten even to bow! But there again, was he quite sure that he could bow as a gentleman should? There were doubtless certain rules and maxims for the bow as there were for mathematics--various motions to be observed in the making of it, of which Barnabas confessed to himself his utter ignorance. What then was a bow? Hereupon, bethinking him of the book in his pocket, he drew it out, and turning to a certain page, began to study the "stiff-legged-gentleman" with a new and enthralled interest. Now over against this gentleman, that is to say, on the opposite page, he read these words:--

"THE ART OF BOWING."

> "To know how, and when, and to whom to bow,
> is in itself an art. The bow is, indeed, an
> all-important accomplishment,--it is the
> 'Open Sesame' of the 'Polite World.' To bow
> gracefully, therefore, may be regarded as
> the most important part of a gentlemanly
> deportment."

"Hum!" said Barnabas, beginning to frown at this; and yet, according to the title-page, these were the words of a "Person of Quality."

> "To bow gracefully,"--the Person of Quality
> chattered on,--"the feet should be primarily
> disposed as in the first position of dancing."

Barnabas sighed, frowning still.

> "The left hand should be lifted airily and laid
> upon the bosom, the fingers kept elegantly spread.
> The head is now stooped forward, the body following
> easily from the hips, the right hand, at the same

moment, being waved gracefully in the air. It is, moreover, very necessary that the expression of the features should assume as engaging an air as possible. The depth of the bow is to be regulated to the rank of the person saluted."

And so forth and so on for two pages more.

Barnabas sighed and shook his head hopelessly.

"Ah!" said he, "under these circumstances it is perhaps just as well that I forgot to try. It would seem I should have bungled it quite shamefully. Who would have thought a thing so simple could become a thing so very complicated!" Saying which, he shut the book, and thrust it back into his pocket, and thus became aware of a certain very small handful of dainty lace and cambric, and took it out, and, looking at it, beheld again the diminutive stain, while there stole to his nostrils a perfume, faint and very sweet.

"I wonder," said he to himself. "I wonder who she was--I might have asked her name but, fool that I am, I even forgot that!"

Here Barnabas sighed, and, sighing, hid the handkerchief in his pocket.

"And yet," he pursued, "had she told me her name, I should have been compelled to announce mine, and--Barnabas Barty--hum! somehow there is no suggestion about it of broad acres, or knightly ancestors; no, Barty will never do." Here Barnabas became very thoughtful. "Mortimer sounds better," said he, after a while, "or Mandeville. Then there's Neville, and Desborough, and Ravenswood--all very good names, and yet none of them seems quite suitable. Still I must have a name that is beyond all question!" And Barnabas walked on more thoughtful than ever. All at once he stopped, and clapped hand to thigh.

"My mother's name, of course--Beverley; yes, it is an excellent name, and, since it was hers, I have more right to it than to any other. So Beverley it shall be--Barnabas Beverley--good!" Here Barnabas stopped and very gravely lifted his hat to his shadow.

"Mr. Beverley," said he, "I salute you, your very humble obedient servant, Mr. Beverley, sir, God keep you!" Hereupon he put on his hat again, and fell into his swinging stride.

"So," said he, "that point being settled it remains to master the intricacies of the bow." Saying which, he once more had recourse to the "priceless wollum," and walked on through the glory of the morning, with his eyes upon the valuable instructions of the "Person of Quality."

Now, as he went, chancing to look up suddenly, he beheld a gate-post. A very ancient gate-post it was--a decrepit gate-post, worn and heavy with years, for it leaned far out from the perpendicular. And with his gaze upon this, Barnabas halted suddenly, clapped the book to his bosom, and raising his hat with an elegant flourish, bowed to that gnarled and withered piece of timber as though it had been an Archduke at the very least, or the loveliest lady in the land.

"Ha! by Thor and Odin, what's all this?" cried a voice behind him. "I say what the devil's all this?"

Turning sharp about, Barnabas beheld a shortish, broad-shouldered individual in a befrogged surtout and cords, something the worse for wear, who stood with his booted legs wide apart and stared at him from a handsome bronzed face, with a pair of round blue eyes; he held a broad-brimmed hat in his hand--the other, Barnabas noticed, was gone from the elbow.

"Egad!" said he, staring at Barnabas with his blue eyes. "What's in the wind? I say, what the devil, sir--eh, sir?"

Forthwith Barnabas beamed upon him, and swept him another bow almost as low as that he had bestowed upon the gate-post.

"Sir," said he, hat gracefully flourished in the air, "your very humble obedient servant to command."

"A humble obedient fiddlestick, sir!" retorted the new comer. "Pooh, sir!--I say dammit!--are ye mad, sir, to go bowing and scraping to a gate-post, as though it were an Admiral of the Fleet or Nelson himself--are ye mad or only drunk, sir? I say, what d' ye mean?"

Here Barnabas put on his hat and opened the book.

"Plainly, sir," he answered, "being overcome with a sudden desire to bow to something or other, I bowed to that gate-post in want of a worthier object; but now, seeing you arrive so very opportunely, I' 11 take the liberty of trying another. Oblige me by observing if my expression is sufficiently engaging," and with the words Barnabas bowed as elaborately as before.

"Sink me!" exclaimed the one-armed individual, rounder of eye than ever, "the fellow's mad--stark, staring mad."

"No, indeed, sir," smiled Barnabas, reassuringly, "but the book here--which I am given to understand is wholly infallible--says that to bow is the most important item of a gentlemanly equipment, and in the World of Fashion--"

"In the World of Fashion, sir, there are no gentlemen left," his hearer broke in.

"How, sir--?"

"I say no, sir, no one. I say, damme, sir--"

"But, sir--"

"I say there are no gentlemen in the fashionable world--they are all blackguardly Bucks, cursed Corinthians, and mincing Macaronies nowadays, sir. Fashionable world--bah, sir!"

"But, sir, is not the Prince himself--"

"The Prince, sir!" Here the one-armed gentleman clapped on his hat and snorted, "The Prince is a--prince, sir; he's also an authority

on sauce and shoe-buckles. Let us talk of something more interesting--yourself, for instance."

Barnabas bowed.

"Sir," said he, "my name is Barnabas--Barnabas Beverley."

"Hum!" said the other, thoughtfully, "I remember a Beverley--a lieutenant under Hardy in the 'Agamemnon'--though, to be sure, he spelt his name with an 'l-e-y.'"

"So do I, sir," said Barnabas.

"Hum!"

"Secondly, I am on my way to London."

"London! Egad! here's another of 'em! London, of course--well?"

"Where I hope to cut some figure in the--er--World of Fashion."

"Fashion--Gog and Magog!--why not try drowning. 'T would be simpler and better for you in the long run. London! Fashion! in that hat, that coat, those--"

"Sir," said Barnabas, flushing, "I have already--"

"Fashion, eh? Why, then, you must cramp that chest into an abortion, all collar, tail, and buttons, and much too tight to breathe in; you must struggle into breeches tight enough to burst, and cram your feet into bepolished torments--"

"But, sir," Barnabas ventured again, "surely the Prince himself is accountable for the prevailing fashion, and as you must know, he is said to be the First Gentleman in Europe and--"

"Fiddle-de-dee and the devil, sir!--who says he is? A set of crawling sycophants, sir--a gang of young reprobates and bullies. First Gentleman in--I say pish, sir! I say bah! Don't I tell you that gentlemen went out o' fashion when Bucks came in? I say there isn't a gentleman left in England except perhaps one or two. This is the age of your swaggering, prize-fighting Corinthians. London swarms with 'em, Brighton's rank with 'em, yet they pervade even these solitudes, damme! I saw one of 'em only half an hour ago, limping out of a wood yonder. Ah! a polished, smiling rascal--a dangerous rogue! One of your sleepy libertines--one of your lucky gamblers--one of your conscienceless young reprobates equally ready to win your money, ruin your sister, or shoot you dead as the case may be, and all in the approved way of gallantry, sir; and, being all this, and consequently high in royal favor, he is become a very lion in the World of Fashion. Would you succeed, young sir, you must model yourself upon him as nearly as may be."

"And he was limping, you say?" inquired Barnabas, thoughtfully.

"And serve him right, sir--egad! I say damme! he should limp in irons to Botany Bay and stay there if I had my way."

"Did you happen to notice the color of his coat?" inquired Barnabas

again.

"Ay, 't was green, sir; but what of it--have you seen him?"

"I think I have, sir," said Barnabas, "if 't was a green coat he wore. Pray, sir, what might his name be?"

"His name, sir, is Carnaby--Sir Mortimer Carnaby."

"Sir Mortimer Carnaby!" said Barnabas, nodding his head.

"And, sir," pursued his informant, regarding Barnabas from beneath his frowning brows, "since it is your ambition to cut a figure in the World of Fashion, your best course is to cultivate him, frequent his society as much as possible, act upon his counsel, and in six months, or less, I don't doubt you'll be as polished a young blackguard as any of 'em. Good morning, sir."

Here the one-armed gentleman nodded and turned to enter the field.

"Sir," said Barnabas, "one moment! Since you have been so obliging as to describe a Buck, will you tell me who and what in your estimation is a gentleman?"

"A gentleman? Egad, sir! must I tell you that? No, I say I won't--the Bo'sun shall." Hereupon the speaker faced suddenly about and raised his voice: "Aft there!" he bellowed. "Pass the word for the Bo'sun--I say where's Bo'sun Jerry?"

Immediately upon these words there came another roar surprisingly hoarse, deep, and near at hand.

"Ay, ay, sir! here I be, Cap'n," the voice bellowed back. "Here I be, sir, my helm hard a-starboard, studden sails set, and all a-drawing alow and aloft, but making bad weather on it on account o' these here furrers and this here jury-mast o' mine, but I'll fetch up alongside in a couple o' tacks."

Now glancing in the direction of the voice, Barnabas perceived a head and face that bobbed up and down on the opposite side of the hedge. A red face it was, a jovial, good-humored face, lit up with quick, bright eyes that twinkled from under a prodigious pair of eyebrows; a square honest face whose broad good nature beamed out from a mighty bush of curling whisker and pigtail, and was surmounted by a shining, glazed hat.

Being come opposite to them, he paused to mop at his red face with a neckerchief of vivid hue, which done, he touched the brim of the glazed hat, and though separated from them by no more than the hedge and ditch, immediately let out another roar--for all the world as though he had been hailing the maintop of a Seventy-four in a gale of wind.

"Here I be, Cap'n!" he bellowed, "studden sails set an' drawing, tho' obleeged to haul my wind, d'ye see, on account o' this here spar o' mine a-running foul o' the furrers." Having said the which, he advanced again with a heave to port and a lurch to starboard very like a ship in a heavy sea; this peculiarity of gait was explained as he hove into full view, for then Barnabas saw that his left leg was

gone from the knee and had been replaced by a wooden one.

"Bo'sun," said the Captain, indicating Barnabas, with a flap of his empty sleeve, "Bo'sun--favor me, I say oblige me by explaining to this young gentleman your opinion of a gentleman--I say tell him who you think is the First Gentleman in Europe!"

The Bo'sun stared from Barnabas to the Captain and back again.

"Begging your Honor's parding," said he, touching the brim of the glazed hat, "but surely nobody don't need to be told that 'ere?"

"It would seem so, Jerry."

"Why then, Cap'n--since you ax me, I should tell you--bold an' free like, as the First Gentleman in Europe--ah! or anywhere else--was Lord Nelson an' your Honor."

As he spoke the Bo'sun stood up very straight despite his wooden leg, and when he touched his hat again, his very pigtail seemed straighter and stiffer than ever.

"Young sir," said the Captain, regarding Barnabas from the corners of his eyes, "what d' ye say to that?"

"Why," returned Barnabas, "now I come to think of it, I believe the Bo'sun is right."

"Sir," nodded the Captain, "the Bo'sun generally is; my Bo'sun, sir, is as remarkable as that leg of his which he has contrived so that it will screw on or off--in sections sir--I mean the wooden one."

"But," said Barnabas, beginning to stroke his chin in the argumentative way that was all his father's, "but, sir, I was meaning gentlemen yet living, and Lord Nelson, unfortunately, is dead."

"Bo'sun," said the Captain, "what d' ye say to that?"

"Why, Cap'n, axing the young gentleman's pardon, I beg leave to remark, or as you might say, ob-serve, as men like 'im don't die, they jest gets promoted, so to speak."

"Very true, Jerry," nodded the Captain again, "they do, but go to a higher service, very true. And now, Bo'sun, the bread!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said the Bo'sun, and, taking the neat parcel the Captain held out, dropped it forthwith into the crown of the glazed hat.

"Bo'sun, the meat! the young fool will be hungry by now, poor lad!"

"Ay, ay, Cap'n!" And, the meat having disappeared into the same receptacle, the Bo'sun resumed his hat. Now turning to Barnabas, the Captain held out his hand.

"Sir," said he, "I wish you good-by and a prosperous voyage, and may you find yourself too much a man ever to fall so low as 'fashion,'--I say dammit! The bread and meat, sir, are for a young fool who thinks, like yourself, that the World of Fashion

is _the_ world. By heaven, sir, I say by Gog and Magog! if I had a son with fashionable aspirations, I'd have him triced up to the triangles and flogged with the 'cat'--I say with the cat-o'-ninetails, sir, that is--no I wouldn't, besides I--never had a son--she--died, sir--and good-by!"

"Stay," said Barnabas, "pray tell me to whom I am indebted for so much good instruction."

"My name, sir, is Chumly--plain Chumly--spelt with a U and an M, sir; none of your _olmondeleys_ for me, sir, and I beg you to know that I have no crest or monogram or coat of arms; there's neither or, azure, nor argent about me; I'm neither rampant, nor passant, nor even regardant. And I want none of your sables, ermines, bars, escallops, embattled fiddle-de-dees, or dencette tarradiddles, sir. I'm Chumly, Captain John Chumly, plain and without any fashionable varnish. Consequently, though I have commanded many good ships, sloops, frigates, and even one Seventy-four--"

"The 'Bully-Sawyer,' Trafalgar!" added the Bo'sun.

"Seeing I am only John Chumly, with a U and an M, I retire still a captain. Now, had I clapped in an _olmondeley_ and the rest of the fashionable gewgaws, I should now be doubtless a Rear Admiral at the very least, for the polite world--the World of Fashion is rampant, sir, not to mention passant and regardant. So, if you would achieve a reputation among Persons of Quality nowadays--bow, sir, bow everywhere day in and day out--keep a supple back, young sir, and spell your name with as many unnecessary letters as you can. And as regards my idea of a gentleman, he is, I take it, a man--who is gentle--I say good morning, young sir." As he ended, the Captain took off his hat, with his remaining arm put it on again, and then reached out, suddenly, and clapped Barnabas upon the shoulder. "Here's wishing you a straight course, lad," said he with a smile, every whit as young and winning as that which curved the lips of Barnabas, "a fair course and a good, clean wind to blow all these fashionable fooleries out of your head. Good-by!" So he nodded, turned sharp about and went upon his way.

Hereupon the Bo'sun shook his head, took off the glazed hat, stared into it, and putting it on again, turned and stumped along beside Barnabas.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCERNING THE CAPTAIN'S ARM, THE BOSUN'S LEG, AND THE "BELISARIUS," SEVENTY-FOUR

"The 'Bully-Sawyer,' Trafalgar!" murmured the Bo'sun, as they went on side by side; "you've 'eerd o' the 'Bully-Sawyer,' Seventy-four, o' course, young sir?"

"I'm afraid not," said Barnabas, rather apologetically.

"Not 'eerd o' the 'Bully-Sawyer,' Seventy-four, Lord, young sir!

axing your pardon, but--not 'eerd o' the--why, she were in the van that day one o' the first to engage the enemy--but a cable's length to wind'ard o' the 'Victory'--one o' the first to come up wi' the Mounseers, she were. An' now you tell me as you ain't 'eerd o' the--Lord, sir!" and the Bo'sun sighed, and shook his head till it was a marvel how the glazed hat kept its position.

"Won't you tell me of her, Bo'sun?"

"Tell you about the old 'Bully-Sawyer,' Seventy-four, ay surely, sir, surely. Ah! 't were a grand day for us, a grand day for our Nelson, and a grand day for England--that twenty-first o' October--though 't were that day as they French and Spanishers done for the poor old 'Bully-Sawyer,' Seventy-four, and his honor's arm and my leg, d' ye see. The wind were light that day as we bore down on their line--in two columns, d' ye see, sir--we was in Nelson's column, the weather line 'bout a cable's length astarn o' the 'Victory.' On we went, creeping nearer and nearer--the 'Victory,' the old 'Bully-Sawyer,' and the 'Temeraire'--and every now and then the Mounseers trying a shot at us to find the range, d' ye see. Right ahead o' us lay the 'Santissima Trinidado'--a great four-decker, young sir--astarn o' her was the 'Beaucenture,' and astarn o' her again, the 'Redoutable,' wi' eight or nine others. On we went wi' the Admiral's favorite signal flying, 'Engage the enemy more closely.' Ah, young sir, there weren't no stand-offishness about our Nelson, God bless him! As we bore closer their shot began to come aboard o' us, but the old 'Bully-Sawyer' never took no notice, no, not so much as a gun. Lord! I can see her now as she bore down on their line; every sail drawing aloft, the white decks below--the gleam o' her guns wi' their crews stripped to the waist, every eye on the enemy, every man at his post--very different she looked an hour arterwards. Well, sir, all at once the great 'Santissima Trinidado' lets fly at us wi' her whole four tiers o' broadside, raking us fore and aft, and that begun it; down comes our foretopmast wi' a litter o' falling spars and top-hamper, and the decks was all at once splashed, here and there, wi' ugly blotches. But, Lord! the old 'Bully-Sawyer' never paid no heed, and still the men stood to the guns, and his Honor, the Captain, strolled up and down, chatting to his flag officer. Then the enemy's ships opened on us one arter another, the 'Beaucenture,' the 'San Nicholas,' and the 'Redoutable' swept and battered us wi' their murderous broadsides; the air seemed full o' smoke and flame, and the old 'Bully-Sawyer' in the thick o' it. But still we could see the 'Victory' through the drifting smoke ahead o' us wi' the signal flying, 'Engage the enemy more closely,' and still we waited and waited very patient, and crept down on the enemy nearer and nearer."

"And every minute their fire grew hotter, and their aim truer--down came our mizzen-topgallant-mast, and hung down over our quarter; away went our bowsprit--but we held on till we struck their line 'twixt the 'Santissima Trinidado' and the 'Beaucenture,' and, as we crossed the Spanisher's wake, so close that our yard-arms grazed her gilded starn, up flashed his Honor's sword, 'Now, lads!' cried he, hailing the guns--and then--why then, afore I'd took my whistle from my lips, the old 'Bully-Sawyer,' as had been so patient, so very patient, let fly wi' every starboard gun as it bore, slap into the great Spanisher's towering starn, and, a moment arter, her larboard guns roared and flamed as her broadside smashed into the 'Beaucenture,' and 'bout five minutes arterwards we fell aboard o'

the 'Fougeux,' and there we lay, young sir, and fought it out yard-arm to yard-arm, and muzzle to muzzle, so close that the flame o' their guns blackened and scorched us, and we was obliged to heave buckets o' water, arter every discharge, to put out the fire. Lord! but the poor old 'Bully-Sawyer' were in a tight corner then, what wi' the 'Fougeux' to port, the 'Beaucenture' to starboard, and the great Spanisher hammering us astarn, d' ye see. But there was our lads--what was left o' 'em--reeking wi' sweat, black wi' powder, splashed wi' blood, fighting the guns; and there was his Honor the Cap'n, leaning against the quarter-rail wi' his sword in one hand, and his snuff-box in t' other--he had two hands then, d'ye see, young sir; and there was me, hauling on the tackle o' one o' the quarter-guns--it happened to be short-handed, d'ye see--when, all at once, I felt a kind o' shock, and there I was flat o' my back, and wi' the wreckage o' that there quarter-gun on this here left leg o' mine, pinning me to the deck. As I lay there I heerd our lads a cheering above the roar and din, and presently, the smoke lifting a bit, I see the Spanisher had struck, but I likewise see as the poor old 'Bully-Sawyer' were done for; she lay a wreck--black wi' smoke, blistered wi' fire, her decks foul wi' blood, her fore and mainmasts beat overboard, and only the mizzen standing. All this I see in a glance--ah! and something more--for the mizzen-topgallant had been shot clean through at the cap, and hung dangling. But now, what wi' the quiver o' the guns and the roll o' the vessel, down she come sliding, and sliding, nearer and nearer, till the splintered end brought up ag'in the wreck o' my gun. But presently I see it begin to slide ag'in nearer to me--very slow, d'ye see--inch by inch, and there's me pinned on the flat o' my back, watching it come. 'Another foot,' I sez, 'and there's an end o' Jerry Tucker--another ten inches, another eight, another six.' Lord, young sir, I heaved and I strained at that crushed leg o' mine; but there I was, fast as ever, while down came the t'gallant--inch by inch. Then, all at once, I kinder let go o' myself. I give a shout, sir, and then--why then--there's his Honor the Cap'n leaning over me. 'Is that you, Jerry?' sez he--for I were black wi' powder, d' ye see, sir. 'Is that you, Jerry?' sez he. 'Ay, ay, sir,' sez I, 'it be me surely, till this here spar slips down and does for me.' 'It shan't do that,' sez he, very square in the jaw. 'It must,' sez I. 'No,' sez he. 'Nothing to stop it, sir,' sez I. 'Yes, there is,' sez he. 'What's that,' sez I. 'This,' sez he, 'twixt his shut teeth, young sir. And then, under that there hellish, murdering piece of timber, the Cap'n sets his hand and arm--his naked hand and arm, sir!' In the name o' God!' I sez, 'let it come, sir!' 'And lose my Bo'sun?--not me!' sez he. Then, sir, I see his face go white--and whiter. I heerd the bones o' his hand and arm crack--like so many sticks--and down he falls atop o' me in a dead faint, sir."

"But the t'gallant were stopped, and the life were kept in this here carcase o' mine. So--that's how the poor old 'Bully-Sawyer,' Seventy-four, were done for--that's how his Honor lost his arm, and me my leg, sir. And theer be the stocks, and theer be our young gentleman inside o' 'em, as cool and smiling and comfortable as you please."

CHAPTER IX

WHICH CONCERNS ITSELF, AMONG OTHER MATTERS, WITH THE VIRTUES OF A PAIR OF STOCKS AND THE PERVERSITY OF FATHERS

Before them was a church, a small church, gray with age, and, like age, lonely. It stood well back from the road which wound away down the hill to the scattered cottages in the valley below.

About this church was a burial ground, upon whose green mounds and leaning headstones the great square tower cast a protecting shadow that was like a silent benediction. A rural graveyard this, very far removed from the strife and bustle of cities, and, therefore, a good place to sleep in.

A low stone wall was set about it, and in the wall was a gate with a weather-beaten porch, and beside the gate were the stocks, and in the stocks, with his hands in his pockets, and his back against the wall, sat a young gentleman.

A lonely figure, indeed, whose boots, bright and polished, were thrust helplessly enough through the leg-holes of the stocks, as though offering themselves to the notice of every passer-by. Tall he was, and _point-de-vice_ from those same helpless boots to the gleaming silver buckle in his hat band.

Now observing the elegance of his clothes, and the modish languor of his lounging figure, Barnabas at once recognized him as a gentleman par excellence, and immediately the memory of his own country-made habiliments and clumsy boots arose and smote him. The solitary prisoner seemed in no whit cast down by his awkward and most undignified situation, indeed, as they drew nearer, Barnabas could hear him whistling softly to himself. At the sound of their approach, however, he glanced up, and observed them from under the brim of the buckled hat with a pair of the merriest blue eyes in the world.

"Aha, Jerry!" he cried, "whom do you bring to triumph over me in my abasement? For shame, Jerry! Is this the act of a loving and affectionate Bo'sun, the Bo'sun of my innocent childhood? Oh, bruise and blister me!"

"Why, sir," answered the Bo'sun, beaming through his whiskers, "this be only a young genelman, like yourself, as be bound for Lonnon, Master Horatio."

The face, beneath the devil-may-care rake of the buckled hat, was pale and handsome, and, despite its studied air of gentlemanly weariness, the eyes were singularly quick and young, and wholly ingenuous.

Now, as they gazed at each other, eye to eye--the merry blue and the steadfast gray--suddenly, unaffectedly, as though drawn by instinct, their hands reached out and met in a warm and firm clasp, and, in that instant, the one forgot his modish languor, and the other his country clothes and blunt-toed boots, for the Spirit of Youth stood between them, and smile answered smile.

"And so you are bound for London, sir; pray, are you in a hurry to get there?"

"Not particularly," Barnabas rejoined.

"Then there you have the advantage of me, for I am, sir. But here I sit, a martyr for conscience sake. Now, sir, if you are in no great hurry, and have a mind to travel in company with a martyr, just as soon as I am free of these bilboes, we'll take the road together. What d' ye say?"

"With pleasure!" answered Barnabas.

"Why then, sir, pray sit down. I blush to offer you the stocks, but the grass is devilish dewy and damp, and there's deuce a chair to be had--which is only natural, of course; but pray sit somewhere until the Bo'sun, like the jolly old dog he is, produces the key, and lets me out."

"Bo'sun, you'll perceive the gentleman is waiting, and, for that matter, so am I. The key, Jerry, the key."

"Axing your pardons, gentlemen both," began the Bo'sun, taking himself by the starboard whisker, "but orders is orders, and I was to tell you, Master Horatio, sir, as there was firstly a round o' beef cold, for breakfus!"

"Beef!" exclaimed the prisoner, striking himself on the crown of the hat.

"Next a smoked tongue--" continued the Bo'sun.

"Tongue!" sighed the prisoner, turning to Barnabas. "You hear that, sir, my unnatural father and uncle batten upon rounds of beef, and smoked tongues, while I sit here, my legs at a most uncomfortable angle, and my inner man as empty as a drum; oh, confound and curse it!"

"A brace o' cold fowl," went on the Bo'sun inexorably; "a biled 'am--"

"Enough, Jerry, enough, lest I forget filial piety and affection and rail upon 'em for heartless gluttons."

"And," pursued the Bo'sun, still busy with his whisker and abstracted of eye--"and I were to say as you was now free to come out of they stocks--"

"Aha, Jerry! even the most Roman of fathers can relent, then. Out with the key, Jerry! Egad! I can positively taste that beef from here; unlock me, Jerry, that I may haste to pay my respects to Roman parent, uncle, and beef--last, but not least, Jerry--"

"Always supposing," added the Bo'sun, giving a final twist to his whisker, "that you've 'ad time to think better on it, d' ye see, and change your mind, Master Horatio, my Lord."

Barnabas pricked up his ears; a lord, and in the stocks! preposterous! and yet surely these were the boots, and clothes, and hat of a lord.

"Change my mind, Jerry!" exclaimed his Lordship, "impossible; you know I never change my mind. What! yield up my freedom for a mess of beef and tongue, or even a brace of cold fowl--"

"Not to mention a cold biled 'am, Master Horatio, sir."

"No, Jerry, not for all the Roman parents, rounds of beef, tyrannical uncles and cold hams in England. Tempt me no more, Jerry; Bo'sun, avaunt, and leave me to melancholy and emptiness."

"Why then," said the Bo'sun, removing the glazed hat and extracting therefrom the Captain's meat packages, "I were to give you this meat, Master Horatio, beef and bread, my Lord."

"From the Captain, I'll be sworn, eh, Jerry?"

"Ay, ay, my Lord, from his Honor the Cap'n."

"Now God bless him for a tender-hearted old martinet, eh, Bo'sun?"

"Which I begs to say, amen, Master Horatio, sir."

"To be sure there is nothing Roman about my uncle." Saying which, his Lordship, tearing open the packages, and using his fingers as forks, began to devour the edibles with huge appetite.

"There was a tongue, I think you mentioned, Jerry," he inquired suddenly.

"Ay, sir, likewise a cold biled 'am."

His Lordship sighed plaintively.

"And yet," said he, sandwiching a slice of beef between two pieces of bread with great care and nicety, "who would be so mean-spirited as to sell that freedom which is the glorious prerogative of man (and which I beg you to notice is a not unpleasing phrase, sir) who, I demand, would surrender this for a base smoked tongue?"

"Not forgetting a fine, cold biled 'am, Master Horatio, my Lord. And now, wi' your permission, I'll stand away for the village, leaving you to talk wi' this here young gentleman and take them vittles aboard, till I bring up alongside again, Cap'n's orders, Master Horatio." Saying which, the Bo'sun touched the glazed hat, went about, and, squaring his yards, bore away for the village.

"Sir," said his Lordship, glancing whimsically at Barnabas over his fast-disappearing hunch of bread and meat, "you have never been--called upon to--sit in the stocks, perhaps?"

"Never--as yet," answered Barnabas, smiling.

"Why, then, sir, let me inform you the stocks have their virtues. I'll not deny a chair is more comfortable, and certainly more dignified, but give me the stocks for thought, there's nothing like 'em for profound meditation. The Bible says, I believe, that one should seek the seclusion of one's closet, but, believe me, for deep reverie there's nothing like the stocks. You see, a poor devil has nothing else to do, therefore he meditates."

"And pray," inquired Barnabas, "may I ask what brings you sitting in this place of thought?"

"Three things, sir, namely, matrimony, a horse race, and a father. Three very serious matters, sir, and the last the gravest of all. For you must know I am, shall I say--blessed? yes, certainly, blessed in a father who is essentially Roman, being a man of his word, sir. Now a man of his word, more especially a father, may prove a very mixed blessing. Speaking of fathers, generally, sir, you may have noticed that they are the most unreasonable class of beings, and delight to arrogate to themselves an authority which is, to say the least, trying; my father especially so--for, as I believe I hinted before, he is so infernally Roman."

"Indeed," smiled Barnabas, "the best of fathers are, after all, only human."

"Aha!" cried his Lordship, "there speaks experience. And yet, sir, these human fathers, one and all, believe in what I may term the divine right of fathers to thwart, and bother, and annoy sons old enough to be--ha--"

"To know their own minds," said Barnabas.

"Precisely," nodded his Lordship. "Consequently, my Roman father and I fell out--my honored Roman and I frequently do fall out--but this morning, sir, unfortunately 't was before breakfast." Here his Lordship snatched a hasty bite of bread and meat with great appetite and gusto, while Barnabas sat, dreamy of eye, staring away across the valley.

"Pray," said he suddenly, yet with his gaze still far away, "do you chance to be acquainted with a Sir Mortimer Carnaby?"

"Acquainted," cried his Lordship, speaking with his mouth full. "Oh, Gad, sir, every one who _is_ any one is acquainted with Sir Mortimer Carnaby."

"Ah!" said Barnabas musingly, "then you probably know him."

"He honors me with his friendship."

"Hum!" said Barnabas.

Here his Lordship glanced up quickly and with a slight contraction of the brow.

"Sir," he retorted, with a very creditable attempt at dignity, despite the stocks and his hunch of bread and meat, "Sir, permit me to add that I am proud of his friendship."

"And pray," inquired Barnabas, turning his eyes suddenly to his companion's face, "do you like him?"

"Like him, sir!"

"Or trust him!" persisted Barnabas, steadfast-eyed.

"Trust him, sir," his Lordship repeated, his gaze beginning to wander, "trust him!" Here, chancing to espy what yet remained of the bread and meat, he immediately took another bite, and when he spoke it was in a somewhat muffled tone in consequence. "Trust him? Egad, sir,

the boot's on t'other leg, for 'twixt you and me, I owe him a cool thousand, as it is!"

"He is a great figure in the fashionable world, I understand," said Barnabas.

"He is the most admired Buck in London, sir," nodded his Lordship, "the most dashing, the most sought after, a boon companion of Royalty itself, sir, the Corinthian of Corinthians."

"Do you mean," said Barnabas, with his eyes on the distance again, "that he is a personal friend of the Prince?"

"One of the favored few," nodded his Lordship, "and, talking of him, brings us back to my honored Roman."

"How so?" inquired Barnabas, his gaze on the distance once more.

"Because, sir, with that unreasonableness peculiar to fathers, he has taken a violent antipathy to my friend Carnaby, though, as far as I know, he has never met my friend Carnaby. This morning, sir, my father summoned me to the library. 'Horatio,' says he, in his most Roman manner,--he never calls me Horatio unless about to treat me to the divine right of fathers,--'Horatio,' says he, 'you're old enough to marry.' 'Indeed, I greatly fear so, sir,' says I. 'Then,' says he, solemn as an owl, 'why not settle down here and marry?' Here he named a certain lovely person whom, 'twixt you and me, sir, I have long ago determined to marry, but, in my own time, be it understood. 'Sir,' said I, 'believe me I would ride over and settle the matter with her this very morning, only that I am to race 'Moonraker' (a horse of mine, you'll understand, sir) against Sir Mortimer Carnaby's 'Clasher' and if I should happen to break my neck, it might disappoint the lady in question, or even break her heart.' 'Horatio,' says my Roman--more Roman than ever--'I strongly disapprove of your sporting propensities, and, more especially, the circle of acquaintances you have formed in London.' 'Blackguardedly Bucks and cursed Corinthians!' snarls my uncle, the Captain, flapping his empty sleeve at me. 'That, sirs, I deeply regret,' says I, preserving a polite serenity, 'but the match is made, and a man must needs form some circle of acquaintance when he lives in London.' 'Then,' says my honored Roman, with that lack of reasonableness peculiar to fathers, 'don't live in London, and as for the horse match give it up.' 'Quite impossible, sir,' says I, calmly determined, 'the match has been made and recorded duly at White's, and if you were as familiar with the fashionable sporting set as I, you would understand.' 'Pish, boy,' says my Roman--'t is a trick fathers have at such times of casting one's youth in one's teeth, you may probably have noticed this for yourself, sir--'Pish, boy,' says he, 'I know, I know, I've lived in London!' 'True, sir,' says I, 'but things have changed since your day, your customs went out with your tie-wigs, and are as antiquated as your wide-skirted coats and buckled shoes'--this was a sly dig at my worthy uncle, the Captain, sir. 'Ha!' cries he, flapping his empty sleeve at me again, 'and nice figure-heads you made of yourselves with your ridiculous stocks and skin-tight breeches,' and indeed," said his Lordship, stooping to catch a side-view of his imprisoned legs, "they are a most excellent fit, I think you'll agree."

"Marvellous!" sighed Barnabas, observing them with the eyes of envy.

"Well, sir," pursued his Lordship, "the long and short of it was--my honored Roman, having worked himself into a state of 'divine right' necessary to the occasion, vows that unless I give up the race and spend less time and money in London, he will clap me into the stocks. 'Then, sir,' says I, smiling and unruffled, 'pray clap me in as soon as you will'; and he being, as I told you, a man of his word,--well--here I am."

"Where I find you enduring your situation with a remarkable fortitude," said Barnabas.

"Egad, sir! how else should I endure it? I flatter myself I am something of a philosopher, and thus, enduring in the cause of freedom and free will, I scorn my bonds, and am consequently free. Though, I'll admit, 'twixt you and me, sir, the position cramps one's legs most damnably."

"Now in regard to Sir Mortimer Carnaby," persisted Barnabas, "your father, it would seem, neither likes nor trusts him."

"My father, sir, is--a father, consequently perverse. Sir Mortimer Carnaby is my friend, therefore, though my father has never met Sir Mortimer Carnaby, he takes a mortal antipathy to Sir Mortimer Carnaby, Q.E.D., and all the rest of it."

"On the other hand," pursued Barnabas the steadfast-eyed, "you--admire, respect, and honor your friend Sir Mortimer Carnaby!"

"Admire him, sir, who wouldn't? There isn't such another all-round sportsman in London--no, nor England. Only last week he drove cross-country in his tilbury over hedges and ditches, fences and all, and never turned a hair. Beat the 'Fighting Tanner' at Islington in four rounds, and won over ten thousand pounds in a single night's play from Egalite d'Orleans himself. Oh, egad, sir! Carnaby's the most wonderful fellow in the world!"

"Though a very indifferent boxer!" added Barnabas.

"Indiff--!" His Lordship let fall the last fragments of his bread and meat, and stared at Barnabas in wide-eyed amazement. "Did you say--indifferent?"

"I did," nodded Barnabas, "he is much too passionate ever to make a good boxer."

"Why, deuce take me! I tell you there isn't a pugilist in England cares to stand up to him with the muffles, or bare knuckles!"

"Probably because there are no pugilists left in England, worth the name," said Barnabas.

"Gad, sir! we are all pugilists nowadays--the Manly Art is all the fashion--and, I think, a very excellent fashion. And permit me to tell you I know what I'm talking of, I have myself boxed with nearly all the best 'milling coves' in London, and am esteemed no novice at the sport. Indeed love of the 'Fancy' was born in me, for my father, sir--though occasionally Roman--was a great patron of the game, and witnessed the great battle between 'Glorious John Barty' and

Nathaniel Bell--"

"At Dartford!" added Barnabas.

"And when Bell was knocked down, at the end of the fight--"

"After the ninety-seventh round!" nodded Barnabas.

"My father, sir, was the first to jump into the ring and clasp the Champion's fist--and proud he is to tell of it!"

"Proud!" said Barnabas, staring.

"Proud, sir--yes, why not? so should I have been--so would any man have been. Why let me tell you, sir, at home, in the hall, between the ensign my uncle's ship bore through Trafalgar, and the small sword my grandfather carried at Blenheim, we have the belt John Barty wore that day."

"His belt!" exclaimed Barnabas, "my--John Barty's belt?"

"So you see I should know what I am talking about. Therefore, when you condemn such a justly celebrated man of his hands as my friend Carnaby, I naturally demand to know who you are to pronounce judgment?"

"I am one," answered Barnabas, "who has been taught the science by that very Nathaniel Bell and 'Glorious John' you mention."

"Hey--what?--what?" cried his Lordship.

"I have boxed with them regularly every day," Barnabas continued, "and I have learned that strength of arm, quickness of foot, and a true eye are all unavailing unless they be governed by a calm, unruffled temper, for passion clouds the judgment, and in fighting as in all else, it is judgment that tells in the long run."

"Now, by heaven!" exclaimed his Lordship, jerking his imprisoned legs pettishly, "if I didn't happen to be sitting trussed up here, and we had a couple of pair of muffles, why we might have had a friendly 'go' just to take each other's measures; as it is--"

But at this moment they heard a hoarse bellow, and, looking round, beheld the Bo'sun who, redder of face than ever and pitching and rolling in his course, bore rapidly down on them, and hauling his wind, took off the glazed hat.

"Ha, Jerry!" exclaimed his Lordship, "what now? If you happen to have anything else eatable in that hat of yours, out with it, for I am devilish sharp-set still."

"Why, I have got summat, Master Horatio, but it aren't bread nor yet beef, nor yet again biled 'am, my Lord--it can't be eat nor it can't be drank--and here it be!" and with the words the Bo'sun produced a ponderous iron key.

"Why, my dear old Jerry--my lovely Bo'sun--"

"Captured by his Honor, Master Horatio--carried off by the Cap'n under your own father's very own nose, sir--or as you might say, cut

out under the enemy's guns, my Lord!" With which explanation the old sailor unfastened the padlock, raised the upper leg-board, and set the prisoner free.

"Ah!--but it's good to have the use of one's legs again!" exclaimed his Lordship, stretching the members in question, "and that," said he, turning to Barnabas with his whimsical smile, "that is another value of the stocks--one never knows how pleasant and useful a pair of legs can be until one has sat with 'em stretched out helplessly at right angles for an hour or two." Here, the Bo'sun having stowed back the key and resumed his hat, his Lordship reached out and gripped his hand. "So it was Uncle John, was it, Jerry--how very like Uncle John--eh, Jerry?"

"Never was nobody born into this here vale o' sorrer like the Cap'n--no, nor never will be--nohow!" said the Bo'sun with a solemn nod.

"God bless him, eh, Jerry?"

"Amen to that, my Lord."

"You'll let him know I said 'God bless him,' Jerry?"

"I will, my Lord, ay, ay, God bless him it is, Master Horatio!"

"Now as to my Roman--my father, Jerry, tell him--er--"

"Be you still set on squaring away for London, then, sir?"

"As a rock, Jerry, as a rock!"

"Then 't is 'good-by,' you're wishing me?"

"Yes, 'good-by,' Jerry, remember 'God bless Uncle John,' and--er--tell my father that--ah, what the deuce shall you tell him now?--it should be something a little affecting--wholly dutiful, and above all gently dignified--hum! Ah, yes--tell him that whether I win or lose the race, whether I break my unworthy neck or no, I shall never forget that I am the Earl of Bamborough's son. And as for you, Jerry, why, I shall always think of you as the jolly old sea dog who used to stoop down to let me get at his whiskers, they were a trifle blacker in those days. Gad! how I did pull 'em, Jerry, even then I admired your whiskers, didn't I? I swear there isn't such another pair in England. Good-by, Jerry!" Saying which his Lordship turned swiftly upon his heel and walked on a pace or two, while Barnabas paused to wring the old seaman's brown hand; then they went on down the hill together.

And the Bo'sun, sitting upon the empty stocks with his wooden pin sticking straight out before him, sighed as he watched them striding London-wards, the Lord's son, tall, slender, elegant, a gentleman to his finger tips, and the commoner's son, shaped like a young god, despite his homespun, and between them, as it were linking them together, fresh and bright and young as the morning, went the joyous Spirit of Youth.

Now whether the Bo'sun saw aught of this, who shall say, but old eyes see many things. And thus, perhaps, the sigh that escaped the

battered old man-o'-war's man's lips was only because of his own vanished youth--his gray head and wooden leg, after all.

CHAPTER X

WHICH DESCRIBES A PERIPATETIC CONVERSATION

"Sir," said his Lordship, after they had gone some way in silence, "you are thoughtful, not to say, devilish grave!"

"And you," retorted Barnabas, "have sighed--three times."

"No, did I though?--why then, to be candid,--I detest saying 'Good-by!'--and I have been devoutly wishing for two pair of muffles, for, sir, I have taken a prodigious liking to you--but--"

"But?" inquired Barnabas.

"Some time since you mentioned the names of two men--champions both--ornaments of the 'Fancy'--great fighters of unblemished reputation."

"You mean my--er--that is, Natty Bell and John Barty."

"Precisely!--you claim to have--boxed with them, sir?"

"Every day!" nodded Barnabas.

"With both of them,--I understand?"

"With both of them."

"Hum!"

"Sir," said Barnabas, growing suddenly polite, "do you doubt my word?"

"Well," answered his Lordship, with his whimsical look, "I'll admit I could have taken it easier had you named only one, for surely, sir, you must be aware that these were Masters of the Fist--the greatest since the days of Jack Broughton and Mendoza."

"I know each had been champion--but it would almost seem that I have entertained angels unawares!--and I boxed with both because they happened to live together."

"Then, sir," said the Viscount, extending his hand in his frank, impetuous manner, "you are blest of the gods. I congratulate you and, incidentally, my desire for muffles grows apace,--you must positively put 'em on with me at the first opportunity."

"Right willingly, sir," said Barnabas.

"But deuce take me!" exclaimed the Viscount, "if we are to become friends, which I sincerely hope, we ought at least to know each other's name. Mine, sir, is Bellasis, Horatio Bellasis; I was named

Horatio after Lord Nelson, consequently my friends generally call me Tom, Dick, or Harry, for with all due respect to his Lordship, Horatio is a very devil of a name, now isn't it? Pray what's yours?"

"Barnabas--Beverley. At your service."

"Barnabas--hum! Yours isn't much better. Egad! I think 't is about as bad. Barnabas!--No, I'll call you Bev, on condition that you make mine Dick; what d' ye say, my dear Bev?"

"Agreed, Dick," answered Barnabas, smiling, whereupon they stopped, and having very solemnly shaken hands, went on again, merrier than ever.

"Now what," inquired the Viscount, suddenly, "what do you think of marriage, my dear Bev?"

"Marriage?" repeated Barnabas, staring.

"Marriage!" nodded his Lordship, airily, "matrimony, Bev,--wedlock, my dear fellow?"

"I--indeed I have never had occasion to think of it."

"Fortunate fellow!" sighed his companion.

"Until--this morning!" added Barnabas, as his fingers encountered a small, soft, lacy bundle in his pocket.

"Un-fortunate fellow!" sighed the Viscount, shaking his head. "So you are haunted by the grim spectre, are you? Well, that should be an added bond between us. Not that I quarrel with matrimony, mark you, Bev; in the abstract it is a very excellent institution, though--mark me again!--when a man begins to think of marriage it is generally the beginning of the end. Ah, my dear fellow! many a bright and promising career has been blighted--sapped--snapped off--and--er--ruthlessly devoured by the ravenous maw of marriage. There was young Egerton with a natural gift for boxing, and one of the best whips I ever knew--we raced our coaches to Brighton and back for a thousand a side and he beat me by six yards--a splendid all round sportsman--ruined by matrimony! He's buried somewhere in the country and passing his days in the humdrum pursuit of being husband and father. Oh, bruise and blister me! it's all very pitiful, and yet"--here the Viscount sighed again--"I do not quarrel with the state, for marriage has often proved a--er--very present help in the time of trouble, Bev."

"Trouble?" repeated Barnabas.

"Money-troubles, my dear Bev, pecuniary unpleasantnesses, debts, and duns, and devilish things of that kind."

"But surely," said Barnabas, "no man--no honorable man would marry and burden a woman with debts of his own contracting?"

At this, the Viscount looked at Barnabas, somewhat askance, and fell to scratching his chin. "Of course," he continued, somewhat hurriedly, "I shall have all the money I need--more than I shall need some day."

"You mean," inquired Barnabas, "when your father dies?"

Here the Viscount's smooth brow clouded suddenly.

"Sir," said he, "we will not mention that contingency. My father is a great Roman, I'll admit, but, 'twixt you and me,--I--I'm devilish fond of him, and, strangely enough, I prefer to have him Romanly alive and my purse empty--than to possess his money and have him dea--Oh damn it! let's talk of something else,--Carnaby for instance."

"Yes," nodded Barnabas, "your friend, Carnaby."

"Well, then, in the first place, I think I hinted to you that I owe him five thousand pounds?"

"Five thousand! indeed, no, it was only one, when you mentioned it to me last."

"Was it so? but then, d'ye see, Bev, we were a good two miles nearer my honored Roman when I mentioned the matter before, and trees sometimes have ears, consequently I--er--kept it down a bit, my dear Bev, I kept it down a bit; but the fact remains that it's five, and I won't be sure but that there's an odd hundred or two hanging on to it somewhere, beside."

"You led your father to believe it was only one thousand, then?"

"I did, Bev; you see money seems to make him so infernally Roman, and I've been going the pace a bit these last six months. There's another thousand to Jerningham, but he can wait, then there's six hundred to my tailor, deuce take him!"

"Six hundred!" exclaimed Barnabas, aghast.

"Though I won't swear it isn't seven."

"To be sure he is a very excellent tailor," Barnabas added.

"Gad, yes! and the fellow knows it! Then, let's see, there's another three hundred and fifty to the coach builders, how much does that make, Bev?"

"Six thousand, nine hundred and fifty pounds!"

"So much--deuce take it! And that's not all, you know."

"Not?"

"No, Bev, I dare say I could make you up another three or four hundred or so if I were to rake about a bit, but six thousand is enough to go on with, thank you!"

"Six thousand pounds is a deal of money to owe!" said Barnabas.

"Yes," answered the Viscount, scratching his chin again, "though, mark me, Bev, it might be worse! Slingsby, a friend of mine, got plucked for fifteen thousand in a single night last year. Oh! it might be worse. As it is, Bev, the case lies thus: unless I win the race some three weeks from now--I've backed myself heavily, you'll

understand--unless I win, I am between the deep sea of matrimony and the devil of old Jasper Gaunt."

"And who is Jasper Gaunt?"

"Oh, delicious innocence! Ah, Bev! it's evident you are new to London. Gaunt is an outcome of the City, as harsh and dingy as its bricks, as flinty and hard as its pavements. Gad! most of our set know Jasper Gaunt--to their cost! Who is Jasper Gaunt, you ask; well, my dear fellow, question Slingsby of the Guards, he's getting deeper every day, poor old Sling! Ask it, but in a whisper, at Almack's, or White's, or Brooke's, and my Lord this, that, or t'other shall tell you pat and to the point in no measured terms. Ask it of wretched debtors in the prisons, of haggard toilers in the streets, of pale-faced women and lonely widows, and they'll tell you, one and all, that Jasper Gaunt is the harshest, most merciless bloodsucker that ever battened and grew rich on the poverty and suffering of his fellow men, and--oh here we are!"

Saying which, his Lordship abruptly turned down an unexpected and very narrow side lane, where, screened behind three great trees, was a small inn, or hedge tavern with a horse-trough before the door and a sign whereon was the legend, "The Spotted Cow," with a representation of that quadruped below, surely the very spottiest of spotted cows that ever adorned an inn sign.

"Not much to look at, my dear Bev," said the Viscount, with a wave of his hand towards the inn, "but it's kept by an old sailor, a shipmate of the Bo'sun's. I can at least promise you a good breakfast, and the ale you will find excellent. But first I want to show you a very small demon of mine, a particularly diminutive fiend; follow me, my dear fellow."

So, by devious ways, the Viscount led Barnabas round to the back of the inn, and across a yard to where, beyond a gate, was a rick-yard, and beyond that again, a small field or paddock. Now, within this paddock, the admired of a group of gaping rustics, was the very smallest groom Barnabas had ever beheld, for, from the crown of his leather postilion's hat to the soles of his small top boots, he could not have measured more than four feet at the very most.

"There he is, Bev, behold him!" said the Viscount, with his whimsical smile, "the very smallest fiend, the most diminutive demon that ever wore top boots!"

The small groom was engaged in walking a fine blood horse up and down the paddock, or rather the horse was walking the groom, for the animal being very tall and powerful and much given to divers startings, snortings, and tossings of the head, it thus befell that to every step the diminutive groom marched on terra firma, he took one in mid-air, at which times, swinging pendulum-like, he poured forth a stream of invective that the most experienced ostler, guard, or coachman might well have envied, and all in a voice so gruff, so hoarse and guttural, despite his tender years, as filled the listening rustics with much apparent awe and wonder.

"And he can't be a day older than fourteen, my dear Bev," said the Viscount, with a complacent nod, as they halted in the perfumed shade of an adjacent rick; "that's his stable voice assumed for the

occasion, and, between you and me, I can't think how he does it. Egad! he's the most remarkable boy that ever wore livery, the sharpest, the gamest. I picked him up in London, a ragged urchin--caught him picking my pocket, Been with me ever since, and I wouldn't part with him for his weight in gold."

"Picking your pocket!" said Barnabas, "hum!"

The Viscount looked a trifle uncomfortable. "Why you see, my dear fellow," he explained, "he was so--so deuced--small, Bev, a wretched little pale-faced, shivering atomy, peeping up at me over a ragged elbow waiting to be thrashed, and I liked him because he didn't snivel, and he was too insignificant for prison, so, when he told me how hungry he was, I forgot to cuff his shrinking, dirty little head, and suggested a plate of beef at one of the a la mode shops. 'Beef?' says he. 'Yes, beef,' says I, 'could you eat any?' 'Beef?' says he again, 'couldn't I? why, I could eat a ox whole, I could!' So I naturally dubbed him Milo of Crotona on the spot."

"And has he ever tried to pick your pocket since?"

"No, Bev; you see, he's never hungry nowadays. Gad!" said the Viscount, taking Barnabas by the arm, "I've set the fashion in tigers, Bev. Half the fellows at White's and Brooke's are wild to get that very small demon of mine; but he isn't to be bought or bribed or stolen--for what there is of him is faithful, Bev,--and now come in to breakfast."

So saying, the Viscount led Barnabas across the yard to a certain wing or off-shoot of the inn, where beneath a deep, shadowy gable was a door. Yet here he must needs pause a moment to glance down at himself to settle a ruffle and adjust his hat ere, lifting the latch, he ushered Barnabas into a kitchen.

A kitchen indeed? Ay, but such a kitchen! Surely wood was never whiter, nor pewter more gleaming than in this kitchen; surely no flagstones ever glowed a warmer red; surely oak panelling never shone with a mellower lustre; surely no viands could look more delicious than the great joint upon the polished sideboard, flanked by the crisp loaf and the yellow cheese; surely no flowers could ever bloom fairer or smell sweeter than those that overflowed the huge punch bowl at the window and filled the Uncle Toby jugs upon the mantel; surely nowhere could there be at one and the same time such dainty orderliness and comfortable comfort as in this kitchen.

Indeed the historian is bold to say that within no kitchen in this world were all things in such a constant state of winking, twinkling, gleaming and glowing purity, from the very legs of the oaken table and chairs, to the hacked and battered old cutlass above the chimney, as in this self-same kitchen of "The Spotted Cow."

And yet--and yet! Sweeter, whiter, warmer, purer, and far more delicious than anything in this kitchen (or out of it) was she who had started up to her feet so suddenly, and now stood with blushing cheeks and hurried bosom, gazing shy-eyed upon the young Viscount; all dainty grace from the ribbons in her mob-cap to the slender, buckled shoe peeping out beneath her print gown; and Barnabas, standing between them, saw her flush reflected as it were for a moment in the Viscount's usually pale cheek.

"My Lord!" said she, and stopped.

"Why, Clemency, you--you are--handsomer than ever!" stammered the Viscount.

"Oh, my Lord!" she exclaimed; and as she turned away Barnabas thought there were tears in her eyes.

"Did we startle you, Clemency? Forgive me--but I--that is, we are--hungry, ravenous. Er--this is a friend of mine--Mr. Beverley--Mistress Clemency Dare; and oh, Clemency, I've had no breakfast!"

But seeing she yet stood with head averted, the Viscount with a freedom born of long acquaintance, yet with a courtly deference also, took the hand that hung so listless, and looked down into the flushed beauty of her face, and, as he looked, beheld a great tear that crept upon her cheek.

"Why, Clemency!" he exclaimed, his raillery gone, his voice suddenly tender, "Clemency--you're crying, my dear maid; what is it?"

Now, beholding her confusion, and because of it, Barnabas turned away and walked to the other end of the kitchen, and there it chanced that he spied two objects that lay beneath the table, and stooping, forthwith, he picked them up. They were small and insignificant enough in themselves--being a scrap of crumpled paper, and a handsome embossed coat button; yet as Barnabas gazed upon this last, he smiled grimly, and so smiling slipped the objects into his pocket.

"Come now, Clemency," persisted the Viscount, gently, "what is wrong?"

"Nothing; indeed, nothing, my Lord."

"Ay, but there is. See how red your eyes are; they quite spoil your beauty--"

"Beauty!" she cried. "Oh, my Lord; even you!"

"What? What have I said? You are beautiful you know, Clem, and--"

"Beauty!" she cried again, and turned upon him with clenched hands and dark eyes aflame. "I hate it--oh, I hate it!" and with the words she stamped her foot passionately, and turning, sped away, banging the door behind her.

"Now, upon my soul!" said the Viscount, taking off his hat and ruffling up his auburn locks, "of all the amazing, contradictory creatures in the world, Bev! I've known Clemency--hum--a goodish time, my dear fellow; but never saw her like this before, I wonder what the deuce--"

But at this juncture a door at the further end of the kitchen opened, and a man entered. He, like the Bo'sun, was merry of eye, breezy of manner, and hairy of visage; but there all similarity ended, for, whereas the Bo'sun was a square man, this man was round--round of head, round of face, and round of eye. At the sight of the Viscount,

his round face expanded in a genial smile that widened until it was lost in whisker, and he set two fingers to his round forehead and made a leg.

"Lord love me, my Lord, and is it you?" he exclaimed, clasping the hand the Viscount had extended. "Now, from what that imp of a bye--axing his parding--your tiger, Mr. Milo, told me, I were to expect you at nine sharp--and here it be nigh on to ten--"

"True, Jack; but then both he and I reckoned without my father. My father had the bad taste to--er--disagree with me, hence I am late, Jack, and breakfastless, and my friend Mr. Beverley is as hungry as I am. Bev, my dear fellow, this is a very old friend of mine--Jack Truelove, who fought under my uncle at Trafalgar."

"Servant, sir!" says Jack, saluting Barnabas.

"The 'Belisarius,' Seventy-four!" smiled Barnabas.

"Ay, ay," says Jack, with a shake of his round head, "the poor old 'Bully-Sawyer'--But, Lord love me! if you be hungry--"

"Devilish!" said the Viscount, "but first, Jack--what's amiss with Clemency?"

"Clemency? Why, where be that niece o' mine?"

"She's run away, Jack. I found her in tears, and I had scarce said a dozen words to her when--hey presto! She's off and away."

"Tears is it, my Lord?--and 'er sighed, too, I reckon. Come now--'er sighed likewise. Eh, my Lord?"

"Why, yes, she may have sighed, but--"

"There," says Jack, rolling his round head knowingly, "it be nought but a touch o' love, my Lord."

"Love!" exclaimed the Viscount sharply.

"Ah, love! Nieces is difficult craft, and very apt to be took all aback by the wind o' love, as you might say--but Lord! it's only natural arter all. Ah! the rearing o' motherless nieces is a ticklish matter, gentlemen--as to nevvys, I can't say, never 'aving 'ad none _to_ rear--but nieces--Lord! I could write a book on 'em, that is, s'posing I could write, which I can't; for, as I've told you many a time, my Lord, and you then but a bye over here on a visit, wi' the Bo'sun, or his Honor the Cap'n, and you no older then than--er--Mr. Milo, though longer in the leg, as I 've told you many a time and oft--a very ob-servant man I be in most things, consequent' I aren't observed this here niece--this Clem o' mine fair weather and foul wi'out larning the kind o' craft nieces be. Consequent', when you tell me she weeps, and likewise sighs, then I make bold to tell you she's got a touch o' love, and you can lay to that, my Lord."

"Love," exclaimed the Viscount again, and frowning this time; "now, who the devil should she be in love with!"

"That, my Lord, I can't say, not having yet observed. But now, by

your leave, I'll pass the word for breakfast."

Hereupon the landlord of "The Spotted Cow" opened the lattice, and sent a deep-lunged hail across the yard.

"Ahoy!" he roared, "Oliver, Penelope, Bess--breakfast ho!--breakfast for the Viscount--and friend. They be all watching of that theer imp--axing his pardon--that theer groom o' yours, what theer be of him, which though small ain't by no means to be despised, him being equally ready wi' his tongue as his fist."

Here entered two maids, both somewhat flushed with haste but both equally bright of eye, neat of person, and light of foot, who very soon had laid a snowy cloth and duly set out thereon the beef, the bread and cheese, and a mighty ham, before which the Viscount seated himself forthwith, while their sailor host, more jovial than ever, pointed out its many beauties with an eloquent thumb. And so, having seen his guests seated opposite each other, he pulled his forelock at them, made a leg to them, and left them to their breakfast.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH FISTS ARE CLENCHED; AND OF A SELFISH MAN, WHO WAS AN APOSTLE OF PEACE

Conversation, though in itself a blessed and delightful thing, yet may be sometimes out of place, and wholly impertinent. If wine is a loosener of tongues, surely food is the greatest, pleasantest, and most complete silencer; for what man when hunger gnaws and food is before him--what man, at such a time, will stay to discuss the wonders of the world, of science--or even himself?

Thus our two young travellers, with a very proper respect for the noble fare before them, paid their homage to it in silence--but a silence that was eloquent none the less. At length, however, each spoke, and each with a sigh.

The Viscount. "The ham, my dear fellow--!"

Barnabas. "The beef, my dear Dick--!"

The Viscount and Barnabus. "Is beyond words."

Having said which, they relapsed again into a silence, broken only by the occasional rattle of knife and fork.

The Viscount (hacking at the loaf). "It's a grand thing to be hungry, my dear fellow."

Barnabas (glancing over the rim of his tankard). "When you have the means of satisfying it--yes."

The Viscount (becoming suddenly abstracted, and turning his piece of bread over and over in his fingers). "Now regarding--Mistress Clemency, my dear Bev; what do you think of her?"

Barnabas (helping himself to more beef). "That she is a remarkably handsome girl!"

The Viscount (frowning at his piece of bread). "Hum! d'you think so?"

Barnabas. "Any man would. I'll trouble you for the mustard, Dick."

The Viscount. "Yes; I suppose they would."

Barnabas. "Some probably do--especially men with an eye for fine women."

The Viscount (frowning blacker than ever). "Pray, what mean you by that?"

Barnabas. "Your friend Carnaby undoubtedly does."

The Viscount (starting). "Carnaby! Why what the devil put him into your head? Carnaby's never seen her."

Barnabas. "Indeed, I think it rather more than likely."

The Viscount (crushing the bit of bread suddenly in his fist). "Carnaby! But I tell you he hasn't--he's never been near this place."

Barnabas. "There you are quite wrong."

The Viscount (flinging himself back in his chair). "Beverley, what the devil are you driving at?"

Barnabas. "I mean that he was here this morning."

The Viscount. "Carnaby? Here? Impossible! What under heaven should make you think so?"

"This," said Barnabas, and held out a small, crumpled piece of paper. The Viscount took it, glanced at it, and his knife clattered to the floor.

"Sixty thousand pounds!" he exclaimed, and sat staring down at the crumpled paper, wide-eyed. "Sixty thousand!" he repeated. "Is it sixty or six, Bev? Read it out," and he thrust the torn paper across to Barnabas, who, taking it up, read as follows:--

> --felicitate you upon your marriage with the lovely heiress, Lady M., failing which I beg most humbly to remind you, my dear Sir Mortimer Carnaby, that the sixty thousand pounds must be paid back on the day agreed upon, namely July 16,
>
> Your humble, obedient Servant,
>
> JASPER GAUNT.

"Jasper Gaunt!" exclaimed the Viscount. "Sixty thousand pounds! Poor Carnaby! Sixty thousand pounds payable on July sixteenth! Now the fifteenth, my dear Bev, is the day of the race, and if he should lose, it looks very much as though Carnaby would be ruined, Bev."

"Unless he marries 'the lovely heiress'!" added Barnabas.

"Hum!" said the Viscount, frowning. "I wish I'd never seen this cursed paper, Bev!" and as he spoke he crumpled it up and threw it into the great fireplace. "Where in the name of mischief did you get it?"

"It was in the corner yonder," answered Barnabas. "I also found this." And he laid a handsomely embossed coat button on the table. "It has been wrenched off you will notice."

"Yes," nodded the Viscount, "torn off! Do you think--"

"I think," said Barnabas, putting the button back into his pocket, "that Mistress Clemency's tears are accounted for--"

"By God, Beverley," said the Viscount, an ugly light in his eyes, "if I thought that--!" and the hand upon the table became a fist.

"I think that Mistress Clemency is a match for any man--or brute," said Barnabas, and drew his hand from his pocket.

Now the Viscount's fist was opening and shutting convulsively, the breath whistled between his teeth, he glanced towards the door, and made as though he would spring to his feet; but in that moment came a diversion, for Barnabas drew his hand from his pocket, and as he did so, something white fluttered to the floor, close beside the Viscount's chair. Both men saw it and both stooped to recover it, but the Viscount, being nearer, picked it up, glanced at it, looked at Barnabas with a knowing smile, glanced at it again, was arrested by certain initials embroidered in one corner, stooped his head suddenly, inhaling its subtle perfume, and so handed it back to Barnabas, who took it with a word of thanks and thrust it into an inner pocket, while the Viscount stared at him under his drawn brows. But Barnabas, all unconscious, proceeded to cut himself another slice of beef, offering to do the same for the Viscount.

"Thank you--no," said he.

"What--have you done, so soon?"

"Yes," said he, and thereafter sat watching Barnabas ply knife and fork, who, presently catching his eye, smiled.

"Pray," said the Viscount after a while, "pray are you acquainted with the Lady Cleone Meredith?"

"No," answered Barnabas. "I'll trouble you for the mustard, Dick."

"Have you ever met the Lady Cleone Meredith?"

"Never", answered Barnabas, innocent of eye.

Hereupon the Viscount rose up out of the chair and leaned across the table.

"Sir," said he, "you are a most consummate liar!"

Hereupon Barnabas helped himself to the mustard with grave deliberation, then, leaning back in his chair, he smiled up into the Viscount's glowing eyes as politely and with as engaging an air as might be.

"My Lord," said he gently, "give me leave to remark that he who says so, lies himself most foully." Having said which Barnabas set down the mustard, and bowed.

"Mr. Beverley," said the Viscount, regarding him calm-eyed across the table, "there is a place I know of near by, a very excellent place, being hidden by trees, a smooth, grassy place--shall we go?"

"Whenever you will, my Lord," said Barnabas, rising.

Forthwith having bowed to each other and put on their hats, they stepped out into the yard, and so walked on side by side, a trifle stiffer and more upright than usual maybe, until they came to a stile. Here they must needs pause to bow once more, each wishful to give way to the other, and, having duly crossed the stile, they presently came to a place, even as the Viscount had said, being shady with trees, and where a brook ran between steep banks. Here, too, was a small foot-bridge, with hand-rails supported at either end by posts. Now upon the right-hand post the Viscount set his hat and coat, and upon the left, Barnabas hung his. Then, having rolled up their shirt-sleeves, they bowed once more, and coming to where the grass was very smooth and level they faced each other with clenched fists.

"Mr. Beverley," said the Viscount, "you will remember I sighed for muffles, but, sir, I count this more fortunate, for to my mind there is nothing like bare fists, after all, to try a man's capabilities."

"My Lord," said Barnabas, "you will also remember that when I told you I had boxed daily both with 'Glorious John' and Nathaniel Bell, you doubted my word? I therefore intend to try and convince you as speedily as may be."

"Egad!" exclaimed the Viscount, his blue eyes a-dance, "this is positively more than I had ventured to hope, my dear fell--Ah! Mr. Beverley, at your service, sir?"

And, after a season, Barnabas spoke, albeit pantingly, and dabbing at his bloody mouth the while.

"Sir," said he, "I trust--you are not--incommoded at all?" whereupon the Viscount, coming slowly to his elbow and gazing round about him with an expression of some wonder, made answer, albeit also pantingly and short of breath:

"On the contrary, sir, am vastly--enjoying myself--shall give myself the pleasure--of continuing--just as soon as the ground subsides a little."

Therefore Barnabas, still dabbing at his mouth, stepped forward being minded to aid him to his feet, but ere he could do so, a voice arrested him.

"Stop!" said the voice.

Now glancing round, Barnabas beheld a man, a small man and slender, whose clothes, old and worn, seemed only to accentuate the dignity and high nobility of his face.

Bareheaded he advanced towards them and his hair glistened silver white in the sunshine, though his brows were dark, like the glowing eyes below. Upon his cheek was the dark stain of blood, and on his lips was a smile ineffably sweet and gentle as he came forward, looking from one to the other.

"And pray, sir," inquired the Viscount, sitting cross-legged upon the green, "pray, who might you be?"

"I am an apostle of peace, young sir," answered the stranger, "a teacher of forgiveness, though, doubtless, an unworthy one."

"Peace, sir!" cried the Viscount, "deuce take me!--but you are the most warlike Apostle of Peace that eyes ever beheld; by your looks you might have been fighting the Seven Champions of Christendom, one down, t' other come on--"

"You mean that I am bleeding, sir; indeed, I frequently do, and therein is my joy, for this is the blood of atonement."

"The blood of atonement?" said Barnabas.

"Last night," pursued the stranger in his gentle voice, "I sought to teach the Gospel of Mercy and Universal Forgiveness at a country fair not so very far from here, and they drove me away with sticks and stones; indeed, I fear our rustics are sometimes woefully ignorant, and Ignorance is always cruel. So, to-day, as soon as the stiffness is gone from me, I shall go back to them, sirs, for even Ignorance has ears."

Now whereupon, the Viscount got upon his legs, rather unsteadily, and bowed.

"Sir," said he, "I humbly ask your pardon; surely so brave an apostle should do great works."

"Then," said the stranger, drawing nearer, "if such is your thought, let me see you two clasp hands."

"But, sir," said the Viscount, somewhat taken aback, "indeed we have--scarcely begun--"

"So much the better," returned the teacher of forgiveness with his gentle smile, and laying a hand upon the arm of each.

"But, sir, I went so far as to give this gentleman the lie!" resumed the Viscount.

"Which I went so far as to--return," said Barnabas.

"But surely the matter can be explained?" inquired the stranger.

"Possibly!" nodded the Viscount, "though I generally leave explanations until afterwards."

"Then," said the stranger, glancing from one proud young face to the other, "in this instance, shake hands first. Hate and anger are human attributes, but to forgive is Godlike. Therefore now, forget yourselves and in this thing be gods. For, young sirs, as it seems to me, it was ordained that you two should be friends. And you are young and full of great possibilities and friendship is a mighty factor in this hard world, since by friendship comes self-forgctfulness, and no man can do great works unless he forgets Self. So, young sirs, shake hands!"

Now, as they looked upon each other, of a sudden, despite his split lip, Barnabas smiled and, in that same moment, the Viscount held out his hand.

"Beverley," said he, as their fingers gripped, "after your most convincing--shall we say, argument?--if you tell me you have boxed with all and every champion back to Mendoza, Jack Slack, and Broughton, egad! I'll believe you, for you have a devilish striking and forcible way with you at times!" Here the Viscount cherished his bruised ribs with touches of tender inquiry. "Yes," he nodded, "there is a highly commendable thoroughness in your methods, my dear Bev, and I'm free to confess I like you better and better--but--!"

"But?" inquired Barnabas.

"As regards the handkerchief now--?"

"I found it--on a bramble-bush--in a wood," said Barnabas.

"In a wood!"

"In Annersley Wood; I found a lady there also."

"A lady--oh, egad!"

"A very beautiful woman," said Barnabas thoughtfully, "with wonderful yellow hair!"

"The Lady Cleone Meredith!" exclaimed the Viscount, "but in a--wood!"

"She had fallen from her horse."

"How? When? Was she hurt?"

"How, I cannot tell you, but it happened about two hours ago, and her hurt was trifling."

"And you--found her?"

"I also saw her safely out of the wood."

"And you did not know her name?"

"I quite--forgot to ask it," Barnabas admitted, "and I never saw her until this morning."

"Why, then, my dear Bev," said the Viscount, his brow clearing, "let us go back to breakfast, all three of us."

But, now turning about, they perceived that the stranger was gone, yet, coming to the bridge, they presently espied him sitting beside the stream laving his hurts in the cool water.

"Sir," said Barnabas, "our thanks are due to you--"

"And you must come back to the inn with us," added the Viscount; "the ham surpasses description."

"And I would know what you meant by the 'blood of atonement,'" said Barnabas, the persistent.

"As to breakfast, young sirs," said the stranger, shaking his head, "I thank you, but I have already assuaged my hunger; as to my story, well, 'tis not over long, and indeed it is a story to think upon--a warning to heed, for it is a story of Self, and Self is the most insidious enemy that man possesses. So, if you would listen to the tale of a selfish man, sit down here beside me, and I'll tell you."

CHAPTER XII

OF THE STRANGER'S TALE, WHICH, BEING SHORT, MAY PERHAPS MEET WITH THE READER'S KIND APPROBATION.

"In ancient times, sirs," began the stranger, with his gaze upon the hurrying waters of the brook, "when a man had committed some great sin he hid himself from the world, and lashed himself with cruel stripes, he walked barefoot upon sharp flints and afflicted himself with grievous pains and penalties, glorying in the blood of his atonement, and wasting himself and his remaining years in woeful solitude, seeking, thereby, to reclaim his soul from the wrath to come. But, as for me, I walk the highways preaching always forgiveness and forgetfulness of self, and if men grow angry at my teaching and misuse me, the pain of wounds, the hardships, the fatigue, I endure them all with a glad and cheerful mind, seeking thereby to work out my redemption and atonement, for I was a very selfish man." Here the stranger paused, and his face seemed more lined and worn, and his white hair whiter, as he stared down into the running waters of the brook.

"Sirs," he continued, speaking with bent head, "I once had a daughter, and I loved her dearly, but my name was dearer yet. I was proud of her beauty, but prouder of my ancient name, for I was a selfish man."

"We lived in the country, a place remote and quiet, and consequently led a very solitary, humdrum life, because I was ever fond of books and flowers and the solitude of trees--a selfish man always. And so, at last, because she was young and high-spirited, she ran away from my lonely cottage with one who was a villain. And I grieved for her, young sirs, I grieved much and long, because I was lonely, but I grieved more for my name, my honorable name that she had besmirched, because, as I told you, I was a selfish man." Again the stranger was silent, sitting ever with bent head staring down at the crystal waters of the brook, only he clasped his thin hands and wrung them as he continued:

"One evening, as I sat among my roses with a book in my hand, she came back to me through the twilight, and flung herself upon her knees before me, and besought my forgiveness with sobs and bitter, bitter tears. Ah, young sirs! I can hear her weeping yet. The sound of it is always in my ears. So she knelt to me in her abasement with imploring hands stretched out to me. Ah, the pity of those white appealing hands, the pity of them! But I, sirs, being as I say a selfish man and remembering only my proud and honorable name, I, her father, spurned her from me with reproaches and vile words, such burning, searing words as no daughter should hear or father utter."

"And so, weeping still, she turned away wearily, hopelessly, and I stood to watch her bowed figure till she had crept away into the evening and was gone."

"Thus, sirs, I drove her from me, this wounded lamb, this poor broken-hearted maid--bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh--I drove her from me, I who should have comforted and cherished her, I drove her out into the night with hateful words and bitter curses. Oh, was ever sin like mine? Oh, Self, Self! In ancient times, sirs, when a man had committed some great sin he lashed himself with cruel stripes, but I tell you no rod, no whip of many thongs ever stung or bit so sharp and deep as remorse--it is an abiding pain. Therefore I walk these highways preaching always forgiveness and forgetfulness of self, and so needs must I walk until my days be done, or until--I find her again." The stranger rose suddenly and so stood with bent head and very still, only his hands griped and wrung each other. Yet when he looked up his brow was serene and a smile was on his lips."

"But you, sirs, you are friends again, and that is good, for friendship is a blessed thing. And you have youth and strength, and all things are possible to you, therefore. But oh, beware of self, take warning of a selfish man, forget self, so may you achieve great things."

"But, as for me, I never stand upon a country road when evening falls but I see her, a broken, desolate figure, creeping away from me, always away from me, into the shadows, and the sound of her weeping comes to me in the night silences." So saying, the stranger turned from them and went upon his way, limping a little because of his hurts, and his hair gleamed silver in the sunshine as he went.

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH BARNABAS MAKES A CONFESSION

"A very remarkable man!" said the Viscount, taking up his hat.

"And a very pitiful story!" said Barnabas, thoughtfully.

"Though I could wish," pursued the Viscount, dreamy of eye, and settling his hat with a light tap on the crown, "yes, I do certainly wish that he hadn't interfered quite so soon, I was just beginning to--ah--enjoy myself."

"It must be a terrible thing to be haunted by remorse so bitter as his, 'to fancy her voice weeping in the night,' and to see her creeping on into the shadows always--away from him," said Barnabas.

But now, having helped each other into their coats, they set off back to the inn.

"My ribs," said the Viscount, feeling that region of his person with tender solicitude as he spoke, "my ribs are infernally sore, Bev, though it was kind of you not to mark my face; I'm sorry for your lip, my dear fellow, but really it was the only opening you gave me; I hope it isn't painful?"

"Indeed I had forgotten it," returned Barnabas.

"Then needs must I try to forget my bruised ribs," said the Viscount, making a wry face as he clambered over the stile.

But here Barnabas paused to turn and look back at the scene of their encounter, quite deserted now, for the stranger had long since disappeared in the green.

"Yes, a very remarkable man!" sighed Barnabas, thoughtfully. "I wish he had come back with us to the inn and--Clemency. Yes, a very strange man. I wonder now--"

"And I beg you to remember," added the Viscount, taking him by the arm, "he said that you and I were ordained to be friends, and by Gad! I think he spoke the truth, Bev."

"I feel sure of it, Viscount," Barnabas nodded.

"Furthermore, Bev, if you are 'Bev' to me, I must be 'Dick' to you henceforth--amen and so forth!"

"Agreed, Dick."

"Then, my dear Bev?" said the Viscount impulsively.

"Yes, my dear Dick?"

"Suppose we shake hands on it?"

"Willingly, Dick, yet, first, I think it but honorable to tell you that I--love the Lady Cleone Meredith."

"Eh--what?" exclaimed the Viscount, falling back a step, "you love her? the devil you do! since when?"

"Since this morning."

"Love her!" repeated the Viscount, "but you've seen her but once in your life."

"True," said Barnabas, "but then I mean to see her many times, henceforth."

"Ah! the deuce you do!"

"Yes," answered Barnabas. "I shall possibly marry her--some day."

The Viscount laughed, and frowned, and laughed again, then noting the set mouth and chin of the speaker, grew thoughtful, and thereafter stood looking at Barnabas with a new and suddenly awakened interest. Who was he? What was he? From his clothes he might have been anything between a gentleman farmer and a gamekeeper.

As for Barnabas himself, as he leaned there against the stile with his gaze on the distance, his eyes a-dream, he had clean forgotten his awkward clothes and blunt-toed boots.

And after all, what can boots or clothes matter to man or woman? indeed, they sink into insignificance when the face of their wearer is stamped with the serene yet determined confidence that marked Barnabas as he spoke.

"Marry--Cleone Meredith?" said the Viscount at last.

"Marry her--yes," said Barnabas slowly.

"Why then, in the first place let me tell you she's devilish high and proud."

"'T is so I would have her!" nodded Barnabas.

"And cursedly hard to please."

"So I should judge her," nodded Barnabas.

"And heiress to great wealth."

"No matter for that," said Barnabas.

"And full of whims and fancies."

"And therefore womanly," said Barnabas.

"My dear Beverley," said the Viscount, smiling again, "I tell you the man who wins Cleone Meredith must be stronger, handsomer, richer, and more accomplished than any 'Buck,' 'Corinthian,' or 'Macaroni' of 'em all--"

"Or more determined!" added Barnabas.

"Or more determined, yes," nodded the Viscount.

"Then I shall certainly marry her--some day," said Barnabas.

Again the Viscount eyed Barnabas a while in silence, but this time, be it noted, he smiled no more.

"Hum!" said he at last, "so it seems in finding a friend I have also found myself another rival?"

"I greatly fear so," said Barnabas, and they walked on together.

But when they had gone some distance in moody silence, the Viscount

spoke:

"Beverley," said he, "forewarned is forearmed!"

"Yes," answered Barnabas, "that is why I told you."

"Then," said the Viscount, "I think we'll--shake hands--after all."

The which they did forthwith.

Now it was at this moment that Milo of Crotona took it upon himself to become visible.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCERNING THE BUTTONS OF ONE MILO OF CROTONA

Never did a pair of top boots, big or little, shine with a lustre more resplendent; never was postilion's jacket more excellent of fit, nattier, or more carefully brushed; and nowhere could there be found two rows of crested silver buttons with such an air of waggish roguery, so sly, so knowing, and so pertinaciously on the everlasting wink, as these same eight buttons that adorned the very small person of his groomship, Milo of Crotona. He had slipped out suddenly from the hedge, and now stood cap in hand, staring from the Viscount to Barnabas, and back again, with his innocent blue eyes, and with every blinking, twinkling button on his jacket. And his eyes were wide and guileless--the eyes of a cherub; but his buttons!

Yea, forsooth, it was all in his buttons as they winked slyly one to another as much as to say:

"Aha! we don't know why his Lordship's nankeens are greened at the knees, not we! nor why the gent's lower lip is unduly swelled. Lord love your eyes and limbs, oh no!"

"What, my imp of innocence!" exclaimed the Viscount. "Where have you sprung from?"

"'Edge, m'lud."

"Ah! and what might you have been doing in the hedge now?"

"Think'n', m'lud."

"And what were you thinking?"

"I were think'n', m'lud, as the tall genelman here is a top-sawyer wi' 'is daddies, m'lud. I was."

"Aha! so you've been watching, eh?"

"Not watchin'--oh no, m'lud; I just 'appened ter notice--that's all, m'lud."

"Ha!" exclaimed the Viscount; "then I suppose you happened to notice me being--knocked down?"

"No, m'lud; ye see, I shut my eyes--every time."

"Every time, eh!" said his Lordship, with his whimsical smile. "Oh Loyalty, thy name is Milo! But hallo!" he broke off, "I believe you've been fighting again--come here!"

"Fightin', m'lud! What, me?"

"What's the matter with your face--it's all swollen; there, your cheek?"

"Swellin', m'lud; I don't feel no swellin'."

"No, no; the other cheek."

"Oh, this, m'lud. Oh, 'e done it, 'e did; but I weren't fightin'."

"Who did it?"

"S' Mortimer's friend, 'e done it, 'e did."

"Sir Mortimer's friend?"

"Ah, 'im, m'lud."

"But, how in the world--"

"Wi' his fist, m'lud."

"What for?"

"'Cos I kicked 'im, I did."

"You--kicked Sir Mortimer Carnaby's friend!" exclaimed the Viscount. "What in heaven's name did you do that for?"

"'Cos you told me to, m'lud, you did."

"I told you to kick--"

"Yes, m'lud, you did. You sez to me, last week--arter I done up that butcher's boy--you sez to me, 'don't fight 'cept you can't 'elp it,' you sez; 'but allus pertect the ladies,' you sez, 'an if so be as 'e's too big to reach wi' your fists--why, use your boots,' you sez, an' so I did, m'lud."

"So you were protecting a lady, were you, Imp?"

"Miss Clemency, mam; yes, m'lud. She's been good ter me, Miss Clemency, mam 'as--an' so when I seen 'im strugglin' an' a-tryin' to kiss 'er--when I 'eered 'er cry out--I came in froo de winder, an' I kicked 'im, I did, an' then--"

"Imp," said the Viscount gravely, "you are forgetting your aitches! And so Sir Mortimer's friend kissed her, did he? Mind your aitches now!"

"Yes, m' lud; an' when Hi seen the tears hin her eyes--"

"Now you are mixing them, Imp!--tears in her eyes. Well?"

"Why then I kicked him, m' lud, an' he turned round an' give me this 'ere."

"And what was Sir Mortimer's friend like?"

"A tall--werry sleepy gentleman, wot smiled, m' lud."

"Ha!" exclaimed the Viscount, starting; "and with a scar upon one cheek?"

"Yes, m'lud."

His Lordship frowned. "That would be Chichester," said he thoughtfully. "Now I wonder what the devil should bring that fellow so far from London?"

"Well, m' lud," suggested Milo, shaking his golden curls, "I kind of 'specks there's a woman at the bottom of it. There mostly generally is."

"Hum!" said the Viscount.

"'Sides, m' lud, I 'eard 'im talkin' 'bout a lady to S' Mortimer!"

"Did they mention her name?"

"The sleepy one 'e did, m' lud. Jist as S' Mortimer climbed into the chaise--'Here's wishing you luck wi' the lovely Meredyth,' 'e sez."

"Meredith!" exclaimed the Viscount.

"Meredith, m' lud; 'the lovely Meredith,' 'e sez, an' then, as he stood watchin' the chaise drive away, 'may the best man win,' sez 'e to himself, 'an' that's me,' sez'e."

"Boy," said the Viscount, "have the horses put to--at once."

"Werry good, m' lud," and, touching his small hat, Milo of Crotona turned and set off as fast as his small legs would carry him.

"Gad!" exclaimed his Lordship, "this is more than I bargained for. I must be off."

"Indeed!" said Barnabas, who for the last minute or so had been watching a man who was strolling idly up the lane, a tall, languid gentleman in a jaunty hat. "You seem all at once in a mighty hurry to get to London."

"London!" repeated the Viscount, staring blankly. "London? Oh, why yes, to be sure, I was going to London; but--hum--fact of the matter is, I've changed my mind about it, my dear Bev; I'm going--back. I'm following Carnaby."

"Ah!" said Barnabas, still intent upon the man in the lane,

"Carnaby again."

"Oh, damn the fellow!" exclaimed the Viscount.

"But--he is your friend."

"Hum!" said the Viscount; "but Carnaby is always--Carnaby, and she--"

"Meaning the Lady Cleone," said Barnabas.

"Is a woman--"

"'The lovely Meredith'!" nodded Barnabas.

"Exactly!" said the Viscount, frowning; "and Carnaby is the devil with women."

"But not this woman," answered Barnabas, frowning a little also.

"My dear fellow, men like Carnaby attract all women--"

"That," said Barnabas, shaking his head, "that I cannot believe."

"Have you known many women, Bev?"

"No," answered Barnabas; "but I have met the Lady Cleone--"

"Once!" added the Viscount significantly.

"Once!" nodded Barnabas.

"Hum," said the Viscount. "And, therefore," added Barnabas, "I don't think that we need fear Sir Mortimer as a rival."

"That," retorted the Viscount, shaking his head, "is because you don't know him--either."

Hereupon, having come to the inn and having settled their score, the Viscount stepped out to the stables accompanied by the round-faced landlord, while Barnabas, leaning out from the open casement, stared idly into the lane. And thus he once more beheld the gentleman in the jaunty hat, who stood lounging in the shade of one of the great trees that grew before the inn, glancing up and down the lane in the attitude of one who waits. He was tall and slender, and clad in a tight-fitting blue coat cut in the extreme of the prevailing fashion, and beneath his curly-brimmed hat, Barnabas saw a sallow face with lips a little too heavy, nostrils a little too thin, and eyes a little too close together, at least, so Barnabas thought, but what he noticed more particularly was the fact that one of the buttons of the blue coat had been wrenched away.

Now, as the gentleman lounged there against the tree, he switched languidly at a bluebell that happened to grow within his reach, cut it down, and with gentle, lazy taps beat it slowly into nothingness, which done, he drew out his watch, glanced at it, frowned, and was in the act of thrusting it back into his fob when the hedge opposite was parted suddenly and a man came through. A wretched being he looked, dusty, unkempt, unshorn, whose quick, bright eyes gleamed in the thin oval of his pallid face. At sight of this man the

gentleman's lassitude vanished, and he stepped quickly forward.

"Well," he demanded, "did you find her?"

"Yes, sir."

"And a cursed time you've been about it."

"Annersley is further than I thought, sir, and--"

"Pah! no matter, give me her answer," and the gentleman held out a slim white hand.

"She had no time to write, sir," said the man, "but she bid me tell you--"

"Damnation!" exclaimed the gentleman, glancing towards the inn, "not here, come further down the lane," and with the word he turned and strode away, with the man at his heels.

"Annersley," said Barnabas, as he watched them go; "Annersley."

But now, with a prodigious clatter of hoofs and grinding of wheels, the Viscount drove round in his curricle, and drew up before the door in masterly fashion; whereupon the two high-mettled bloods immediately began to rear and plunge (as is the way of their kind), to snort, to toss their sleek heads, and to dance, drumming their hoofs with a sound like a brigade of cavalry at the charge, whereupon the Viscount immediately fell to swearing at them, and his diminutive groom to roaring at them in his "stable voice," and the two ostlers to cursing them, and one another; in the midst of which hubbub out came Barnabas to stare at them with the quick, appraising eye of one who knows and loves horses.

To whom, thusly, the Viscount, speaking both to him and the horses:

"Oh, there you are, Bev--stand still, damn you! There's blood for you, eh, my dear fellow--devil burn your hide! Jump up, my dear fellow--Gad, they're pulling my arms off."

"Then you want me to come with you, Dick?"

"My dear Bev, of course I do--stand still, damn you--though we are rivals, we're friends first--curse your livers and bones--so jump up, Bev, and--oh dammem, there's no holding 'em--quick, up with you."

Now, as Barnabas stepped forward, afar off up the lane he chanced to espy a certain jaunty hat, and immediately, acting for once upon impulse, he shook his head.

"No, thanks," said he.

"Eh--no?" repeated the Viscount, "but you shall see her, I'll introduce you myself."

"Thanks, Dick, but I've decided not to go back."

"What, you won't come then?"

"No."

"Ah, well, we shall meet in London. Inquire for me at White's or Brooke's, any one will tell you where to find me. Good-by!"

Then, settling his feet more firmly, he took a fresh grip upon the reins, and glanced over his shoulder to where Milo of Crotona sat with folded arms in the rumble.

"All right behind?"

"Right, m'lud."

"Then give 'em their heads, let 'em go!"

The grooms sprang away, the powerful bays reared, once, twice, and then, with a thunder of hoofs, started away at a gallop that set the light vehicle rocking and swaying, yet which in no whit seemed to trouble Milo of Crotona, who sat upon his perch behind with folded arms as stiff and steady as a small graven image, until he and the Viscount and the curricle had been whirled into the distance and vanished in a cloud of dust.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH THE PATIENT READER MAY LEARN SOMETHING OF THE GENTLEMAN IN THE JAUNTY HAT

"Lord, but this is a great day for the old 'Cow,' sir," said the landlord, as Barnabas yet stood staring down the road, "we aren't had so many o' the quality here for years. Last night the young Vi-count, this morning, bright and early, Sir Mortimer Carnaby and friend, then the Vi-count again, along o' you, sir, an' now you an' Sir Mortimer's friend; you don't be no ways acquainted wi' Sir Mortimer's friend, be you, sir?"

"No," answered Barnabas, "what is his name?"

"Well, Sir Mortimer hailed him as 'Chichester,' I fancy, sir, though I aren't prepared to swear it, no more yet to oath it, not 'aving properly ob-served, but 'Chichester,' I think it were; and, 'twixt you an' me, sir, he be one o' your fine gentlemen as I aren't no wise partial to, an' he's ordered dinner and supper."

"Has he," said Barnabas, "then I think I'll do the same."

"Ay, ay, sir, very good."

"In the meantime could you let me have pen, ink and paper?"

"Ay, sir, surely, in the sanded parlor, this way, sir."

Forthwith he led Barnabas into a long, low panelled room, with a wide fireplace at the further end, beside which stood a great high-backed settle with a table before it. Then Barnabas sat down

and wrote a letter to his father, as here follows:--

* * * * *

My Dear Father and Natty Bell,--I have read somewhere in my books that 'adventures are to the adventurous,' and, indeed, I have already found this to be true. Now, since I am adventuring the great world, I adventure lesser things also.

Thus I have met and talked with an entertaining pedler, from whom I have learned that the worst place in the world is Giles's Rents down by the River; from him, likewise, I purchased a book as to the merits of which I begin to entertain doubts.

Then I have already thrashed a friend of the Prince Regent, and somewhat spoiled a very fine gentleman, and, I fear, am like to be necessitated to spoil another before the day is much older; from each of whom I learn that a Prince's friend may be an arrant knave.

Furthermore, I have become acquainted with the son of an Earl, and finding him a man also, have formed a friendship with him, which I trust may endure.

Thus far, you see, much has happened to me; adventures have befallen me in rapid succession. 'Wonderful!' say you. 'Not at all,' say I, since I have found but what I sought after, for, as has been said--'adventures are to the adventurous.' Therefore, within the next few hours, I confidently expect other, and perchance weightier, happenings to overtake me because--I intend them to. So much for myself.

Now, as for you and Natty Bell, it is with deep affection that I think of you--an affection that shall abide with me always. Also, you are both in my thoughts continually. I remember our bouts with the 'muffles,' and my wild gallops on unbroken horses with Natty Bell; surely he knows a horse better than any, and is a better rider than boxer, if that could well be. Indeed, I am fortunate in having studied under two such masters.

Furthermore, I pray you to consider that this absence of mine will only draw us closer together, in a sense. Indeed, now, when I think of you both, I am half-minded to give up this project and come back to you. But my destiny commands me, and destiny must be obeyed. Therefore I shall persist unto the end; but whether I succeed or no, remember, I pray of you, that I am always,

Your lover and friend,

Barnabas.

P.S.--Regarding the friend of the Prince Regent, I could wish now that I had struck a little harder, and shall do so next time, should the opportunity be given.

B.

Having finished this letter, in which it will be seen he made no mention of the Lady Cleone, though his mind was yet full of her, having finished his letter I say, Barnabas sanded it, folded it,

affixed wafers, and had taken up his pen to write the superscription, when he was arrested by a man's voice speaking in a lazy drawl, just outside the open lattice behind him.

"Now 'pon my soul and honor, Beatrix--so much off ended virtue for a stolen kiss--begad! you were prodigal of 'em once--"

"How-dare you! Oh, coward that you are!" exclaimed another voice, low and repressed, yet vibrant with bitter scorn; "you know that I found you out--in time, thank God!"

"Beatrix?" said Barnabas to himself.

"In time; ah! and pray who'd believe it? You ran away from me--but you ran away with me--first! In time? Did your father believe it, that virtuous old miser? would any one, who saw us together, believe it? No, Beatrix, I tell you all the world knows you for my--"

"Stop!" A moment's silence and then came a soft, gently amused laugh.

"Lord, Beatrix, how handsome you are!--handsomer than ever, begad! I'm doubly fortunate to have found you again. Six years is a long time, but they've only matured you--ripened you. Yes, you're handsomer than ever; upon my life and soul you are!"

But here came the sudden rush of flying draperies, the sound of swift, light footsteps, and Barnabas was aware of the door behind him being opened, closed and bolted, and thereafter, the repressed sound of a woman's passionate weeping. Therefore he rose up from the settle, and glancing over its high back, beheld Clemency.

Almost in the same moment she saw him, and started back to the wall, glanced from Barnabas to the open lattice, and covered her face with her hands. And now not knowing what to do, Barnabas crossed to the window and, being there, looked out, and thus espied again the languid gentleman, strolling up the lane, with his beaver hat cocked at the same jaunty angle, and swinging his betasselled stick as he went.

"You--you heard, then!" said Clemency, almost in a whisper.

"Yes," answered Barnabas, without turning; "but, being a great rascal he probably lied."

"No, it is--quite true--I did run away with him; but oh! indeed, indeed I left him again before--before--"

"Yes, yes," said Barnabas, a little hurriedly, aware that her face was still hidden in her hands, though he kept his eyes studiously averted. Then all at once she was beside him, her hands were upon his arm, pleading, compelling; and thus she forced him to look at her, and, though her cheeks yet burned, her eyes met his, frank and unashamed.

"Sir," said she, "you do believe that I--that I found him out in time--that I--escaped his vileness--you must believe--you shall!" and her slender fingers tightened on his arm. "Oh, tell me--tell me, you believe!"

"Yes," said Barnabas, looking down into the troubled depths of her eyes; "yes, I do believe."

The compelling hands dropped from his arm, and she stood before him, staring out blindly into the glory of the morning; and Barnabas could not but see how the tears glistened under her lashes; also he noticed how her brown, shapely hands griped and wrung each other.

"Sir," said she suddenly; "you are a friend of--Viscount Devenham."

"I count myself so fortunate."

"And--therefore--a gentleman."

"Indeed, it is my earnest wish."

"Then you will promise me that, should you ever hear anything spoken to the dishonor of Beatrice Darville, you will deny it."

"Yes," said Barnabas, smiling a little grimly, "though I think I should do--more than that."

Now when he said this, Clemency looked up at him suddenly, and in her eyes there was a glow no tears could quench; her lips quivered but no words came, and then, all at once, she caught his hand, kissed it, and so was gone, swift and light, and shy as any bird.

And, in a while, happening to spy his letter on the table, Barnabas sat down and wrote out the superscription with many careful flourishes, which done, observing his hat near by, he took it up, brushed it absently, put it on, and went out into the sunshine.

Yet when he had gone but a very little way, he paused, and seeing he still carried the letter in his hand, thrust it into his breast, and so remained staring thoughtfully towards that spot, green and shady with trees, where he and the Viscount had talked with the Apostle of Peace. And with his gaze bent thitherwards he uttered a name, and the name was--

"Beatrix."

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH BARNABAS ENGAGES ONE WITHOUT A CHARACTER

Barnabas walked on along the lane, head on breast, plunged in a profound reverie, and following a haphazard course, so much so that, chancing presently to look about him, he found that the lane had narrowed into a rough cart track that wound away between high banks gay with wild flowers, and crowned with hedges, a pleasant, shady spot, indeed, as any thoughtful man could wish for.

Now as he walked, he noticed a dry ditch--a grassy, and most inviting ditch; therefore Barnabas sat him down therein, leaning his back against the bank.

"Beatrix!" said he, again, and thrusting his hands into his pockets he became aware of the "priceless wollum." Taking it out, he began turning its pages, idly enough, and eventually paused at one headed thus:

* * * * *

THE CULT OF DRESS.

* * * * *

But he had not read a dozen words when he was aware of a rustling of leaves, near by, that was not of the wind, and then the panting of breath drawn in painful gasps; and, therefore, having duly marked his place with a finger, he raised his head and glanced about him. As he did so, the hedge, almost opposite, was burst asunder and a man came slipping down the bank, and, regaining his feet, stood staring at Barnabas and panting. A dusty, bedraggled wretch he looked, unshaven and unkempt, with quick, bright eyes that gleamed in the pale oval of his face.

"What do you want?" Barnabas demanded.

"Everything!" the man panted, with the ghost of a smile on his pallid lips; "but--the ditch would do."

"And why the ditch?"

"Because they're--after me."

"Who are?"

"Gamekeepers!"

"Then, you're a poacher?"

"And a very clumsy one--they had me once--close on me now."

"How many?"

"Two."

"Then--hum!--get into the ditch," said Barnabas.

Now the ditch, as has been said, was deep and dry, and next moment, the miserable fugitive was hidden from view by reason of this, and of the grasses and wild flowers that grew luxuriantly there; seeing which, Barnabas went back to his reading.

> "It is permitted," solemnly writes the Person of Quality, "that white waistcoats be worn,--though sparingly, for caution is always advisable, and a buff waistcoat therefore is recommended as safer. Coats, on the contrary, may occasionally vary both as to the height of the collar, which must, of course, roll, and the number of buttons--"

Thus far the Person of Quality when:

"Hallo, theer" roared a stentorian voice.

"Breeches, on the other hand," continues the Person of Quality gravely, "are governed as inexorably as the Medes and Persians; thus, for mornings they must be either pantaloons and Hessians--"

"Hallo theer! oho!--hi!--waken oop will 'ee!"

"Or buckskins and top boots--"

"Hi!" roared the voice, louder than ever, "you theer under th' 'edge,--oho!"

Once more Barnabas marked the place with his finger, and glancing up, straightway espied Stentor, somewhat red-faced, as was but natural, clad in a velveteen jacket and with a long barrelled gun on his shoulder.

"Might you be shouting at me?" inquired Barnabas.

"Well," replied Stentor, looking up and down the lane, "I don't see nobody else to shout at, so let's s'pose as I be shouting at ye, bean't deaf, be ye?"

"No, thank God."

"'Cause if so be as y' are deaf, a can shout a tidy bit louder nor that a reckon."

"I can hear you very well as it is."

"Don't go for to be too sartin, now; ye see I've got a tidy voice, I have, which I aren't noways afeared o' usin'!"

"So it would appear!" nodded Barnabas.

"You're quite sure as ye can 'ear me, then?"

"Quite."

"Werry good then, if you are sure as you can 'ear me I'd like to ax 'ee a question, though, mark me, I'll shout it, ah! an' willin'; if so be you're minded, say the word!"

But, before Barnabas could reply, another man appeared, being also clad in velveteens and carrying a long barrelled gun.

"Wot be doin', Jarge?" he inquired of Stentor, in a surly tone, "wot be wastin' time for"

"W'y, lookee, I be about to ax this 'ere deaf chap a question, though ready, ah! an' willin' to shout it, if so be 'e gives the word."

"Stow yer gab, Jarge," retorted Surly, more surly than ever, "you be a sight too fond o' usin' that theer voice o' your'n!" saying which he turned to Barnabas:

"Did ye see ever a desprit, poachin' wagabone run down this 'ere lane, sir?" he inquired.

"No," answered Barnabas.

"Well, did ye see ever a thievin' wastrel run oop this 'ere lane?" demanded Stentor.

"No," answered Barnabas.

"But we seen 'im run this way," demurred Surly.

"Ah!--he must ha' run oop or down this 'ere lane," said Stentor.

"He did neither," said Barnabas.

"Why, then p'r'aps you be stone blind as well as stone deaf?" suggested Stentor.

"Neither one nor the other," answered Barnabas, "and now, since I have answered all your questions, suppose you go and look somewhere else?"

"Look, is it?--look wheer--d'ye mean--?"

"I mean--go."

"Go!" repeated Stentor, round of eye, "then s'pose you tell us--wheer!"

"Anywhere you like, only--be off!"

"Now you can claw me!" exclaimed Stentor with an injured air, nodding to his gun, seeing his companion had already hurried off, "you can grab and duck me if this don't beat all!--you can burn an' blister me if ever I met a deaf cove as was so ongrateful as this 'ere deaf cove,--me 'avin' used this yer v'ice o' mine for 'is be'oof an' likewise benefit; v'ices like mine is a gift as was bestowed for deaf 'uns like 'im;--I've met deaf 'uns afore, yes,--but such a ongrateful deaf 'un as 'im,--no. All I 'opes is as 'e gets deafer an' deafer, as deaf as a stock, as a stone, as a--dead sow,--that's all I 'opes!"

Having said which, Stentor nodded to his gun again, glanced at Barnabas again, and strode off, muttering, after his companion.

Hereupon Barnabas once more opened his book; yet he was quite aware that the fugitive had thrust his head out of the ditch, and having glanced swiftly about, was now regarding him out of the corners of his eyes.

"Why do you stare at me?" he demanded suddenly.

"I was wondering why you took the trouble and risk of shielding such a thing as I am," answered the fugitive.

"Hum!" said Barnabas, "upon my soul,--I don't know."

"No," said the man, with the ghostly smile upon his lips again, "I thought not."

Now, as he looked at the man, Barnabas saw that his cheeks, beneath

their stubble, were hollow and pinched, as though by the cruel hands of want and suffering. And yet in despite of all this and of the grizzled hair at his temples, the face was not old, moreover there was a merry twinkle in the eye, and a humorous curve to the wide-lipped mouth that appealed to Barnabas.

"And you are a poacher, you say?"

"Yes, sir, and that is bad, I confess, but, what is worse, I was, until I took to poaching, an honest man without a shred of character."

"How so?"

"I was discharged--under a cloud that was never dispelled."

"To be sure, you don't look like an ordinary poacher."

"That is because I am an extraordinary one."

"You mean?"

"That I poach that I may live to--poach again, sir. I am, at once, a necessitous poacher, and a poacher by necessity."

"And what by choice?"

"A gentleman, sir, with plenty of money and no ambitions."

"Why deny ambition?"

"Because I would live a quiet life, and who ever heard of an ambitious man ever being quiet, much less happy and contented?"

"Hum!" said Barnabas, "and what were you by profession?"

"My calling, sir, was to work for, think for, and shoulder the blame for others--generally fools, sir. I was a confidential servant, a valet, sir. And I have worked, thought, and taken the blame for others so very successfully, that I must needs take to poaching that I may live."

"But--other men may require valets!"

"True, sir, and there are plenty of valets to be had--of a sort; but the most accomplished one in the world, if without a character, had better go and hang himself out of the way, and have done with it. And indeed, I have seriously contemplated so doing."

"You rate yourself very highly."

"And I go in rags! Though a professed thief may do well in the world, though the blackest rascal, the slyest rogue, may thrive and prosper, the greatest of valets being without a character, may go in rags and starve--and very probably will."

"Hum!" said Barnabas.

"Now, to starve, sir, is unpleasant; thus I, having a foolish, though very natural, dread of it, poach rabbits that I may exist. I

possess also an inborn horror of rags and dirt, therefore I--exchanged this coat and breeches from a farmhouse, the folk being all away in the fields, and though they are awkward, badly-made garments, still beggars--and--"

"Thieves!" added Barnabas.

"And thieves, sir, cannot always be choosers, can they?"

"Then you admit you are a thief?"

Here the fugitive glanced at Barnabas with a wry smile.

"Sir, I fear I must. Exchange is no robbery they say; but my rags were so very ragged, and these garments are at least wearable."

"You have also been a--great valet, I understand?"

"And have served many gentlemen in my time."

"Then you probably know London and the fashionable world?"

"Yes, sir," said the man, with a sigh.

"Now," pursued Barnabas, "I am given to understand, on the authority of a Person of Quality, that to dress properly is an art."

The fugitive nodded. "Indeed, sir, though your Person of Quality should rather have called it the greatest of all the arts."

"Why so?"

"Because by dress it is possible to make--something out of nothing!"

"Explain yourself."

"Why, there was the case of young Lord Ambleside, a nobleman remarkable for a vague stare, and seldom saying anything but 'What!' or 'Dey-vil take me!' though I'll admit he could curse almost coherently--at times. I found him nothing but a lord, and very crude material at that, yet in less than six months he was made."

"Made?"

"Made, sir," nodded the fugitive. "I began him with a cravat, an entirely original creation, which drew the approval of Brummell himself, and, consequently, took London by storm, and I continued him with a waistcoat."

"Not a--white one?" Barnabas inquired.

"No, sir, it was a delicate pink, embroidered with gold, and of quite a new cut and design, which was the means of introducing him to the notice of Royalty itself. The Prince had one copied from it, and wore it at a state reception. And I finished him with a pair of pantaloons which swept the world of fashion clean off its legs, and brought him into lasting favor with the Regent. So my Lord was made, and eventually I married him to an heiress."

"You married him?"

"That is to say, I dictated all his letters, and composed all his verses, which speedily brought the affair to a happy culmination."

"You seem to be a man of many and varied gifts?"

"And one--without a character, sir."

"Nevertheless," said Barnabas, "I think you are the very man I require."

"Sir," exclaimed the fugitive, staring, "sir?"

"And therefore," continued Barnabas, "you may consider yourself engaged."

"Engaged, sir--engaged!" stammered the man--"me?"

"As my valet," nodded Barnabas.

"But, sir, I told you--I was--a thief!"

"Yes," said Barnabas, "and therefore I have great hopes of your future honesty."

Now hereupon the man, still staring, rose up to his knees, and with a swift, appealing gesture, stretched out his hands towards Barnabas, and his hands were trembling all at once.

"Sir!" said he, "oh, sir--d'ye mean it? You don't know, you can't know what such an offer means to me. Sir, you're not jesting with me?"

"No," answered Barnabas, calmly serious of eye, "no, I'm not jesting; and to prove it, here is an advance of wages." And he dropped two guineas into the man's open palm.

The man stared down at the coins in his hand, then rose abruptly to his feet and turned away, and when he spoke again his voice was hoarse.

"Sir," said he, jerkily, "for such trust I would thank you, only words are too poor. But if, as I think, it is your desire to enter the World of Fashion, it becomes my duty, as an honest man, to tell you that all your efforts, all your money, would be unavailing, even though you had been introduced by Barrymore, or Hanger, or Vibart, or Brummell himself."

"Ah," said Barnabas, "and why?"

"Because you have made a fatal beginning."

"How?"

"By knocking down the Prince's friend and favorite--Sir Mortimer Carnaby."

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH BARNABAS PARTS COMPANY WITH THE PERSON OF QUALITY

For a long moment the two remained silent, each staring at the other, Barnabas still seated in the ditch and the man standing before him, with the coins clutched in his hand.

"Ah!" said Barnabas, at last, "then you were in the wood?"

"I lay hidden behind a bush, and watched you do it, sir."

"And what were you doing in Annersley Wood?"

"I bore a message, sir, for the lady."

"Ah!" said Barnabas, "the lady--yes."

"Who lay watching you, also."

"No," said Barnabas, "the lady was unconscious."

"Yet recovered sufficiently to adjust her habit, and to watch you knock him down."

"Hum!" said Barnabas, and was silent a while. "Have you heard such a name as Chichester?" he inquired suddenly.

"No, sir."

"And did you deliver the letter?"

"I did, sir."

"And she--sent back an answer?"

"Yes, sir."

"The gentleman who sent the letter was tall and slender, I think, with dark hair, and a scar on his cheek?"

"Yes, sir."

"And when you came back with her answer, he met you down the lane yonder, and I heard you say that the lady had no time to write."

"Yes, sir; but she promised to meet him at a place called Oakshott's Barn."

"Ah!" said Barnabas, "I think I know it."

"At sunset, sir!"

"That would be somewhere about half past seven," mused Barnabas, staring blankly, down at the book on his knee.

"Yes, sir."

"How came you to be carrying his letter?"

"He offered me five shillings to go and bring her answer."

"Did you know the lady?"

"No, sir, but he described her."

"To be sure." said Barnabas; "he mentioned her hair, perhaps?"

"Yes, sir."

"Her--eyelashes, perhaps?"

"And her eyes also, sir."

"Yes, her eyes, of course. He seemed to know her well, perhaps?"

"Yes, sir."

"And she--promised to meet him--in a very lonely place?"

"At Oakshott's Barn, sir."

Once again Barnabas stared down at his book, and was silent so long that his new servant wondered, grew fidgety, coughed, and at last spoke.

"Sir," said he, "what are your orders?"

Barnabas started and looked up.

"Orders?" he repeated; "why, first of all, get something to eat, then find yourself a barber, and wait for me at 'The Spotted Cow.'"

"Yes, sir." The man bowed, turned away, took three or four steps, and came back again.

"Sir," said he, "I have two guineas of yours, and you have never even asked my name."

"True," said Barnabas.

"Supposing I go, and never come back?"

"Then I shall be two guineas the poorer, and you will have proved yourself a thief; but until you do, you are an honest man, so far as I am concerned."

"Sir, said the fugitive, hoarsely, but with a new light in his face," for that, if I were not your servant--I--should like to--clasp your hand; and, sir, my name is John Peterby."

"Why, then," said Barnabas, smiling all at once, "why then, John Peterby, here it is!"

So, for a moment their hands met, and then John Peterby turned sharp about and strode away down the lane, his step grown light and his

head held high.

But as for Barnabas, he sat there in the ditch, staring at nothing; and as he stared his brow grew black and ever blacker, until chancing at last to espy the "priceless wollum," where it lay beside him, he took it up, balanced it in his hand, then hurled it over the opposite hedge: which done, he laughed sudden and harsh, and clenched his fists.

"God!" he exclaimed, "a goddess and a satyr!" and so sat staring on at nothingness again.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW BARNABAS CAME TO OAKSHOTT'S BARN

The sun was getting low, as Barnabas parted the brambles, and looking about him, frowned. He stood in a grassy glade or clearing, a green oasis hemmed in on every side with bushes. Before him was Oakshott's Barn, an ancient structure, its rotting thatch dishevelled, its doors gone long since, its aged walls cracked and scarred by years, a very monument of desolation; upon its threshold weeds had sprung up, and within its hoary shadow breathed an air damp, heavy, and acrid with decay.

It was indeed a place of solitude full of the "hush" of leaves, shut out from the world, close hidden from observation, a place apt for the meetings of lovers. And, therefore, leaning in the shadow of the yawning doorway, Barnabas frowned.

Evening was falling, and from shadowy wood, from dewy grass and flower, stole wafts of perfume, while from some thicket near by a blackbird filled the air with the rich note of his languorous song; but Barnabas frowned only the blacker, and his hand clenched itself on the stick he carried, a heavy stick, that he had cut from the hedge as he came.

All at once the blackbird's song was hushed, and gave place to a rustle of leaves that drew nearer and nearer; yet Barnabas never moved, not even when the bushes were pushed aside and a man stepped into the clearing--a tall, elegant figure, who having paused to glance sharply about him, strolled on again towards the barn, swinging his tasselled walking-cane, and humming softly to himself as he came. He was within a yard of Barnabas when he saw him, and stopped dead.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, softly; and thereafter the two eyed each other in an ominous silence.

"And who the devil are you?" he inquired at length, his eyes still intent.

"Sir," said Barnabas, yet leaning in the doorway--"your name I think, is Chichester?"

"Well?"

"Permit me to return your coat button!" and Barnabas held out the article in question, but Mr. Chichester never so much as glanced at it.

"What do you want here?" he demanded, soft of voice.

"To tell you that this dismal place is called Oakshott's Barn, sir."

"Well?"

"To warn you that Oakshott's Barn is an unhealthy place--for your sort, sir."

"Ha!" said Mr. Chichester, his heavy-lidded eyes unwinking, "do you threaten?"

"Let us rather say--I warn!"

"So you do threaten!"

"I warn!" repeated Barnabas.

"To the devil with you and your warning!" All this time neither of them had moved or raised his voice, only Mr. Chichcster's thin, curving nostrils began to twitch all at once, while his eyes gleamed beneath their narrowed lids. But now Barnabas stepped clear of the doorway, the heavy stick swinging in his hand.

"Then, sir," said he, "let me advise. Let me advise you to hurry from this solitude."

Mr. Chichester laughed--a low, rippling laugh.

"Ah!" said he, "ah, so that's it!"

"Yes," nodded Barnabas, shifting his gaze to Mr. Chichester's right hand, a white beringed hand, whose long, slender fingers toyed with the seals that dangled at his fob, "so pray take up your button and go!"

Mr. Chichester glanced at the heavy stick; at the powerful hand, the broad shoulders and resolute face of him who held it, and laughed again, and, laughing, bowed.

"Your solicitude for my health--touches me, sir,--touches me, my thanks are due to you, for my health is paramount. I owe you a debt which I shall hope to repay. This place, as you say, is dismal. I wish you good evening!" saying which, Mr. Chichester turned away. But in that same instant, swift and lithe as a panther, Barnabas leapt, and dropping his stick, caught that slender, jewelled hand, bent it, twisted it, and wrenched the weapon from its grasp. Mr. Chichester stood motionless, white-lipped and silent, but a devil looked out of his eyes.

"Ah!" said Barnabas, glancing down at the pistol he held, "I judged you would not venture into these wilds without something of the sort. The path, you will notice, lies to your left; it is a winding path,

I will go with you therefore, to see that you do not lose your way, and wander--back here again."

Without a word Mr. Chichester turned, and coming to the path followed it, walking neither fast nor slow, never once looking to where Barnabas strode behind, and heedless of briar or bramble that dragged at him as he passed. On they went, until the path lost itself in a grassy lane, until the lane ended in a five-barred gate. Now, having opened the gate, Mr. Chichester passed through into the high road, and then, for one moment he looked at Barnabas, a long, burning look that took in face, form and feature, and so, still without uttering a word, he went upon his way, walking neither fast nor slow, and swinging his tasselled cane as he went, while Barnabas, leaning upon the gate, watched him until his tall, slender figure had merged into the dusk, and was gone.

Then Barnabas sighed, and becoming aware of the pistol in his hand, smiled contemptuously, and was greatly minded to throw it away, but slipped it into his pocket instead, for he remembered the devil in the eyes of Mr. Chichester.

CHAPTER XIX

WHICH TELLS HOW BARNABAS TALKS WITH MY LADY CLEONE FOR THE SECOND TIME

It was dark among the trees, but, away to his left, though as yet low down, the moon was rising, filling the woods with mystery, a radiant glow wherein objects seemed to start forth with a new significance; here the ragged hole of a tree, gnarled, misshapen; there a wide-flung branch, weirdly contorted, and there again a tangle of twigs and strange, leafy shapes that moved not. And over all was a deep and brooding quietude.

Yes, it was dark among the trees, yet not so black as the frown that clouded the face of Barnabas as he strode on through the wood, and so betimes reached again the ancient barn of Oakshott. And lo! even as he came there, it was night, and because the trees grew tall and close together, the shadows lay thicker than ever save only in one place where the moon, finding some rift among the leaves, sent down a shaft of silvery light that made a pool of radiance amid the gloom. Now, as Barnabas gazed at this, he stopped all at once, for, just within this patch of light, he saw a foot. It was a small foot, proudly arched, a shapely foot and slender, like the ankle above; indeed, a haughty and most impatient foot, that beat the ground with angry little taps, and yet, in all and every sense, surely, and beyond a doubt, the most alluring foot in the world. Therefore Barnabas sighed and came a step nearer, and in that moment it vanished; therefore Barnabas stood still again. There followed a moment's silence, and then:

"Dear," said a low, thrilling voice, "have you come--at last? Ah! but you are late, I began to fear--" The soft voice faltered and broke off with a little gasp, and, as Barnabas stepped out of the

shadows, she shrank away, back and back, to the mossy wall of the barn, and leaned there staring up at him with eyes wide and fearful. Her hood, close drawn, served but to enhance the proud beauty of her face, pale under the moon, and her cloak, caught close in one white hand, fell about her ripe loveliness in subtly revealing folds. Now in her other hand she carried a silver-mounted riding-whip. And because of the wonder of her beauty, Barnabas sighed again, and because of the place wherein they stood, he frowned; yet, when he spoke, his voice was gentle:

"Don't be afraid, madam, he is gone."

"Gone!" she echoed, faintly.

"Yes, we are quite alone; consequently you have no more reason to be afraid."

"Afraid, sir? I thought--why, 'twas you who startled me."

"Ay," nodded Barnabas, "you expected--him!"

"Where is he? When did he go?"

"Some half-hour since."

"Yet he expected me; he knew I should come; why did he go?"

Now hereupon Barnabas lifted a hand to his throat, and loosened his neckcloth.

"Why then," said he slowly, "you have--perhaps--met him hereabouts--before to-night?"

"Sir," she retorted, "you haven't answered me; why did he go so soon?"

"He was--forced to, madam."

"Forced to go,--without seeing me,--without one word! Oh, impossible!"

"I walked with him to the cross-roads, and saw him out of sight."

"But I--I came as soon as I could! Ah! surely he gave you some message--some word for me?"

"None, madam!" said Barnabas evenly, but his hand had clenched itself suddenly on the stick he held.

"But I--don't understand!" she sighed, with a helpless gesture of her white hands, "to hurry away like this, without a word! Oh, why--why did he go?"

"Madam," said Barnabas, "it was because I asked him to."

"You--asked him to?"

"I did."

"But why--why?"

"Because, from what little I know of him, I judged it best."

"Sir," she said, softly, "sir--what do you mean?"

"I mean, that this is such a very lonely place for any woman and--such as he."

Now even as Barnabas uttered the words she advanced upon him with upflung head and eyes aflame with sudden passionate scorn.

"Insolent," she exclaimed. "So it was you--you actually dared to interfere?"

"Madam," said Barnabas, "I did."

Very straight and proud she stood, and motionless save for the pant and tumult of her bosom, fierce-eyed and contemptuous of lip.

"And remained to insult me--with impunity."

"To take you home again," said Barnabas, "therefore pray let us begone."

"Us? Sir, you grow presumptuous."

"As you will," said Barnabas, "only let us go."

"With you?" she exclaimed.

"With me."

"No--not a step, sir; When I choose to go, I go alone."

"But to-night," said Barnabas, gentle of voice but resolute of eye, "to-night--I go with you."

"You!" she cried, "a man I have seen but once, a man who may be anything, a--a thief, a ploughman, a runaway groom for aught I know." Now, watching him beneath disdainful drooping lashes, she saw Barnabas flinch at this, and the curve of her scornful lips grew more bitter.

"And now I'm going--alone. Stand aside, and let me pass."

"No, madam."

"Let me pass, I warn you!"

For a minute they fronted each other, eye to eye, very silent and still, like two antagonists that measure each other's strength; then Barnabas smiled and shook his head. And in that very instant, quick and passionate, she raised her whip and struck him across the cheek. Then, as she stood panting, half fearful of what she had done, Barnabas reached out and took the whip, and snapped it between his hands.

"And now," said he, tossing aside the broken pieces, "pray let us go."

"No."

"Why, then," sighed Barnabas, "I must carry you again."

Once more she shrank away from him, back and back to the crumbling wall, and leaned there. But now because of his passionless strength, she fell a-trembling and, because of his calmly resolute eyes and grimly smiling mouth, fear came upon her, and therefore, because she could not by him, because she knew herself helpless against him, she suddenly covered her face from his eyes, and a great sob burst from her.

Barnabas stopped, and looking at her bowed head and shrinking figure, knew not what to do. And as he stood there within a yard of her, debating within himself, upon the quiet broke a sudden sound--a small, sharp sound, yet full of infinite significance--the snapping of a dry twig among the shadows; a sound that made the ensuing silence but the more profound, a breathless quietude which, as moment after moment dragged by, grew full of deadly omen. And now, even as Barnabas turned to front these menacing shadows, the moon went out.

CHAPTER XX

OF THE PROPHECY OF ONE BILLY BUTTON, A MADMAN

Upon the quiet stole a rustle of leaves, a whisper that came and went, intermittently, that grew louder and louder, and so was gone again; but in place of this was another sound, a musical jingle like the chime of fairy bells, very far, and faint, and sweet. All at once Barnabas knew that his companion's fear of him was gone, swallowed up--forgotten in terror of the unknown. He heard a slow-drawn, quivering sigh, and then, pale in the dimness, her hand came out to him, crept down his arm, and finding his hand, hid itself in his warm clasp; and her hand was marvellous cold, and her fingers stirred and trembled in his.

Came again a rustling in the leaves, but louder now, and drawing nearer and nearer, and ever the fairy chime swelled upon the air. And even as it came Barnabas felt her closer, until her shoulder touched his, until the fragrance of her breath fanned his cheek, until the warmth of her soft body thrilled through him, until, loud and sudden in the silence, a voice rose--a rich, deep voice:

"'Now is the witching hour when graveyards yawn'--the witching hour--aha!--Oh! poor pale ghost, I know thee--by thy night-black hair and sad, sweet eyes--I know thee. Alas, so young and dead--while I, alas, so old and much alive! Yet I, too, must die some day--soon, soon, beloved shadow. Then shall my shade encompass thine and float up with thee into the infinite. But now, aha! now is the witching hour! Oh! shades and phantoms, I summon thee, fairies, pixies, ghosts and goblins, come forth, and I will sing you and dance you."

"Tis a rare song, mine--and well liked by the quality,--you've heard it before, perchance--ay, ay for you, being dead, hear and see all things, oh, Wise Ones! Come, press round me, so. Now, hearkee,

'Oysters! oysters! and away we go."

"'Many a knight and lady fair
My oysters fine would try,
They are the finest oysters, sir,
That ever you did buy.
Oysters! who'll buy my oysters, oh!'"

The bushes rustled again, and into the dimness leapt a tall, dark figure that sang in a rich, sweet voice, and capered among the shadows with a fantastic dancing step, then grew suddenly silent and still. And in that moment the moon shone out again, shone down upon a strange, wild creature, bareheaded and bare of foot. A very tall man he was, with curling gray hair that hung low upon his shoulders, and upon his coat were countless buttons of all makes and kinds that winked and glittered in the moonlight, and jingled faintly as he moved. For a moment he stood motionless and staring, then, laying one hand to the gleaming buttons on his bosom, bowed with an easy, courtly grace.

"Who are you?" demanded Barnabas.

"Billy, sir, poor Billy--Sir William, perhaps--but, mum for that; the moon knows, but cannot tell, then why should I?"

"And what do you want--here?"

"To sing, sir, for you and the lady, if you will. I sing for high folk and low folk. I have many songs, old and new, grave and gay, but folk generally ask for my Oyster Song. I sing for rich and poor, for the sad and for the merry. I sing at country fairs sometimes, and sometimes to trees in lonely places--trees are excellent listeners always. But to-night I sing for--Them."

"And who are they?"

"The Wise Ones, who, being dead, know all things, and live on for ever. Ah, but they're kind to poor Billy, and though they have no buttons to give him, yet they tell him things sometimes. Aha! such things!--things to marvel at! So I sing for them always when the moon is full, but, most of all, I sing for Her."

"Who is she?"

"One who died, many years ago. Folk told her I was dead, killed at sea, and her heart broke--hearts will break--sometimes. So when she died, I put off the shoes from my feet, and shall go barefoot to my grave. Folk tell me that poor Billy's mad--well, perhaps he is--but he sees and hears more than folk think; the Wise Ones tell me things. You now; what do they tell me of you? Hush! You are on your way to London, they tell me--yes--yes, to London town; you are rich, and shall feast with princes, but youth is over-confident, and thus shall you sup with beggars. They tell me you came here to-night--oh, Youth!--oh, Impulse!--hasting--hasting to save a wanton from herself."

"Fool!" exclaimed Barnabas, turning upon the speaker in swift anger; for my lady's hand had freed itself from his clasp, and she had drawn away from him.

"Fool?" repeated the man, shaking his head, "nay, sir, I am only mad, folk tell me. Yet the Wise Ones make me their confidant, they tell me that she--this proud lady--is here to aid an unworthy brother, who sent a rogue instead."

"Brother!" exclaimed Barnabas, with a sudden light in his eyes.

"Who else, sir?" demands my lady, very cold and proud again all at once.

"But," stammered Barnabas, "but--I thought--"

"Evil of me!" says she.

"No--that is--I--I--Forgive me!"

"Sir, there are some things no woman can forgive; you dared to think--"

"Of the rogue who came instead," said Barnabas.

"Ah!--the rogue?"

"His name is Chichester," said Barnabas.

"Chichester!" she repeated, incredulously. "Chichester!"

"A tall, slender, dark man, with a scar on his cheek," added Barnabas.

"Do you mean he was here--here to meet me--alone?"

Now, at this she seemed to shrink into herself; and, all at once, sank down, crouching upon her knees, and hid her face from the moon.

"My lady!"

"Oh!" she sighed, "oh, that he should have come to this!"

"My Lady Cleone!" said Barnabas, and touched her very gently.

"And you--you!" she cried, shuddering away from him, "you thought me what--he would have made me! You thought I--Oh, shame! Ah, don't touch me!"

But Barnabas stooped and caught her hands, and sank upon his knees, and thus, as they knelt together in the moonlight, he drew her so that she must needs let him see her face.

"My lady," said he, very reverently, "my thought of you is this, that, if such great honor may be mine, I will marry you--to-night."

But hereupon, with her two hands still prisoned in his, and with the tears yet thick upon her lashes, she threw back her head, and laughed with her eyes staring into his. Thereat Barnabas frowned blackly, and dropped her hands, then caught her suddenly in his long arms, and held her close.

"By God!" he exclaimed, "I'd kiss you, Cleone, on that scornful, laughing mouth, only--I love you--and this is a solitude. Come away!"

"A solitude," she repeated; "yes, and he sent me here, to meet a beast--a satyr! And now--you! You drove away the other brute, oh! I can't struggle--you are too strong--and nothing matters now!" And so she sighed, and closed her eyes. Then gazing down upon her rich, warm beauty, Barnabas trembled, and loosed her, and sprang to his feet.

"I think," said he, turning away to pick up his cudgel, "I think--we had--better--go."

But my lady remained crouched upon her knees, gazing up at him under her wet lashes.

"You didn't--kiss me!" she said, wonderingly.

"You were so--helpless!" said Barnabas. "And I honor you because it was--your brother."

"Ah! but you doubted me first, you thought I came here to meet that--beast!"

"Forgive me," said Barnabas, humbly.

"Why should I?"

"Because I love you."

"So many men have told me that," she sighed.

"But I," said Barnabas, "I am the last, and it is written 'the last shall be first,' and I love you because you are passionate, and pure, and very brave."

"Love!" she exclaimed, "so soon; you have seen me only once!"

"Yes," he nodded, "it is, therefore, to be expected that I shall worship you also--in due season."

Now Barnabas stood leaning upon his stick, a tall, impassive figure; his voice was low, yet it thrilled in her ears, and there was that in his steadfast eyes before which her own wavered and fell; yet, even so, from the shadow of her hood, she must needs question him further.

"Worship me? When?"

"When you are--my--wife."

Again she was silent, while one slender hand plucked nervously at the grass.

"Are you so sure of me?" she inquired at last.

"No; only of myself."

"Ah! you mean to--force a promise from me--here?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because it is night, and you are solitary; I would not have you fear me again. But I shall come to you, one day, a day when the sun is in the sky, and friends are within call. I shall come and ask you then."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then I shall wait."

"Until I wed another?"

"Until you change your mind."

"I think I shall--refuse you."

"Indeed, I fear it is very likely."

"Why?"

"Because of my unworthiness; and, therefore, I would not have you kneel while I stand."

"And the grass is very damp," she sighed.

So Barnabas stepped forward with hand outstretched to aid her, but, as he did so, the wandering singer was between them, looking from one to the other with his keen, bright eyes.

"Stay!" said he. "The Wise Ones have told me that she who kneels before you now, coveted for her beauty, besought for her money, shall kneel thus in the time to come; and one--even I, poor Billy--shall stand betwixt you and join your hands thus, and bid you go forth trusting in each other's love and strength, even as poor Billy does now. And, mayhap, in that hour you shall heed the voice, for time rings many changes; the proud are brought low, the humble exalted. Hush! the Wise Ones grow impatient for my song; I hear them calling from the trees, and must begone. But hearkee! they have told me your name, Barnabas? yes, yes; Barn--, Barnabas; for the other, no matter--mum for that! Barnabas, aha! that minds me--at Barnaby Bright we shall meet again, all three of us, under an orbed moon, at Barnaby Bright:--"

"Oh, Barnaby Bright, Barnaby Bright,
The sun's awake, and shines all night!"

"Ay, ay, 't is the night o' the fairies--when spirits pervade the air. Then will I tell you other truths; but now--They call me. She is fair, and passing fair, and by her beauty, suffering shall come upon thee; but 'tis by suffering that men are made, and because of pride, shame shall come on her; but by shame cometh humility. Farewell; I must begone--farewell till Barnaby Bright. We are to meet again in London town, I think--yes, yes--in London. Oho! oysters! oysters, sir?"

"Many a knight and lady gay
My oysters fine would try,
They are the finest oysters

That ever you could buy!
Oysters! Oysters."

And so he bowed, turned, and danced away into the shadows, and above the hush of the leaves rose the silvery jingle of his many buttons, that sank to a chime, to a murmur, and was gone. And now my lady sighed and rose to her feet, and looking at Barnabas, sighed again--though indeed a very soft, little sigh this time. As for Barnabas, he yet stood wondering, and looking after the strange creature, and pondering his wild words. Thus my lady, unobserved, viewed him at her leisure; noted the dark, close-curled hair, the full, well-opened, brilliant eye, the dominating jaw, the sensitive nostrils, the tender curve of the firm, strong mouth. And she had called him "a ploughman--a runaway footman," and had even--she could see the mark upon his cheek--how red it glowed! Did it hurt much, she wondered?

"Mad of course--yes a madman, poor fellow!" said Barnabas, thoughtfully.

"And he said your name is Barnabas."

"Why, to be sure, so he did," said Barnabas, rubbing his chin as one at a loss, "which is very strange, for I never saw or heard of him before."

"So then, your name is--Barnabas?"

"Yes. Barnabas Bar--Beverley."

"Beverley?"

"Yes--Beverley. But we must go."

"First, tell me how you learned my name?"

"From the Viscount--Viscount Devenham?"

"Then, you know the Viscount?"

"I do; we also know each other as rivals."

"Rivals? For what?"

"Yourself."

"For me? Sir--sir--what did you tell him?"

"My name is Barnabas. And I told him that I should probably marry you, some day."

"You told him--that?"

"I did. I thought it but honorable, seeing he is my friend."

"Your friend!--since when, sir?"

"Since about ten o'clock this morning."

"Sir--sir--are you not a very precipitate person?"

"I begin to think I am. And my name is Barnabas."

"Since ten o'clock this morning! Then you knew--me first?"

"By about an hour."

Swiftly she turned away, yet not before he had seen the betraying dimple in her cheek. And so, side by side, they came to the edge of the clearing.

Now as he stooped to open a way for her among the brambles, she must needs behold again the glowing mark upon his cheek, and seeing it, her glance fell, and her lips grew very tender and pitiful, and, in that moment, she spoke.

"Sir," she said, very softly, "sir?"

"My name is Barnabas."

"I fear--I--does your cheek pain you very much, Mr. Beverley?"

"Thank you, no. And my name is Barnabas."

"I did not mean to--to--"

"No, no, the fault was mine--I--I frightened you, and indeed the pain is quite gone," he stammered, holding aside the brambles for her passage. Yet she stood where she was, and her face was hidden in her hood. At last she spoke and her voice was very low.

"Quite gone, sir?"

"Quite gone, and my name is--"

"I'm very--glad--Barnabas."

Four words only, be it noted; yet on the face of Barnabas was a light that was not of the moon, as they entered the dim woodland together.

CHAPTER XXI

IN WHICH BARNABAS UNDERTAKES A MISSION

Their progress through the wood was slow, by reason of the undergrowth, yet Barnabas noticed that where the way permitted, she hurried on at speed, and moreover, that she was very silent and kept her face turned from him; therefore he questioned her.

"Are you afraid of these woods?"

"No."

"Of me?"

"No."

"Then, I fear you are angry again."

"I think Barnab--your name is--hateful!"

"Strange!" said Barnabas, "I was just thinking how musical it was--as you say it."

"I--oh! I thought your cheek was paining you," said she, petulantly.

"My cheek?--what has that to do with it?"

"Everything, sir!"

"That," said Barnabas, "that I don't understand."

"Of course you don't!" she retorted.

"Hum!" said Barnabas.

"And now!" she demanded, "pray how did you know I was to be at Oakshott's Barn to-night?"

"From my valet."

"Your valet?"

"Yes; though to be sure, he was a poacher, then."

"Sir, pray be serious!"

"I generally am."

"But why have a poacher for your valet?"

"That he might poach no more; and because I understand that he is the best valet in the world."

Here she glanced up at Barnabas and shook her head: "I fear I shall never understand you, Mr. Beverley."

"That time will show; and my name is Barnabas."

"But how did--this poacher--know?"

"He was the man who brought you the letter from Mr. Chichester."

"It was written by my--brother, sir."

"He was the man who gave you your brother's letter in Annersley Wood."

"Yes--I remember--in the wood."

"Where I found you lying quite unconscious."

"Where you found me--yes."

"Lying--quite unconscious!"

"Yes," she answered, beginning to hasten her steps again. "And where you left me without telling me your name--or--even asking mine."

"For which I blamed myself--afterwards," said Barnabas.

"Indeed, it was very remiss of you."

"Yes," sighed Barnabas, "I came back to try and find you."

"Really, sir?" said she, with black brows arched--"did you indeed, sir?"

"But I was too late, and I feared I had lost you--"

"Why, that reminds me, I lost my handkerchief."

"Oh!" said Barnabas, staring up at the moon.

"I think I must have dropped it--in the wood."

"Then, of course, it is gone--you may depend upon that," said Barnabas, shaking his head at the moon.

"It had my monogram embroidered in one corner."

"Indeed!" said Barnabas.

"Yes; I was--hoping--that you had seen it, perhaps?"

"On a bramble-bush," said Barnabas, nodding at the moon.

"Then--you did find it, sir?"

"Yes; and I beg to remind you that my name--"

"Where is it?"

"In my pocket."

"Then why couldn't you say so before?"

"Because I wished to keep it there."

"Please give it to me!"

"Why?"

"Because no man shall have my favors to wear until he has my promise, also."

"Then, since I have the one--give me the other."

"Mr. Beverley, you will please return my handkerchief," and stopping all at once, she held out her hand imperiously.

"Of course," sighed Barnabas, "on a condition--"

"On no condition, sir!"

"That you remember my name is Barnabas."

"But I detest your name."

"I am hoping that by use it may become a little less objectionable," said he, rather ponderously.

"It never can--never; and I want my handkerchief,--Barnabas."

So Barnabas sighed again, and perforce gave the handkerchief into her keeping. And now it was she who smiled up at the moon; but as for Barnabas, his gaze was bent earthwards. After they had gone some way in silence, he spoke.

"Have you met--Sir Mortimer Carnaby--often?" he inquired.

"Yes," she answered, then seeing his scowling look, added, "very often, oh, very often indeed, sir!"

"Ha!" said frowning Barnabas, "and is he one of the many who have--told you their love?"

"Yes."

"Hum," said Barnabas, and strode on in gloomy silence. Seeing which she smiled in the shadow of her hood, and thereafter grew angry all at once.

"And pray, why not, sir?" she demanded, haughtily, "though, indeed, it does not at all concern you; and he is at least a gentleman, and a friend of the Prince--"

"And has an excellent eye for horseflesh--and women," added Barnabas.

Now when he said this, she merely looked at him once, and thereafter forgot all about him, whereby Barnabas gradually perceived that his offence was great, and would have made humble atonement, yet found her blind and deaf, which was but natural, seeing that, for her, he had ceased to exist.

But they reached a stile. It was an uncommonly high stile, an awkward stile at any time, more especially at night. Nevertheless, she faced it resolutely, even though Barnabas had ceased to exist. When, therefore, having vaulted over, he would have helped her, she looked over him, and past him, and through him, and mounted unaided, confident of herself, proud and supremely disdainful both of the stile and Barnabas; and then--because of her pride, or her disdain, or her long cloak, or all three--she slipped, and to save herself must needs catch at Barnabas, and yield herself to his arm; so, for a moment, she lay in his embrace, felt his tight clasp about her, felt his quick breath upon her cheek. Then he had set her down, and was eyeing her anxiously.

"Your foot, is it hurt?" he inquired.

"Thank you, no," she answered, and turning with head carried high,

hurried on faster than ever.

"You should have taken my hand," said he; but he spoke to deaf ears.

"You will find the next stile easier, I think," he ventured; but still she hurried on, unheeding.

"You walk very fast!" said he again, but still she deigned him no reply; therefore he stooped till he might see beneath her hood.

"Dear lady," said he very gently, "if I offended you a while ago--forgive me--Cleone."

"Indeed," said she, looking away from him; "it would seem I must be always forgiving you, Mr. Beverley."

"Why, surely it is a woman's privilege to forgive, Cleone--and my name--"

"And a man's prerogative to be forgiven, I suppose, Mr. Beverley."

"When he repents as I do, Cleone; and my--"

"Oh! I forgive you," she sighed.

"Yet you still walk very fast."

"It must be nearly ten o'clock."

"I suppose so," said Barnabas, "and you will, naturally, be anxious to reach home again."

"Home," she said bitterly; "I have no home."

"But--"

"I live in a gaol--a prison. Yes, a hateful, hateful prison, watched by a one-legged gaoler, and guarded by a one-armed tyrant--yes, a tyrant!" Here, having stopped to stamp her foot, she walked on faster than ever.

"Can you possibly mean old Jerry and the Captain?"

Here my lady paused in her quick walk, and even condescended to look at Barnabas.

"Do you happen to know them too, sir?"

"Yes; and my name is--"

"Perhaps you met them also this morning, sir?"

"Yes; and my--"

"Indeed," said she, with curling lip; "this has been quite an eventful day for you."

"On the whole, I think it has; and may I remind you that my--"

"Perhaps you don't believe me when I say he is a tyrant?"

"Hum," said Barnabas.

"You don't, do you?"

"Why, I'm afraid not," he admitted.

"I'm nineteen!" said she, standing very erect.

"I should have judged you a little older," said Barnabas.

"So I am--in mind, and--and experience. Yet here I live, prisoned in a dreary old house, and with nothing to see but trees, and toads, and cows and cabbages; and I'm watched over, and tended from morning till night, and am the subject of more councils of war than Buonaparte's army ever was."

"What do you mean by councils of war?"

"Oh! whenever I do anything my tyrant disapproves of, he retires to what he calls the 'round house,' summons the Bo'sun, and they argue and talk over me as though I were a hostile fleet, and march up and down forming plans of attack and defence, till I burst in on them, and then--and then--Oh! there are many kinds of tyrants, and he is one. And so to-night I left him; I ran away to meet--" She stopped suddenly, and her head drooped, and Barnabas saw her white hands clench themselves.

"Your brother," said he.

"Yes, my--brother," but her voice faltered at the word, and she went on through the wood, but slowly now, and with head still drooping. And so, at last, they came out of the shadows into the soft radiance of the moon, and thus Barnabas saw that she was weeping; and she, because she could no longer hide her grief, turned and laid a pleading hand upon his arm.

"Pray, think of him as kindly as you can," she sighed, "you see--he is only a boy--my brother."

"So young?" said Barnabas.

"Just twenty, but younger than his age--much younger. You see," she went on hastily, "he went to London a boy--and--and he thought Mr. Chichester was his friend, and he lost much money at play, and, somehow, put himself in Mr. Chichester's power. He is my half-brother, really; but I--love him so, and I've tried to take care of him--I was always so much stronger than he--and--and so I would have you think of him as generously as you can."

"Yes," said Barnabas, "yes." But now she stopped again so that he must needs stop too, and when she spoke her soft voice thrilled with a new intensity.

"Will you do more? You are going to London--will you seek him out, will you try to--save him from himself? Will you promise me to do this--will you?"

Now seeing the passionate entreaty in her eyes, feeling it in the twitching fingers upon his arm, Barnabas suddenly laid his own above that slender hand, and took it into his warm clasp.

"My lady," said he, solemnly, "I will." As he spoke he stooped his head low and lower, until she felt his lips warm upon her palm, a long, silent pressure, and yet her hand was not withdrawn.

Now although Barnabas had clean forgotten the rules and precepts set down in the "priceless wollum," he did it all with a graceful ease which could not have been bettered--no, not even by the Person of Quality itself.

"But it will be difficult," she sighed, as they went on together. "Ronald is very headstrong and proud--it will be very difficult!"

"No matter," said Barnabas.

"And--dangerous, perhaps."

"No matter for that either," said Barnabas.

"Does it seem strange that I should ask so much of you?"

"The most natural thing in the world," said Barnabas.

"But you are a stranger--almost!"

"But I--love you, Cleone."

After this there fell a silence between them; and so having crossed the moonlit meadow, they came to a tall hedge beyond whose shadow the road led away, white under the moon; close by the ways divided, and here stood a weather-beaten finger-post. Now beneath this hedge they stopped, and it is to be noted that neither looked at the other.

"Sir," said she, softly, "we part here, my home lies yonder," and she pointed to where above the motionless tree-tops rose the gables and chimneys of a goodly house.

"It would seem to be fairly comfortable as prisons go," said Barnabas; but my lady only sighed.

"Do you start for London--soon?"

"To-night," nodded Barnabas.

"Sir," said she, after a pause, "I would thank you, if I could, for--for all that you have done for me."

"No, no," said Barnabas, hastily.

"Words are poor things, I know, but how else may I show my gratitude?"

And now it was Barnabas who was silent; but at last--

"There is a way," said he, staring at the finger-post.

"How--what way?"

"You might--kiss me--once, Cleone."

Now here she must needs steal a swift look at him, and thus she saw that he still stared at the ancient finger-post, but that his hands were tight clenched.

"I only ask," he continued heavily, "for what I might have taken."

"But didn't!" she added, with lips and eyes grown suddenly tender.

"No," sighed Barnabas, "nor shall I ever,--until you will it so,--because, you see, I love you."

Now as he gazed at the finger-post, even so she gazed at him; and thus she saw again the mark upon his cheek, and looking, sighed; indeed, it was the veriest ghost of a sigh, yet Barnabas heard it, and straightway forgot the finger-post, forgot the world and all things in it, save her warm beauty, the red allurement of her mouth, and the witchery of her drooping lashes; therefore he reached out his hands to her, and she saw that they were trembling.

"Cleone," he murmured, "oh, Cleone--look up!"

But even as he spoke she recoiled from his touch, for, plain and clear, came the sound of footsteps on the road near by. Sighing, Barnabas turned thitherwards and beheld advancing towards them one who paused, now and then, to look about him as though at a loss, and then hurried on again. A very desolate figure he was, and quaintly pathetic because of his gray hair, and the empty sleeve that flapped helplessly to and fro with the hurry of his going--a figure, indeed, that there was no mistaking. Being come to the finger-post, he paused to look wistfully on all sides, and Barnabas could see that his face was drawn and haggard. For a moment he gazed about him wild-eyed and eager, then with a sudden, hopeless gesture, he leaned his one arm against the battered sign-post and hid his face there.

"Oh, my lass--my dear!" he cried in a strangled voice, "why did you leave me? Oh, my lass!"

Then all at once came a rustle of parting leaves, the flutter of flying draperies, and Cleone had fled to that drooping, disconsolate figure, had wreathed her protecting arms about it, and so all moans, and sobs, and little tender cries, had drawn her tyrant's head down upon her gentle bosom and clasped it there.

CHAPTER XXII

IN WHICH THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO AN ANCIENT FINGER-POST

"Why, Cleone!" exclaimed the Captain, and folded his solitary arm about her; but not content with this, my lady must needs take his empty sleeve also, and, drawing it close about her neck, she held it there.

"Oh, Cleone!" sighed the Captain, "my dear, dear lass!"

"No," she cried, "I'm a heartless savage, an ungrateful wretch! I am, I am--and I hate myself!" and here, forthwith, she stamped her foot at herself.

"No, no, you're not--I say no! You didn't mean to break my heart. You've come back to me, thank God, and--and--Oh, egad, Cleone, I swear--I say I swear--by Gog and Magog, I'm snuffling like a birched schoolboy; but then I--couldn't bear to--lose my dear maid."

"Dear," she sighed, brushing away his tears with the cuff of his empty sleeve, "dear, if you'd only try to hate me a little--just a little, now and then, I don't think I should be quite such a wretch to you." Here she stood on tip-toe and kissed him on the chin, that being nearest. "I'm a cat--yes, a spiteful cat, and I must scratch sometimes; but ah! if you knew how I hated myself after! And I know you'll go and forgive me again, and that's what makes it so hard to bear."

"Forgive you, Clo'--ay, to be sure! You've come back to me, you see, and you didn't mean to leave me solitary and--"

"Ah, but I did--I did! And that's why I am a wretch, and a cat, and a savage! I meant to run away and leave you for ever and ever!"

"The house would be very dark without you, Cleone."

"Dear, hold me tighter--now listen! There are times when I hate the house, and the country, and--yes, even you. And at such times I grow afraid of myself--hold me tighter!--at such times I long for London--and--and--Ah, but you do love me, don't you?"

"Love you--my own lass!" The Captain's voice was very low, yet eloquent with yearning tenderness; but even so, his quick ear had caught a rustle in the hedge, and his sharp eye had seen Barnabas standing in the shadow. "Who's that?" he demanded sharply.

"Why, indeed," says my lady, "I had forgotten him. 'Tis a friend of yours, I think. Pray come out, Mr. Beverley."

"Beverley!" exclaimed the Captain. "Now sink me! what's all this? Come out, sir,--I say come out and show yourself!"

So Barnabas stepped out from the hedge, and uncovering his head, bowed low.

"Your very humble, obedient servant, sir," said he.

"Ha! by Thor and Odin, so it's you again, is it, sir? Pray, what brings you still so far from the fashionable world? What d'ye want, sir, eh, sir?"

"Briefly, sir," answered Barnabas, "your ward."

"Eh--what? what?" cried the Captain.

"Sir," returned Barnabas, "since you are the Lady Cleone's lawful guardian, it is but right to tell you that I hope to marry her--some

day."

"Marry!" exclaimed the Captain. "Marry my--damme, sir, but you're cool--I say cool and devilish impudent, and--and--oh, Gad, Cleone!"

"My dear," said she, smiling and stroking her tyrant's shaven cheek, "why distress ourselves, we can always refuse him, can't we?"

"Ay, to be sure, so we can," nodded the Captain, "but oh! sink me,--I say sink and scuttle me, the audacity of it! I say he's a cool, impudent, audacious fellow!"

"Yes, dear, indeed I think he's all that," said my lady, nodding her head at Barnabas very decidedly, "and I forgot to tell you that beside all this, he is the--gentleman who--saved me from my folly to-night, and brought me back to you."

"Eh? eh?" cried the Captain, staring.

"Yes, dear, and this is he who--" But here she drew down her tyrant's gray head, and whispered three words in his ear. Whatever she said it affected the Captain mightily, for his frown changed suddenly into his youthful smile, and reaching out impulsively, he grasped Barnabas by the hand.

"Aha, sir!" said he, "you have a good, big fist here!"

"Indeed," said Barnabas, glancing down at it somewhat ruefully, "it is--very large, I fear."

"Over large, sir!" says my lady, also regarding it, and with her head at a critical angle, "it could never be called--an elegant hand, could it?"

"Elegant!" snorted the Captain, "I say pooh! I say pish! Sir, you must come in and sup with us, my house is near by. Good English beef and ale, sir."

Barnabas hesitated, and glanced toward Cleone, but her face was hidden in the shadow of her hood, wherefore his look presently wandered to the finger-post, near by, upon whose battered sign he read the words:--

TO HAWKHURST. TO LONDON.

"Sir," said he, "I would, most gratefully, but that I start for London at once." Yet while he spoke, he frowned blackly at the finger-post, as though it had been his worst enemy.

"London!" exclaimed the Captain, "so you are still bound for the fashionable world, are ye?"

"Yes," sighed Barnabas, "but I--"

"Pish, sir, I say fiddle-de-dee!"

"I have lately undertaken a mission."

"Ha! So you won't come in?"

"Thank you, no; this mission is important, and I must be gone;" and here again Barnabas sighed.

Then my lady turned and looked at Barnabas, and, though she uttered no word, her eyes were eloquent; so that the heart of him was uplifted, and he placed his hand upon the finger-post as though it had been his best friend.

"Why then, so be it, young sir," said the Captain, "it remains only to thank you, which I do, I say which I do most heartily, and to bid you good-by."

"Until we meet again, Captain."

"Eh--what, sir? meet when?"

"At 'Barnaby Bright,'" says my lady, staring up at the moon.

"In a month's time," added Barnabas.

"Eh?" exclaimed the Captain, "what's all this?"

"In a month's time, sir, I shall return to ask Cleone to be my wife," Barnabas explained.

"And," said my lady, smiling at the Captain's perplexity, "we shall be glad to see him, shan't we, dear? and shall, of course, refuse him, shan't we, dear?"

"Refuse him? yes--no--egad! I don't know," said the Captain, running his fingers through his hair, "I say, deuce take me--I'm adrift; I say where's the Bo'sun?"

"Good-by, sir!" says my lady, very seriously, and gave him her hand; "good-by."

"Till 'Barnaby Bright,'" said Barnabas.

At this she smiled, a little tremulously perhaps.

"May heaven prosper you in your mission," said she, and turned away.

"Young sir," said the Captain, "always remember my name is Chumly, John Chumly, plain and unvarnished, and, whether we refuse you or not, John Chumly will ever be ready to take you by the hand. Farewell, sir!"

So tyrant and captive turned away and went down the by-road together, and his solitary arm was close about her. But Barnabas stood there under the finger-post until a bend in the road hid them; then he, too, sighed and turned away. Yet he had gone only a little distance when he heard a voice calling him, and, swinging round, he saw Cleone standing under the finger-post.

"I wanted to give you--this," said she, as he came striding back, and held out a folded paper. "It is his--my brother's--letter. Take it with you, it will serve to show you what a boy he is, and will tell you where to find him."

So Barnabas took the letter and thrust it into his pocket. But she yet stood before him, and now, once again, their glances avoided each other.

"I also wanted to--ask you--about your cheek," said she at last.

"Yes?" said Barnabas.

"You are quite sure it doesn't--pain you, Mr. Bev--"

"Must I remind you that my name--"

"Are you quite sure--Barnabas?"

"Quite sure--yes, oh yes!" he stammered.

"Because it--glows very red!" she sighed, though indeed she still kept her gaze averted, "so will you please--stoop your head a little?"

Wonderingly Barnabas obeyed, and then--even as he did so, she leaned swiftly towards him, and for an instant her soft, warm mouth rested upon his cheek. Then, before he could stay her, she was off and away; and her flying feet had borne her out of sight.

Then Barnabas sighed, and would have followed, but the ancient finger-post barred his way with its two arms pointing:--

TO HAWKHURST. TO LONDON.

So he stopped, glanced about him to fix the hallowed place in his memory, and, obeying the directing finger, set off London-wards.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW BARNABAS SAVED HIS LIFE--BECAUSE HE WAS AFRAID

On went Barnabas swift of foot and light of heart, walking through a World of Romance, and with his eyes turned up to the luminous heaven. Yet it was neither of the moon, nor the stars, nor the wonder thereof that he was thinking, but only of the witchery of a woman's eyes, and the thrill of a woman's lips upon his cheek; and, indeed, what more natural, more right, and altogether proper? Little recked he of the future, of the perils and dangers to be encountered, of the sorrows and tribulations that lay in wait for him, or of the enemies that he had made that day, for youth is little given to brooding, and is loftily indifferent to consequences.

So it was of Lady Cleone Meredith he thought as he strode along the moonlit highway, and it was of her that he was thinking as he turned into that narrow by-lane where stood "The Spotted Cow." As he advanced, he espied some one standing in the shadow of one of the great trees, who, as he came nearer, stepped out into the moonlight; and then Barnabas saw that it was none other than his newly engaged valet. The same, yet not the same, for the shabby clothes had given place to a sober, well-fitting habit, and as he took off his hat in

salutation, Barnabas noticed that his hollow cheeks were clean and freshly shaved; he was, indeed, a new man.

But now, as they faced each other, Barnabas observed something else; John Peterby's lips were compressed, and in his eye was anxiety, the which had, somehow, got into his voice when he spoke, though his tone was low and modulated: "Sir, if you are for London to-night, we had better start at once, the coach leaves Tenterden within the hour."

"But," says Barnabas, setting his head aslant, and rubbing his chin with the argumentative air that was so very like his father, "I have ordered supper here, Peterby."

"Which--under the circumstances--I have ventured to countermand, sir."

"Oh?" said Barnabas, "pray, what circumstances?"

"Sir, as I told you, the mail--"

"John Peterby, speak out--what is troubling you?"

But now, even while Peterby stood hesitating, from the open casement of the inn, near at hand, came the sound of a laugh: a soft, gentle, sibilant laugh which Barnabas immediately recognized.

"Ah!" said he, clenching his fist. "I think I understand." As he turned towards the inn, Peterby interposed.

"Sir," he whispered, "sir, if ever a man meant mischief--he does. He came back an hour ago, and they have been waiting for you ever since."

"They?"

"He and the other."

"What other?"

"Sir, I don't know."

"Is he a very--young man, this other?"

"Yes, sir, he seems so. And they have been drinking together and--I've heard enough to know that they mean you harm." But here Master Barnabas smiled with all the arrogance of youth and shook his head.

"John Peterby," said he, "learn that the first thing I desire in my valet is obedience. Pray stand out of my way!" So, perforce Peterby stood aside, yet Barnabas had scarce taken a dozen strides ere Clemency stood before him.

"Go back," she whispered, "go back!"

"Impossible," said Barnabas, "I have a mission to fulfil."

"Go back!" she repeated in the same tense whisper, "you must--oh, you must! I've heard he has killed a man before now--"

"And yet I must see and speak with his companion."

"No, no--ah! I pray you--"

"Nay," said Barnabas, "if you will, and if need be, pray for me." So saying he put her gently aside, and entering the inn, came to the door of that room wherein he had written the letter to his father.

"I tell you I'll kill him, Dalton," said a soft, deliberate voice.

"Undoubtedly; the light's excellent; but, my dear fellow, why--?"

"I object to him strongly, for one thing, and--"

The voice was hushed suddenly, as Barnabas set wide the door and stepped into the room, with Peterby at his heels.

Mr. Chichester was seated at the table with a glass beside him, but Barnabas looked past him to his companion who sprawled on the other side of the hearth--a sleepy, sighing gentleman, very high as to collar, very tight as to waist, and most ornate as to waistcoat; young he was certainly, yet with his first glance, Barnabas knew instinctively that this could not be the youth he sought. Nevertheless he took off his hat and saluted him with a bow that for stateliness left the "stiff-legged gentleman" nowhere.

"Sir," said he, "pray what might your name be?"

Instead of replying, the sleepy gentleman opened his eyes rather wider than was usual and stared at Barnabas with a growing surprise, stared at him from head to foot and up again, then, without changing his lounging attitude, spoke:

"Oh, Gad, Chichester!--is this the--man?"

"Yes."

"But--my dear Chit! Surely you don't propose to--this fellow! Who is he? What is he? Look at his boots--oh, Gad!"

Hereupon Barnabas resumed his hat, and advancing leaned his clenched fists on the table, and from that eminence smiled down at the speaker, that is to say his lips curled and his teeth gleamed in the candle-light.

"Sir," said he gently, "you will perhaps have the extreme condescension to note that my boots are strong boots, and very serviceable either for walking, or for kicking an insolent puppy."

"If I had a whip, now," sighed the gentleman, "if I only had a whip, I'd whip you out of the room. Chichester,--pray look at that coat, oh, Gad!"

But Mr. Chichester had risen, and now crossing to the door, he locked it, and dropped the key into his pocket.

"As you say, the light is excellent, my dear Dalton," said he, fixing Barnabas with his unwavering stare.

"But my dear Chit, you never mean to fight the fellow--a--a being

who wears such a coat! such boots! My dear fellow, be reasonable! Observe that hat! Good Gad! Take your cane and whip him out--positively you cannot fight this bumpkin."

"None the less I mean to shoot him--like a cur, Dalton." And Mr. Chichester drew a pistol from his pocket, and fell to examining flint and priming with a practised eye. "I should have preferred my regular tools; but I dare say this will do the business well enough; pray, snuff the candles."

Now, as Barnabas listened to the soft, deliberate words, as he noted Mr. Chichester's assured air, his firm hand, his glowing eye and quivering nostrils, a sudden deadly nausea came over him, and he leaned heavily upon the table.

"Sirs," said he, uncertainly, and speaking with an effort, "I have never used a pistol in my life."

"One could tell as much from his boots," murmured Mr. Dalton, snuffing the candles.

"You have another pistol, I think, Dalton; pray lend it to him. We will take opposite corners of the room, and fire when you give the word."

"All quite useless, Chit; this fellow won't fight."

"No," said Barnabas, thrusting his trembling hands into his pockets, "not--in a corner."

Mr. Chichester shrugged his shoulders, sat down, and leaning back in his chair stared up at pale-faced Barnabas, tapping the table-edge softly with the barrel of his weapon.

"Not in a corner--I told you so, Chit. Oh, take your cane and whip him out!"

"I mean," said Barnabas, very conscious of the betraying quaver in his voice, "I mean that, as I'm--unused to--shooting, the corner would be--too far."

"Too far? Oh, Gad!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "What's this?"

"As for pistols, I have one here," continued Barnabas, "and if we must shoot, we'll do it here--across the table."

"Eh--what? Across the table! but, oh, Gad, Chichester! this is madness!" said Mr. Dalton.

"Most duels are," said Barnabas, and as he spoke he drew from his pocket the pistol he had taken from Mr. Chichester earlier in the evening and, weapon in hand, sank into a chair, thus facing Mr. Chichester across the table.

"But this is murder--positive murder!" cried Mr. Dalton.

"Sir," said Barnabas, "I am no duellist, as I told you; and it seems to me that this equalizes our chances, for I can no more fail of hitting my man at this distance than he of shooting me dead across

the width of the room. And, sir--if I am to--die to-night, I shall most earnestly endeavor to take Mr. Chichester with me."

There was a tremor in his voice again as he spoke, but his eye was calm, his brow serene, and his hand steady as he cocked the pistol, and leaning his elbow upon the table, levelled it within six inches of Mr. Chichester's shirt frill. But hereupon Mr. Dalton sprang to his feet with a stifled oath:

"I tell you it's murder--murder!" he exclaimed, and took a quick step towards them.

"Peterby!" said Barnabas.

"Sir?" said Peterby, who had been standing rigid beside the door.

"Take my stick," said Barnabas, holding it out towards him, but keeping his gaze upon Mr. Chichester's narrowed eyes; "it's heavy you'll find, and should this person presume to interfere, knock him down with it."

"Yes, sir," said Peterby, and took the stick accordingly.

"But--oh, Gad!" exclaimed Dalton, "I tell you this can't go on!"

"Indeed, I hope not," said Barnabas; "but it is for Mr. Chichester to decide. I am ready for the count when he is."

But Mr. Chichester sat utterly still, his chin on his breast, staring at Barnabas under his brows, one hand tight clenched about the stock of his weapon on the table before him, the other hanging limply at his side. So for an interval they remained thus, staring into each other's eyes, in a stillness so profound that it seemed all four men had ceased breathing. Then Mr. Chichester sighed faintly, dropped his eyes to the muzzle of the weapon so perilously near, glanced back at the pale, set face and unwinking eyes of him who held it, and sighed again.

"Dalton," said he, "pray open the door, and order the chaise," and he laid the key upon the table.

"First," said Barnabas, "I will relieve you of that--encumbrance," and he pointed to the pistol yet gripped in Mr. Chichester's right hand. Without a word Mr. Chichester rose, and leaving the weapon upon the table, turned and walked to the window, while Mr. Dalton, having unlocked the door, hurried away to the stable-yard, and was now heard calling for the ostlers.

"Peterby," said Barnabas, "take this thing and throw it into the horse-pond; yet, no, give it to the gentleman who just went out."

"Yes, sir," said Peterby, and, taking up the pistol, he went out, closing the door behind him.

Mr. Chichester still lounged in the window, and hummed softly to himself; but as for Barnabas, he sat rigid in his chair, staring blankly at the opposite wall, his eyes wide, his lips tense, and with a gleam of moisture amid the curls at his temples. So the one lounged and hummed, and the other glared stonily before him

until came the grind of wheels and the stamping of hoofs. Then Mr. Chichester took up his hat and cane, and, humming still, crossed to the door, and lounged out into the yard.

Came a jingle of harness, a sound of voices, the slam of a door, and the chaise rolled away down the lane, farther and farther, until the rumble of its wheels died away in the distance. Then Barnabas laughed--a sudden shrill laugh--and clenched his fists, and strove against the laughter, and choked, and so sank forward with his face upon his arms as one that is very weary. Now, presently, as he sat thus, it seemed to him that one spoke a long way off, whereupon, in a little, he raised his head, and beheld Clemency.

"You--are not hurt?" she inquired anxiously.

"Hurt?" said Barnabas, "no, not hurt, Mistress Clemency, not hurt, I thank you; but I think I have grown a--great deal--older."

"I saw it all, through the window, and yet I--don't know why you are alive."

"I think because I was so very much--afraid," said Barnabas.

"Sir," said she, with her brown hands clasped together, "was it for--if it was for--my sake that you--quarrelled, and--"

"No," said Barnabas, "it was because of--another."

Now, when he said this, Clemency stared at him wide-eyed, and, all in a moment, flushed painfully and turned away, so that Barnabas wondered.

"Good-by!" said she, suddenly, and crossed to the door, but upon the threshold paused; "I did pray for you," she said, over her shoulder.

"Ah!" said Barnabas, rising, "you prayed for me, and behold, I am alive."

"Good-by!" she repeated, her face still averted.

"Good-by!" said Barnabas, "and will you remember me in your prayers--sometimes?"

"My prayers! Why?"

"Because the prayers of a sweet, pure woman may come between man and evil--like a shield."

"I will," said she, very softly. "Oh, I will," and so, with a swift glance, was gone.

Being come out of the inn, Barnabas met with his valet, John Peterby.

"Sir," he inquired, "what now?"

"Now," said Barnabas, "the Tenterden coach, and London."

CHAPTER XXIV

WHICH RELATES SOMETHING OF THE "WHITE LION" AT TENTERDEN

Of all the lions that ever existed, painted or otherwise, white lions, blue lions, black, green, or red lions, surely never was there one like the "White Lion" at Tenterden. For he was such a remarkably placid lion, although precariously balanced upon the extreme point of one claw, and he stared down at all and sundry with such round, inquiring eyes, as much as to say:

"Who are you? What's your father? Where are you going?" Indeed, so very inquisitive was he that his very tail had writhed itself into a note of interrogation, and, like a certain historical personage, was forever asking a question. To-night he had singled out Barnabas from the throng, and was positively bombarding him with questions, as:

"Dark or fair? Tall or short? Does she love you? Will she remember you? Will she kiss you--next time? Aha! will she, will she?"

But here, feeling a touch upon his arm, Barnabas turned to find Peterby at his elbow, and thus once more became aware of the hubbub about him.

"Box seat, sir; next to the coachman!" says Peterby above the din, for voices are shouting, horses snorting and stamping, ostlers are hurrying here, running there, and swearing everywhere; waiters and serving-maids are dodging to and fro, and all is hurry and bustle, for the night mail is on the eve of departure for London.

Throned above all this clamor, calmly aloof, yet withal watchful of eye, sits the coachman, beshawled to the ears of him, hatted to the eyes of him, and in a wondrous coat of many capes; a ponderous man, hoarse of voice and mottled of face, who, having swallowed his hot rum and water in three leisurely gulps, tosses down the glass to the waiting pot-boy (and very nearly hits a fussy little gentleman in a green spencer, who carries a hat-box in one hand and a bulging valise in the other, and who ducks indignantly, but just in time), sighs, shakes his head, and proceeds to rewind the shawl about his neck and chin, and to belt himself into his seat, throwing an occasional encouraging curse to the perspiring ostlers below.

"Coachman!" cries the fussy gentleman, "hi, coachman!"

"The 'Markis' seems a bit fresh to-night, Sam," says Mottle-face affably to one of the ostlers.

"Fresh!" exclaims that worthy as the 'Marquis' rears again, "fresh, I believe you--burn 'is bones!"

"Driver!" shouts the fussy gentleman, "driver!"

"Why then, bear 'im up werry short, Sam."

"Driver!" roars the fussy little gentleman, "driver! coachman! oh, driver!"

"Vell, sir, that's me?" says Mottle-face, condescending to become aware of him at last.

"Give me a hand up with my valise--d'ye hear?"

"Walise, sir? No, sir, can't be done, sir. In the boot, sir; guard, sir."

"Boot!" cries the fussy gentleman indignantly. "I'll never trust my property in the boot!"

"Then v'y not leave it be'ind, sir, and stay vith it, or--"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the little man, growing angry. "I tell you this is valuable property. D'ye know who I am?"

"Or ye might climb into the boot along vith it, sir--"

"Do you know who I am?"

"All aboard--all aboard for London!" roared the guard, coming up at the instant.

"Valter!" cried Mottle-face.

"Ay, ay, Joe?"

"Gentleman's walise for the boot, Valter; and sharp's the vord!"

"Ay, ay, Joe!" and, as he spoke, the guard caught the valise from the protesting small gentleman with one hand, and the hat-box with the other, and, forthwith, vanished. Hereupon the fussy gentleman, redder of face, and more angry than ever, clambered to the roof, still loudly protesting; all of which seemed entirely lost upon Mottle-face, who, taking up the reins and settling his feet against the dash-board, winked a solemn, owl-like eye at Barnabas sitting beside him, and carolled a song in a husky voice, frequently interrupting himself to admonish the ostlers, in this wise:--

"She vore no 'at upon 'er 'ead,
Nor a cap, nor a--"

"Bear the 'Markis' up werry short, Sam, vill 'ee?

"--dandy bonnet,
But 'er 'air it 'ung all down 'er back,
Like a--"

"Easy--easy now! Hold on to them leaders, Dick!

"--bunch of carrots upon it.
Ven she cried 'sprats' in Vestminister,
Oh! sich a sveet loud woice, sir,
You could 'ear 'er all up Parlyment Street,
And as far as Charing Cross, sir."

"All aboard, all aboard for London!" roars the guard, and roaring, swings himself up into the boot.

"All right be'ind?" cries Mottle-face.

"All right, Joe!" sings the guard.

"Then--leggo, there!" cries Mottle-face.

Back spring the ostlers, forward leap the four quivering horses, their straining hoofs beating out showers of sparks from the cobbles; the coach lurches forward and is off, amid a waving of hats and pocket-handkerchiefs, and Barnabas, casting a farewell glance around, is immediately fixed by the gaze of the "White Lion," as inquiring of eye and interrogatory of tail as ever.

"Tall or short? Dark or fair? Will she kiss you--next time--will she, will she? Will she even be glad to see you again--will she, now will she?"

Whereupon Barnabas must needs become profoundly thoughtful all at once.

"Now--I wonder?" said he to himself.

CHAPTER XXV

OF THE COACHMAN'S STORY

Long before the lights of the "White Lion" had vanished behind them, the guard blows a sudden fanfare on the horn, such a blast as goes echoing merrily far and wide, and brings folk running to open doors and lighted windows to catch a glimpse of the London Mail ere it vanishes into the night; and so, almost while the cheery notes ring upon the air, Tenterden is behind them, and they are bowling along the highway into the open country beyond. A wonderful country this, familiar and yet wholly new; a nightmare world where ghosts and goblins flit under a dying moon; where hedge and tree become monsters crouched to spring, or lift knotted arms to smite; while in the gloom of woods beyond, unimagined horrors lurk.

But, bless you, Mottle-face, having viewed it all under the slant of his hat-brim, merely settles his mottled chin deeper in his shawls, flicks the off ear of the near leader with a delicate turn of the wrists, and turning his owl-like eye upon Barnabas, remarks that "It's a werry fine night!" But hereupon the fussy gentleman, leaning over, taps Mottle-face upon the shoulder.

"Coachman," says he, "pray, when do you expect to reach The Borough, London?"

"Vich I begs to re-mark, sir," retorts Mottle-face, settling his curly-brimmed hat a little further over his left eye, "vich I 'umbly begs to re-mark as I don't expect nohow!"

"Eh--what! what! you don't expect to--"

"Vich I am vun, sir, as don't novise expect nothin', consequent am

never novise disapp'inted," says Mottle-face with a solemn nod; "but, vind an' veather permittin', ve shall be at the 'George' o' South'ark at five, or thereabouts!"

"Ha!" says the fussy gentleman, "and what about my valise? is it safe?"

"Safe, ah! safe as the Bank o' England, unless ve should 'appen to be stopped--"

"Stopped? stopped, coachman? d' you mean--?"

"Ah! stopped by Blue-chinned Jack o' Brockley, or Gallopin' Toby o' Tottenham, or--"

"Eh--what! what! d' you mean there are highwaymen on this road?"

"'Ighvaymen!" snorted Mottle-face, winking ponderously at Barnabas, "by Goles, I should say so, it fair bristles vith 'em."

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the fussy gentleman in an altered tone, "but you are armed, of course?"

"Armed?" repeated Mottle-face, more owl-like of eye than ever, "armed, sir, Lord love me yes! my guard carries a brace o' barkers in the boot."

"I'm glad of that," said the fussy gentleman, "very!"

"Though," pursued Mottle-face, rolling his head heavily, "Joe ain't 'zactly what you might call a dead shot, nor yet a ex-pert, bein' blind in 'is off blinker, d'ye see."

"Eh--blind, d'ye say--blind?" exclaimed the fussy gentleman.

"Only in 'is off eye," nodded Mottle-face, reassuringly, "t'other 'un's as good as yours or mine, ven 'e ain't got a cold in it."

"But this--this is an outrage!" spluttered the fussy gentleman, "a guard blind in one eye! Scandalous! I shall write to the papers of this. But you--surely you carry a weapon too?"

"A vepping? Ay, to be sure, sir, I've got a blunder-bush, under this 'ere werry seat, loaded up to the muzzle wi' slugs too,--though it von't go off."

"Won't--eh, what? Won't go off?"

"Not on no account, sir, vich ain't to be 'spected of it, seeing as it ain't got no trigger."

"But--heaven preserve us! why carry such a useless thing?"

"Force of 'abit, sir; ye see, I've carried that theer old blunderbush for a matter of five-an'-twenty year, an' my feyther 'e carried it afore me."

"But suppose we are attacked?"

"Vich I begs to re-mark, sir, as I don't never suppose no such thing,

like my feyther afore me. Brave as a lion were my feyther, sir, an' bred up to the road; v'y, Lord! 'e were born vith a coachman's v'ip in 'is mouth--no, I mean 'is fist, as ye might say; an' 'e were the boldest--"

"But what's your father got to do with it?" cried the fussy gentleman. "What about my valise?"

"Your walise, sir? we'm a-coming to that;" and here, once more, Mottle-face slowly winked his owl-like eye at Barnabas. "My feyther, sir," he continued, "my feyther, 'e druv' the Dartford Mail, an' 'e were the finest v'ip as ever druv' a coach, Dartford or otherwise; 'Andsome 'Arry' 'e vere called, though v'y 'andsome I don't know, seeing as 'is nose veren't all it might ha' been, on account o' a quart pot; an' v'y 'Arry I don't know, seeing as 'is name vos Villiam; but, "Andsome 'Arry' 'e vere called, an' werry much respected 'e vere too. Lord! there vos never less than a dozen or so young bloods to see 'im start. Ah! a great favorite 'e vere vith them, an' no error, an' werry much admired; admired? I should say so. They copied 'is 'at they copied 'is boots, they copied 'is coat, they'd a copied 'im inside as well as out if they could."

"Hum!" said the fussy gentleman. "Ha!"

"Oh, 'e vos a great fav'rite vith the Quality," nodded Mottle-face. "Ah! it vos a dream to see 'im 'andle the ribbons,--an' spit? Lord! it vos a eddication to see my feyther spit, I should say so! Vun young blood--a dock's son he vere too--vent an' 'ad a front tooth drawed a purpose, but I never 'eard as it done much good; bless you, to spit like my feyther you must be born to it!" (here Mottle-face paused to suit the action to the word). "And, mark you! over an' above all this, my feyther vere the boldest cove that ever--"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the fussy gentleman impatiently, "but where does my valise come in?"

"Your walise, sir," said Mottle-face, deftly flicking the off wheeler, "your walise comes in--at the end, sir, and I'm a-comin' to it as qvick as you'll let me."

"Hum!" said the gentleman again.

"Now, in my feyther's time," resumed Mottle-face serenely, "the roads vos vorse than they are to-day, ah! a sight vorse, an' as for 'ighvaymen--Lord! they vos as thick as blackberries--blackberries? I should say so! Theer vos footpads be'ind every 'edge--gangs of 'em--an' 'ighvaymen on every 'eath--"

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the fussy gentleman, "so many?"

"Many?" snorted Mottle-face, "there vos armies of 'em. But my feyther, as I think I mentioned afore, vere the bravest, boldest, best-plucked coachman as ever sat on a box."

"I hope it runs in the family."

"Sir, I ain't one give to boastin', nor yet to blowin' my own 'orn, but truth is truth, and--it do!"

"Good!" said the fussy gentleman, "very good!"

"Now the vorst of all these rogues vos a cove called Black Dan, a thieving, murdering, desprit wagabone as vere ewcntually 'ung sky-'igh on Pembury 'lll--"

"Good!" said the fussy gentleman louder than before, "good! Glad of it!"

"An' yet," sighed Mottle-face, "'e 'ad a werry good 'eart--as 'ighvaymen's 'earts go; never shot nobody unless 'e couldn't help it, an' ven 'e did, 'e allus made a werry neat job of it, an' polished 'em off nice an' qvick."

"Hum!" said the fussy gentleman, "still, I'm glad he's hanged."

"Black Dan used to vork the roads south o' London,

"Kent an' Surrey mostly, conseqvent it vere a long time afore 'im an' my feyther met; but at last vun night, as my feyther vos driving along--a good fifteen mile an hour, for it vere a uncommon fine night, vith a moon, like as it might be now--"

"Ah?" said the fussy gentleman.

"An' presently 'e came to vere the road narrered a bit, same as it might be yonder--"

"Ah!" murmured the fussy gentleman again.

"An' vith a clump o' trees beyond, nice, dark, shady trees--like it might be them werry trees ahead of us--"

"Oh!" exclaimed the fussy gentleman.

"An' as 'e come up nearer an' nearer, all at vunce 'e made out a shadder in the shade o' them trees--"

"Dear me!" exclaimed the fussy gentleman uneasily, staring very hard at the trees in front.

"A shadder as moved, although the leaves vos all dead still. So my feyther--being a bold cove--reached down for 'is blunderbush--this werry same old blunderbush as I 've got under the box at this i-dentical minute, (though its trigger veren't broke then) but, afore 'e can get it out, into the road leaps a man on a great black 'oss--like it might be dead ahead of us, a masked man, an' vith a pistol in each fist as long as yer arm."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the fussy gentleman.

"'Stand an' deliver!' roars the masked man, so my feyther, cocking 'is heye at the pistols, pulls up, an' there 'e is, starin' down at the 'ighvayman, an' the 'ighvayman staring up at 'im. 'You 're 'Andsome 'Arry, ain't you?' sez the 'ighvayman. 'Ay,' sez my feyther, 'an' I guess you 're Black Dan.' 'Sure as you 're born!' sez Black Dan, 'I've 'eered o' you before to-day, 'Andsome 'Arry,' sez 'e, 'an' meant to make your acquaintance afore this, but I 've been kep' too busy till to-night,' sez 'e, 'but 'ere ve are at last,' 'e sez, 'an' now--vot d' ye think o' that?' sez 'e, an' pi'nts a pistol

under my feyther's werry nose. Now, as I think I 've 'inted afore, my feyther vere a nat'rally bold, courage-ful cove, so 'e took a look at the murderous vepping, an' nodded. 'It's a pistol, ain't it?' sez 'e. 'Sure as you're settin' on that there box, it is,' sez Black Dan, 'an' 'ere's another.' 'An' werry good veppings too,' sez my feyther, 'but vot might you be vanting vith me, Black Dan?' 'First of all, I vants you to come down off that box,' sez Black Dan. 'Oh?' sez my feyther, cool as a coocumber. 'Ah!' sez Black Dan. 'Verefore an' v'y?' enkvires my feyther, but Black Dan only vagged 'is veppings in my feyther's face, an' grinned under 'is mask. 'I vants you, so, 'Andsome 'Arry--come down!' sez 'e. Now I've told you as my feyther vos the boldest--"

"Yes, yes," cried the fussy gentleman. "Well?"

"Vell, sir, my feyther stared at them murderous pistols, stared at Black Dan, an' being the werry gamest an' bravest cove you ever see, didn't 'esitate a second."

"Well," cried the fussy gentleman, "what did he do then?"

"Do, sir--v'y I'll tell you--my feyther--come down."

"Yes, yes," said the fussy gentleman, as Mottle-face paused. "Go on, go on!"

"Go on v'ere, sir?"

"Go on with your story. What was the end of it?"

"V'y, that's the end on it."

"But it isn't; you haven't told us what happened after he got down. What became of him after?"

"Took the 'Ring o' Bells,' out Islington vay, an' drank hisself to death all quite nat'ral and reg'lar."

"But that's not the end of your story."

"It vere the end o' my feyther though--an' a werry good end it vere, too."

Now here there ensued a silence, during which the fussy gentleman stared fixedly at Mottle-face, who chirruped to the horses solicitously, and turned a serene but owl-like eye up to the waning moon.

"And pray," said the fussy gentleman at length, very red in the face, and more indignant than ever, "pray what's all this to do with my valise, I should like to know?"

"So should I," nodded Mottle-face--"ah, that I should."

"You--you told me," spluttered the fussy gentleman, in sudden wrath, "that you were coming to my valise."

"An' so ve have," nodded Mottle-face, triumphantly. "Ve're at it now; ve've been a-coming to that theer blessed walise ever since you

come aboard."

"Well, and what's to be done about it?" snapped the fussy gentleman.

"Vell," said Mottle-face, with another ponderous wink at Barnabas, "if it troubles you much more, sir, if I vos you I should get a werry strong rope, and a werry large stone, and tie 'em together werry tight, an' drop that theer blessed walise into the river, and get rid of it that way."

Hereupon the fussy gentleman uttered an inarticulate exclamation, and, throwing himself back in his seat, tugged his hat over his eyes, and was heard no more.

But Mottle-face, touching up the near leader with deft and delicate play of wrist, or flicking the off wheeler, ever and anon gave vent to sounds which, though somewhat muffled, on account of coat-collar and shawl, were uncommonly like a chuckle. Yet if this were so or no, Barnabas did not trouble to ascertain, for he was already in that dreamy state 'twixt sleeping and waking, drowsily conscious of being borne on through the summer night, past lonely cottage and farmhouse, past fragrant ricks and barns, past wayside pools on whose still waters stars seemed to float--on and ever on, rumbling over bridges, clattering through sleeping hamlets and villages, up hill and down hill, on and ever on toward London and the wonders thereof. But, little by little, the chink and jingle of the harness, the rumble of the wheels, the rhythmic beat of the sixteen hoofs, all became merged into a drone that gradually softened to a drowsy murmur, and Barnabas fell into a doze; yet only to be awakened, as it seemed to him, a moment later by lights and voices, and to find that they were changing horses once more. Whereupon Mottle-face, leaning over, winked his owl-like eye, and spoke in a hoarse, penetrating whisper:

"Ten mile, sir, an' not a vord out o' old Walise so far!" saying which he jerked his head towards the huddled form of the fussy gentleman, winked again, and turned away to curse the hurrying ostlers, albeit in a tone good-natured and jovial.

And so, betimes, off they went again, down hill and up, by rolling meadow and winding stream, 'neath the leafy arches of motionless trees, through a night profoundly still save for the noise of their own going, the crow of a cock, or the bark of a dog from some farmyard. The moon sank and was gone, but on went the London Mail swirling through eddying mist that lay in every hollow like ghostly pools. Gradually the stars paled to the dawn, for low down in the east was a gray streak that grew ever broader, that changed to a faint pink, deepening to rose, to crimson, to gold--an ever brightening glory, till at last up rose the sun, at whose advent the mists rolled away and vanished, and lo! day was born.

Yawning, Barnabas opened drowsy eyes, and saw that here and there were houses in fair gardens, yet as they went the houses grew thicker and the gardens more scant. And now Barnabas became aware of a sound, soft with distance, that rose and fell--a never-ceasing murmur; therefore, blinking drowsily at Mottle-face, he inquired what this might be.

"That, sir, that's London, sir--cobble-stones, sir, cart-vheels, sir, and--Lord love you!"--here Mottle-face leaned over and once more

winked his owl-like eye--"but 'e ain't mentioned the vord 'walise' all night, sir--so 'elp me!" Having said which, Mottle-face vented a throaty chuckle, and proceeded to touch up his horses.

And now as one in a dream, Barnabas is aware that they are threading streets, broad streets and narrow, and all alive with great wagons and country wains; on they go, past gloomy taverns, past churches whose gilded weather-cocks glitter in the early sunbeams, past crooked side-streets and dark alley-ways, and so, swinging suddenly to the right, have pulled up at last in the yard of the "George."

It is a great inn with two galleries one above another and many windows, and here, despite the early hour, a motley crowd is gathered. Forthwith Barnabas climbs down, and edging his way through the throng, presently finds Peterby at his elbow.

"Breakfast, sir?"

"Bed, Peterby."

"Very good--this way, sir."

Thereafter, though he scarcely knows how, he finds himself following a trim-footed damsel, who, having shown him up a winding stair, worn by the tread of countless travellers, brings him to a smallish, dullish chamber, opening upon the lower gallery. Hereupon Barnabas bids her "good night," but, blinking in the sunlight, gravely changes it to "good morning." The trim-footed maid smiles, curtsies, and vanishes, closing the door behind her.

Now upon the wall of the chamber, facing the bed, hangs the picture of a gentleman in a military habit with an uncomfortably high stock. He is an eagle-nosed gentleman with black whiskers, and a pair of remarkably round wide-awake eyes, which stare at Barnabas as much as to say--

"And who the devil are you, sir?"

Below him his name and titles are set forth fully and with many flourishes, thus--

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL THE RIGHT HONORABLE THE EARL OF POMFROY,
K.G., K.T.S., etc., etc., etc.

So remarkably wide-awake is he, indeed, that it seems to drowsy Barnabas as if these round eyes wait to catch him unawares and follow him pertinaciously about the smallish, dullish chamber. Nevertheless Barnabas yawns, and proceeds to undress, which done, remembering he is in London, he takes purse and valuables and very carefully sets them under his pillow, places Mr. Chichester's pistol on the small table conveniently near, and gets into bed.

Yet now, sleepy though he is, he must needs turn to take another look at the Honorable the Earl of Pomfroy, wonders idly what the three "etc.'s" may mean, admires the glossy curl of his whiskers, counts the medals and orders on his bulging breast, glances last of all at his eyes, and immediately becomes aware that they are curiously like those of the "White Lion" at Tenterden, in that they are plying him with questions.

"Tall or short? dark or fair? Will she kiss you--next time, sir? Will she even be glad to see you again, you presumptuous young dog--will she--will she, confound you?"

"Ah!" sighed Barnabas. "Next time--I wonder!"

So saying, he sighed again, once, twice, and with the third fell fast asleep, and dreamed that a certain White Lion, clad in a Lieutenant-General's uniform, and with a pair of handsome black whiskers, stood balancing himself upon a single claw on the rail of the bed.

CHAPTER XXVI

CONCERNING THE DUTIES OF A VALET--AND A MAN

"And now, Peterby," said Barnabas, pushing his chair from the breakfast table, "the first thing I shall require is--a tailor."

"Very true, sir."

"These clothes were good enough for the country, Peterby, but--"

"Exactly, sir!" answered Peterby, bowing.

"Hum!" said Barnabas, with a quick glance. "Though mark you," he continued argumentatively,--"they might be worse, Peterby; the fit is good, and the cloth is excellent. Yes, they might be a great deal worse."

"It is--possible, sir," answered Peterby, with another bow. Hereupon, having glanced at his solemn face, Barnabas rose, and surveyed himself, as well as he might, in the tarnished mirror on the wall.

"Are they so bad as all that?" he inquired.

Peterby's mouth relaxed, and a twinkle dawned in his eye.

"As garments they are--serviceable, sir," said he, gravely, "but as clothes they--don't exist."

"Why then," said Barnabas, "the sooner we get some that do,--the better. Do you know of a good tailor?"

"I know them all, sir."

"Who is the best--the most expensive?"

"Stultz, sir, in Clifford Street; but I shouldn't advise you to have him."

"And why not?"

"Because he _is_ a tailor."

"Oh?" said Barnabas.

"I mean that the clothes he makes are all stamped with his individuality, as it were,--their very excellence damns them. They are the clothes of a tailor instead of being simply a gentleman's garments."

"Hum!" said Barnabas, beginning to frown at this, "it would seem that dress can be a very profound subject, Peterby."

"Sir," answered Peterby, shaking his head, "it is a life study, and, so far as I know, there are only two people in the world who understand it aright; Beau Brummell was one, and, because he was the Beau, had London and the World of Fashion at his feet."

"And who was the other?"

Peterby took himself by the chin, and, though his mouth was solemn, the twinkle was back in his eye as he glanced at Barnabas.

"The other, sir," he answered, "was one who, until yesterday, was reduced to the necessity of living upon poached rabbits."

Here Barnabas stared thoughtfully up at the ceiling.

"I remember you told me you were the best valet in the world," said he.

"It is my earnest desire to prove it, sir."

"And yet," said Barnabas, with his gaze still turned ceiling-wards, "I would have you--even more than this, Peterby."

"More, sir?"

"I would have you, sometimes, forget that you are only 'the best valet in the world,' and remember that you are--a man: one in whom I can confide; one who has lived in this great world, and felt, and suffered, and who can therefore advise me; one I may trust to in an emergency; for London is a very big place, they tell me, and my friends are few--or none--and--do you understand me, Peterby?"

"Sir," said Peterby in an altered tone, "I think I do."

"Then--sit down, John, and let us talk."

With a murmur of thanks Peterby drew up a chair and sat watching Barnabas with his shrewd eyes.

"You will remember," began Barnabas, staring up at the ceiling again, "that when I engaged you I told you that I intended to--hum! to--cut a figure in the fashionable world?"

"Yes, sir; and I told you that,--after what happened in a certain wood,--it was practically impossible."

"You mean because I thrashed a scoundrel?"

"I mean because you knocked down a friend of the Prince Regent."

"And is Carnaby so very powerful, Peterby?"

"Sir, he is--the Prince's friend! He is also as great a Buck as George Hanger, as Jehu, or Jockey of Norfolk, and as famous, almost, as the late Sir Maurice Vibart."

"Ah!" said Barnabas.

"And since the retirement of Mr. Brummell, he and the Marquis of Jerningham have to some extent taken his place and become the Arbiters of Fashion."

"Oh!" said Barnabas.

"And furthermore, sir, I would warn you that he is a dangerous enemy, said to be one of the best pistol-shots in England."

"Hum," said Barnabas, "nevertheless, I mean to begin--"

"To begin, sir?"

"At once, Peterby."

"But--how, sir?"

"That is for you to decide, Peterby."

"Me, sir?"

"You, Peterby."

Here Peterby took himself by the chin again, and looked at Barnabas with thoughtful eyes and gloomy brow.

"Sir," said he, "the World of Fashion is a trivial world where all must appear trivial; it is a place where all must act a part, and where those are most regarded who are most affected; it is a world of shams and insincerity, and very jealously guarded."

"So I have heard," nodded Barnabas.

"To gain admission you must, first of all, have money."

"Yes," said Barnabas.

"Birth--if possible."

"Hum," said Barnabas.

"Wit and looks may be helpful, but all these are utterly useless unless you have what I may call the magic key."

"And what is that?"

"Notoriety, sir."

"For what?"

"For anything that will serve to lift you out of the ruck--to set you above the throng,--you must be one apart--an original."

"Originality is divine!" said Barnabas.

"More or less, sir," added Peterby, "for it is very easily achieved. Lord Alvanly managed it with apricot tarts; Lord Petersham with snuff-boxes; Mr. Mackinnon by his agility in climbing round drawing-rooms on the furniture; Jockey of Norfolk by consuming a vast number of beef-steaks, one after the other; Sir George Cassilis, who was neither rich nor handsome nor witty, by being insolent; Sir John Lade by dressing like a stagecoach-man, and driving like the devil; Sir George Skeffington by inventing a new color and writing bad plays; and I could name you many others beside--"

"Why then, Peterby--what of Sir Mortimer Carnaby?"

"He managed it by going into the ring with Jack Fearby, the 'Young Ruffian,' and beating him in twenty-odd rounds for one thing, and winning a cross-country race--"

"Ha!" exclaimed Barnabas, "a race!" and so he fell to staring up at the ceiling again.

"But I fear, sir," continued Peterby, "that in making him your enemy, you have damned your chances at the very outset, as I told you."

"A race!" said Barnabas again, vastly thoughtful.

"And therefore," added Peterby, leaning nearer in his earnestness, "since you honor me by asking my advice, I would strive with all my power to dissuade you."

"John Peterby--why?"

"Because, in the first place, I know it to be impossible."

"I begin to think not, John."

"Why, then, because--it's dangerous!"

"Danger is everywhere, more or less, John."

"And because, sir, because you--you--" Peterby rose, and stood with bent head and hands outstretched, "because you gave a miserable wretch another chance to live; and therefore I--I would not see you crushed and humiliated. Ah, sir! I know this London, I know those who make up the fashionable world. Sir, it is a heartless world, cruel and shallow, where inexperience is made a mock of--generosity laughed to scorn; where he is most respected who can shoot the straightest; where men seldom stoop to quarrel, but where death is frequent, none the less--and, sir, I could not bear--I--I wouldn't have you cut off thus--!"

Peterby stopped suddenly, and his head sank lower; but as he stood Barnabas rose, and coming to him, took his hand into his own firm clasp.

"Thank you, John Peterby," said he. "You may be the best valet in the world--I hope you are--but I know that you are a man, and, as a man, I tell you that I have decided upon going on with the adventure."

"Then I cannot hope to dissuade you, sir?"

"No, John!"

"Indeed, I feared not."

"It was for this I came to London, and I begin--at once."

"Very good, sir."

"Consequently, you have a busy day before you; you see I shall require, first of all, clothes, John; then--well, I suppose a house to live in--"

"A--house, sir?"

"In a fashionable quarter, and furnished, if possible."

"A lodging, St. James's Street way, is less expensive, sir, and more usual."

"Good!" said Barnabas; "to buy a house will be more original, at least. Then there must be servants, horses--vehicles--but you will understand--"

"Certainly, sir."

"Well then, John--go and get 'em."

"Sir?" exclaimed Peterby.

"Go now, John," said Barnabas, pulling out his purse, "this very moment."

"But," stammered Peterby, "but, sir--you will--"

"I shall stay here--I don't intend to stir out until you have me dressed as I should be--in 'clothes that exist,' John!"

"But you--don't mean to--to entrust--everything--to--me?"

"Of course, John."

"But sir--"

"I have every confidence in your judgment, you see. Here is money, you will want more, of course, but this will do to go on with."

But Peterby only stared from Barnabas to the money on the table, and back again.

"Sir," said he at last, "this is--a great deal of money."

"Well, John?"

"And I would remind you that we are in London, sir, and that yesterday I--was a poacher--a man of no character--a--"

"But to-day you are my valet, John. So take the money and buy me whatever I require, but a tailor first of all."

Then, as one in a dream, Peterby took up the money, counted it, buttoned it into his pocket, and crossed to the door; but there he paused and turned.

"Sir," said he slowly, "I'll bring you a man who, though he is little known as yet, will be famous some day, for he is what I may term an artist in cloth. And sir,"--here Peterby's voice grew uncertain--"you shall find me worthy of your trust, so help me God!" Then he opened the door, went out, and closed it softly behind him. But as for Barnabas, he sat with his gaze fixed on the ceiling again, lost in reverie and very silent. After a while he spoke his thoughts aloud.

"A race!" said he.

CHAPTER XXVII

HOW BARNABAS BOUGHT AN UNRIDABLE HORSE--AND RODE IT

The coffee-room at the "George" is a longish, narrowish, dullish chamber, with a row of windows that look out upon the yard,--but upon this afternoon they looked at nothing in particular; and here Barnabas found a waiter, a lonely wight who struck him as being very like the room itself, in that he, also, was long, and narrow, and dull, and looked out upon the yard at nothing in particular; and, as he gazed, he sighed, and tapped thoughtfully at his chin with a salt-spoon. As Barnabas entered, however, he laid down the spoon, flicked an imaginary crumb from the table-cloth with his napkin, and bowed.

"Dinner, sir?" he inquired in a dullish voice, and with his head set engagingly to one side, while his sharp eyes surveyed Barnabas from boots to waistcoat, from waistcoat to neckcloth, and stayed there while he drew out his own shirt-frill with caressing fingers, and coughed disapprobation into his napkin. "Did you say dinner, sir?" he inquired again.

"Thank you, no," answered Barnabas.

"Perhaps cheese an' a biscuit might be nearer your mark, and say--a half of porter?"

"I've only just had breakfast," said Barnabas, aware of the waiter's scrutiny.

"Ah!" sighed the waiter, still caressing his shirt-frill, "you're Number Four, I think--night coach?"

"Yes."

"From the country of course, sir?"

"Yes--from the country," said Barnabas, beginning to frown a little, "but how in the world did you guess that?"

"From your 'toot example,' sir, as they say in France--from your appearance, sir."

"You are evidently a very observant man!" said Barnabas.

"Well," answered the waiter, with his gaze still riveted upon the neckcloth--indeed it seemed to fascinate him, "well, I can see as far through a brick wall as most,--there ain't much as I miss, sir."

"Why, then," said Barnabas, "you may perhaps have noticed a door behind you?"

The waiter stared from the neckcloth to the door and back again, and scratched his chin dubiously.

"Door, sir--yessir!"

"Then suppose you go out of that door, and bring me pens, and ink, and paper."

"Yessir!"

"Also the latest newspapers."

"Yessir--certainly, sir;" and with another slight, though eloquent cough into his napkin, he started off upon his errand. Hereupon, as soon as he was alone, Barnabas must needs glance down at that offending neckcloth, and his frown grew the blacker.

"Now, I wonder how long Peterby will be?" he said to himself. But here came the creak of the waiter's boots, and that observant person reappeared, bearing the various articles which he named in turn as he set them on the table.

"A bottle of ink, sir; pens and writing-paper, sir; and the Gazette."

"Thank you," said Barnabas, very conscious of his neckcloth still.

"And now, sir," here the waiter coughed into his napkin again, "now--what will you drink, sir; shall we say port, or shall we make it sherry?"

"Neither," said Barnabas.

"Why, then, we 'ave some rare old burgundy, sir--'ighly esteemed by connysoors and (cough again) other--gentlemen."

"No, thank you."

"On the other 'and--to suit 'umbler tastes, we 'ave,"--here the waiter closed his eyes, sighed, and shook his head--"ale, sir, likewise beer, small and otherwise."

"Nothing, thank you," said Barnabas; "and you will observe the door is still where it was."

"Door, sir, yessir--oh, certainly, sir!" said he, and stalked out of the room.

Then Barnabas set a sheet of paper before him, selected a pen, and began to write as follows:--

George Inn,
Borough.
June 2, 18--.

To VISCOUNT DEVENHAM,

MY DEAR DICK,--I did not think to be asking favors of you so soon, but--(here a blot).

"Confound it!" exclaimed Barnabas, and taking out his penknife he began to mend the spluttering quill. But, in the midst of this operation, chancing to glance out of the window, he espied a long-legged gentleman with a remarkably fierce pair of whiskers; he wore a coat of ultra-fashionable cut, and stood with his booted legs wide apart, staring up at the inn from under a curly-brimmed hat. But the hat had evidently seen better days, the coat was frayed at seam and elbow, and the boots lacked polish; yet these small blemishes were more than offset by his general dashing, knowing air, and the untamable ferocity of his whiskers. As Barnabas watched him, he drew a letter from the interior of his shabby coat, unfolded it with a prodigious flourish, and began to con it over. Now, all at once, Barnabas dropped knife and pen, thrust a hand into his own breast and took thence a letter also, at sight of which he straightway forgot the bewhiskered gentleman; for what he read was this:--

Dearest and Best of Sisters,--Never, in all this world was there such an unfortunate, luckless dog as I--were it not for your unfailing love I should have made an end of it all, before now.

I write this letter to beg and implore you to grant me another interview, anywhere and at any time you may name. Of course you will think it is more money I want--so I do; I'm always in need of it, and begin to fear I always shall be. But my reasons for wishing this meeting are much more than this--indeed, _most urgent_! (this underlined). I am threatened by a GRAVE DANGER (this doubly underlined). I am at my wit's end, and only you can save me, Cleone--you and you only. Chichester has been more than kind, _indeed, a true friend to me_! (this also underlined). I would that you could feel kinder towards him.

This letter must reach you where none of your guardian's spies can intercept it; your precious Captain has always hated me, damn him! (this scratched out). Oh, shame that he, a stranger, should ever have been allowed to come between brother and sister. I shall journey down to Hawkhurst to see you and shall stay

about until you can contrive to meet me. Chichester may accompany me, and if he should, try to be kinder to your brother's only remaining friend. How different are our situations! you surrounded by every luxury, while I--yet heaven forbid I should forget my manhood and fill this letter with my woes. But if you ever loved your unfortunate brother, do not fail him in this, Cleone.

Your loving, but desperate,

RONALD BARRYMAINE.

Having read this effusion twice over, and very carefully, Barnabas was yet staring at the last line with its scrawling signature, all unnecessary curls and flourishes, when he heard a slight sound in the adjacent box, and turning sharply, was just in time to see the top of a hat ere it vanished behind the curtain above the partition.

Therefore he sat very still, waiting. And lo! after the lapse of half a minute, or thereabouts, it reappeared, slowly and by degrees--a beaver hat, something the worse for wear. Slowly it rose up over the curtain--the dusty crown, the frayed band, the curly brim, and eventually a pair of bold, black eyes that grew suddenly very wide as they met the unwinking gaze of Barnabas. Hereupon the lips, as yet unseen, vented a deep sigh, and, thereafter, uttered these words:

"The same, and yet, curse me, the nose!--y-e-s, the nose seems, on closer inspection, a trifle too aquiline, perhaps; and the chin--y-e-s, decidedly a thought too long! And yet--!" Here another sigh, and the face rising into full view, Barnabas recognized the bewhiskered gentleman he had noticed in the yard.

"Sir," continued the stranger, removing the curly-brimmed hat with a flourish, and bowing over the partition as well as he could, "you don't happen to be a sailor--Royal Navy, do you?"

"No, sir," answered Barnabas.

"And your name don't happen to be Smivvle, does it?"

"No, sir," said Barnabas again.

"And yet," sighed the bewhiskered gentleman, regarding him with half-closed eyes, and with his head very much on one side, "in spite of your nose, and in spite of your chin, you are the counterpart, sir, the facsimile--I might say the breathing image of a--ha!--of a nephew of mine; noble youth, handsome as Adonis--Royal Navy--regular Apollo; went to sea, sir, years ago; never heard of more; tragic, sir--devilish tragic, on my soul and honor."

"Very!" said Barnabas; "but--"

"Saw you from the yard, sir, immediately struck by close resemblance; flew here, borne on the wings of hope, sir; you 're quite sure your name ain't Smivvle, are you?"

"Quite sure."

"Ah, well--mine is; Digby Smivvle, familiarly known as 'Dig,' at your service, sir. Stranger to London, sir?"

"Yes," said Barnabas.

"Ha! Bad place, London, sink of iniquity! Full of rogues, rascals, damn scoundrels,--by heaven, sharks, sir! confounded cannibals, by George!--eat you alive. Stranger myself, sir; just up from my little place in Worcestershire--King's Heath,--know it, perhaps? No? Charming village! rural, quiet; mossy trees, sir; winding brooks, larks and cuckoos carolling all day long. Sir, there has been a Smivvle at the Hall since before the Conquest! Fine old place, the Hall; ancient, sir, hoary and historic--though devilish draughty, upon my soul and honor!"

Here, finding that he still held the open letter in his hand, Barnabas refolded it and thrust it into his pocket, while Mr. Smivvle smilingly caressed his whiskers, and his bold, black eyes darted glances here and there, from Barnabas mending his pen to the table, from the table to the walls, to the ceiling, and from that altitude they dropped to the table again, and hovered there.

"Sir," said Barnabas without looking up, "pray excuse the blot, the pen was a bad one; I am making another, as you see."

Mr. Smivvle started, and raised his eyes swiftly. Stared at unconscious Barnabas, rubbed his nose, felt for his whisker, and, having found it, tugged it viciously.

"Blot, sir!" he exclaimed loudly; "now, upon my soul and honor--what blot, sir?"

"This," said Barnabas, taking up his unfinished letter to the Viscount--"if you've finished, we may as well destroy it," and forthwith he crumpled it into a ball, and tossed it into the empty fireplace.

"Sir!" exclaimed Mr. Smivvle, louder than before, "'pon my soul, now, if you mean to insinuate--" Here he paused, staring at Barnabas, and with his whiskers fiercer than ever.

"Well, sir?" inquired Barnabas, still busily trimming his quill.

Mr. Smivvle frowned; but finding Barnabas was quite unconscious of it, shook his head, felt for his whisker again, found it, tugged it, and laughed jovially.

"Sir," said he, "you are a devilish sharp fellow, and a fine fellow. I swear you are. I like your spirit, on my soul and honor I do, and, as for blots, I vow to you I never write a letter myself that I don't smear most damnably--curse me if I don't. That blot, sir, shall be another bond between us, for I have conceived a great regard for you. The astounding likeness between you and one who--was snatched away in the flower of his youth--draws me, sir, draws me most damnably; for I have a heart, sir, a heart--why should I disguise it?" Here Mr. Smivvle tapped the third left-hand button of his coat. "And so long as that organ continues its functions, you may count Digby Smivvle your friend, and at his little place in Worcestershire he will be proud to show you the hospitality _of_ a

Smivvle. Meanwhile, sir, seeing we are both strangers in a strange place, supposing we--join forces and, if you are up for the race, I propose--"

"The race!" exclaimed Barnabas, looking up suddenly.

"Yes, sir, devilish swell affair, with gentlemen to ride, and Royalty to look on--a race of races! London's agog with it, all the clubs discuss it, coffee houses ring with it, inns and taverns clamor with it--soul and honor, betting--everywhere. The odds slightly favor Sir Mortimer Carnaby's 'Clasher'; but Viscount Devenham's 'Moonraker' is well up. Then there's Captain Slingsby's 'Rascal,' Mr. Tressider's 'Pilot,' Lord Jerningham's 'Clinker,' and five or six others. But, as I tell you, 'Clasher' and 'Moonraker' carry the money, though many knowing ones are sweet on the 'Rascal.' But, surely, you must have heard of the great steeplechase? Devilish ugly course, they tell me."

"The Viscount spoke of it, I remember," said Barnabas, absently.

"Viscount, sir--not--Viscount Devenham?"

"Yes."

Here Mr. Smivvle whistled softly, took off the curly-brimmed hat, looked at it, and put it on again at a more rakish angle than ever.

"Didn't happen to mention my name, did he--Smivvle, sir?"

"No."

"Nor Dig, perhaps?"

"No, sir."

"Remarkable--hum!" exclaimed Mr. Smivvle, shaking his head; "but I'm ready to lay you odds that he _did_ speak of my friend Barry. I may say my bosom companion--a Mr. Ronald Barrymaine, sir."

"Ronald Barrymaine," repeated Barnabas, trying the new point of his pen upon his thumb-nail, yet conscious of the speaker's keen glance, none the less. "No, he did not."

"Astounding!" exclaimed Mr. Smivvle.

"Why so?"

"Because my friend Barrymaine was particularly intimate with his Lordship, before he fell among the Jews, dammem! My friend Barry, sir, was a dasher, by George! a regular red-hot tearer, by heaven! a Go, sir, a Tippy, a bang up Blood, and would be still if it were not for the Jews--curse 'em!"

"And is Mr. Barrymaine still a friend of yours?"

At this Mr. Smivvle took off his hat again, clapped it to his bosom, and bowed.

"Sir," said he, "for weal or woe, in shadow or shine, the hand of a

Smivvle, once given, is given for good."

As he spoke, Mr. Smivvle stretched out the member in question, which Barnabas observed was none too clean.

"The hand of a Smivvle, sir," pursued that gentleman, "the hand of a Smivvle is never withdrawn either on account of adversity, plague, poverty, pestilence, or Jews--dammem! As for my friend Barrymaine; but, perhaps, you are acquainted with him, sir."

"No," answered Barnabas.

"Ah! a noble fellow, sir! Heroic youth, blood, birth, and breeding to his finger-tips, sir. But he is, above all else, a brother to a--a sister, sir. Ah! what a creature! Fair, sir? fair as the immortal Helena! Proud, sir? proud as an arch-duchess! Handsome, sir? handsome, sir, as--as--oh, dammit, words fail me; but go, sir, go and ransack Olympus, and you couldn't match her, 'pon my soul! Diana, sir? Diana was a frump! Venus? Venus was a dowdy hoyden, by George! and as for the ox-eyed Juno, she was a positive cow to this young beauty! And then--her heart, sir!"

"Well, what of it?" inquired Barnabas, rather sharply.

"Utterly devoted--beats only for my friend--"

"You mean her brother?"

"I mean her brother, yes, sir; though I have heard a rumor that Sir Mortimer Carnaby--"

"Pooh!" said Barnabas.

"With pleasure, sir; but the fact remains that it was partly on his account, and partly because of another, that she was dragged away from London--"

"What other?"

"Well, let us say--H.R.H."

"Sir," inquired Barnabas, frowning, "do you mean the Prince?"

"Sir," said Mr. Smivvle, with a smiling shake of the head, "I prefer the letters H.R.H. Anyhow, there were many rumors afloat at the time, and her guardian--a regular, tarry old sea dog, by George--drags her away from her brother's side, and buries her in the country, like the one-armed old pirate he is, eye to her money they tell me; regular old skinflint; bad as a Jew--damn him! But speaking of the race, sir, do you happen to--know anything?"

"I know that it is to be run on the fifteenth of July," said Barnabas abstractedly.

"Oh, very good!" exclaimed Mr. Smivvle--"ha! ha!--excellent! knows it is to be run on the fifteenth; very facetious, curse me! But, joking apart, sir, have you any private knowledge? The Viscount, now, did he happen to tell you anything that--"

But, at this juncture, they were interrupted by a sudden tumult in the yard outside, a hubbub of shouts, the ring and stamp of hoofs, and, thereafter, a solitary voice upraised in oaths and curses. Barnabas sprang to his feet, and hurrying out into the yard, beheld a powerful black horse that reared and plunged in the grip of two struggling grooms; in an adjacent corner was the late rider, who sat upon a pile of stable-sweepings and swore, while, near by, perched precariously upon an upturned bucket, his slim legs stretched out before him, was a young exquisite--a Corinthian from top to toe--who rocked with laughter, yet was careful to keep his head rigid, so as to avoid crushing his cravat, a thing of wonder which immediately arrested the attention of Barnabas, because of its prodigious height, and the artful arrangement of its voluminous folds.

"Oh, dooce take me," he exclaimed in a faint voice, clapping a hand to his side, "I'll be shot if I saw anything neater, no, not even at Sadler's Wells! Captain Slingsby of the Guards in his famous double somersault! Oh, damme, Sling! I'd give a hundred guineas to see you do it again--I would, dooce take me!"

But Captain Slingsby continued to shake his fist at the great, black horse, and to swear with unabated fervor.

"You black devil!" he exclaimed, "you four-legged imp of Satan! So, you're up to your tricks again, are you? Well, this is the last chance you shall have to break my neck, b'gad! I'm done with you for a--"

Here the Captain became extremely fluent, and redder of face than ever, as he poured forth a minute description of the animal; he cursed him from muzzle to crupper and back again; he damned his eyes, he damned his legs, individually and collectively, and reviled him, through sire and dam, back to the Flood.

Meanwhile Barnabas turned from raging Two-legs to superbly wrathful Four-legs; viewed him from sweeping tail to lofty crest; observed his rolling eye and quivering nostril; took careful heed of his broad chest, slender legs, and powerful, sloping haunches with keen, appraising eyes, that were the eyes of knowledge and immediate desire. And so, from disdainful Four-legs he turned back to ruffled Two-legs, who, having pretty well sworn himself out by this time, rose gingerly to his feet, felt an elbow with gentle inquiry, tenderly rubbed a muddied knee, and limped out from the corner.

Now, standing somewhat apart, was a broad-shouldered man, a rough-looking customer in threadbare clothes, whose dusty boots spoke of travel. He was an elderly man, for the hair, beneath the battered hat, was gray, and he leaned wearily upon a short stick. Very still he stood, and Barnabas noticed that he kept his gaze bent ever upon the horse; nor did he look away even when the Captain began to speak again.

"B'gad!" exclaimed the Captain, "I'll sell the brute to the highest bidder. You, Jerningham, you seem devilish amused, b'gad! If you think you can back him he's yours for what you like. Come, what's the word?"

"Emphatically no, my dear, good Sling," laughed the young Corinthian, shaking his curly head. "I don't mean to risk this most precious

neck of mine until the fifteenth, dear fellow, dooce take me if I do!"

"Why then, b'gad! I'll sell him to any one fool enough to bid. Come now," cried the Captain, glancing round the yard, "who'll buy him? B'gad! who'll give ten pounds for an accursed brute that nobody can possibly ride?"

"I will!" said Barnabas.

"Fifteen, sir!" cried the shabby man on the instant, with his gaze still on the horse.

"Twenty!" said Barnabas, like an echo.

"Twenty-five, sir!" retorted the shabby man.

"Hey?" cried the Captain, staring from one to the other. "What's all this? B'gad! I say stop a bit--wait a minute! Bob, lend me your bucket."

Hereupon the Corinthian obligingly vacating that article. Captain Slingsby incontinent stood upon it, and from that altitude began to harangue the yard, flourishing his whip after the manner of an auctioneer's hammer.

"Now here you are, gentlemen!" he cried. "I offer you a devilishly ugly, damnably vicious brute, b'gad! I offer you a four-legged demon, an accursed beast that nobody can ever hope to ride--a regular terror, curse me! Killed one groom already, will probably kill another. Now, what is your price for this lady's pet? Look him over and bid accordingly."

"Twenty-five pound, sir," said the shabby man.

"Thirty!" said Barnabas.

"Thirty-one, sir."

"Fifty!" said Barnabas.

"Fifty!" cried the Captain, flourishing his whip. "Fifty pounds from the gentleman in the neckcloth--fifty's the figure. Any more? Any advance on fifty? What, all done! Won't any one go another pound for a beast fit only for the knacker's yard? Oh, Gad, gentlemen, why this reticence? Are you all done?"

"I can't go no higher, sir," said the shabby man, shaking his gray head sadly.

"Then going at fifty--at fifty! Going! Going! Gone, b'gad! Sold to the knowing young cove in the neckcloth."

Now, at the repetition of this word, Barnabas began to frown.

"And b'gad!" exclaimed the Captain, stepping down from the bucket, "a devilish bad bargain he's got, too."

"That, sir, remains to be seen," said Barnabas, shortly.

"Why, what do you mean to do with the brute?"

"Ride him."

"Do you, b'gad?"

"I do."

"Lay you ten guineas you don't sit him ten minutes."

"Done!" said Barnabas, buttoning up his coat.

But now, glancing round, he saw that the shabby man had turned away, and was trudging heavily out of the yard, therefore Barnabas hastened after him, and touched him upon the arm.

"I'm sorry you were disappointed," said he.

"Is it about the 'oss you mean, sir?" inquired the shabby man, touching his hat.

"Yes."

"Why, it do come a bit 'ard-like to ha' lost 'im, sir, arter waiting my chance so long. But fifty guineas be a sight o' money to a chap as be out of a job, though 'e's dirt-cheap at the price. There ain't many 'osses like 'im, sir."

"That was why I should have bought him at ten times the price," said Barnabas.

The man took off his hat, ran his stubby fingers through his grizzled hair, and stared hard at Barnabas.

"Sir," said he, "even at that you couldn't ha' done wrong. He ain't a kind 'oss--never 'aving been understood, d' ye see; but take my word for it, 'e's a wonder, that 'oss!"

"You know him, perhaps?"

"Since 'e were foaled, sir. I was stud-groom; but folks think I'm too old for the job, d' ye see, sir?"

"Do you think he 'd remember you?"

"Ay, that 'e would!"

"Do you suppose--look at him!--do you suppose you could hold him quieter than those ostlers?"

"'Old 'im, sir!" exclaimed the man, throwing back his shoulders. "'Old 'im--ah, that I could! Try me!"

"I will," said Barnabas. "How would forty shillings a week suit you?"

"Sir?" exclaimed the old groom, staring.

"Since you need a job, and I need a groom, I'll have you--if you're willing."

The man's square jaw relaxed, his eyes glistened; then all at once he shook his head and sighed.

"Ah! sir," said he, "ah! young sir, my 'air's gray, an' I'm not so spry as I was--nobody wants a man as old as I be, and, seeing as you've got the 'oss, you ain't got no call to make game o' me, young sir. You 've got--the 'oss!"

Now at this particular moment Captain Slingsby took it into his head to interrupt them, which he did in characteristic fashion.

"Hallo!--hi there!" he shouted, flourishing his whip.

"But I'm not making game of you," said Barnabas, utterly unconscious of the Captain, at least his glance never wavered from the eager face of the old groom.

"Hallo, there!" roared the Captain, louder than ever.

"And to prove it," Barnabas continued, "here is a guinea in advance," and he slipped the coin into the old groom's lax hand.

"Oh, b'gad," cried the Captain, hoarsely, "don't you hear me, you over there? Hi! you in the neckcloth!"

"Sir," said Barnabas, turning sharply and frowning again at the repetition of the word, "if you are pleased to allude to me, I would humbly inform you that my name is Beverley."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Captain, "I see--young Beverley, son of old Beverley--and a devilish good name too!"

"Sir, I'm vastly relieved to hear you say so," retorted Barnabas, with a profound obeisance. Then taking out his purse, he beckoned his new groom to approach.

"What is your name?" he inquired, as he counted out a certain sum.

"Gabriel Martin, sir."

"Then, Martin, pray give the fellow his money."

"Sir?"

"I mean the red-faced man in the dirty jacket, Martin," added Barnabas.

The old groom hesitated, glanced from the Captain's scowling brow to the smiling lips of Barnabas.

"Very good, sir," said he, touching his shabby hat, and taking the money Barnabas held out, he tendered it to the Captain, who, redder of face than ever, took it, stared from it to Barnabas, and whistled.

"Now, damme!" he exclaimed, "damme, if I don't believe the fellow means to be offensive!"

"If so, sir, the desire would seem to be mutual!" returned Barnabas.

"Yes, b'gad! I really believe he means to be offensive!" repeated the Captain, nodding as he pocketed the money.

"Of that you are the best judge, sir," Barnabas retorted. Captain Slingsby whistled again, frowned, and tossing aside his whip, proceeded to button up his coat.

"Why then," said he, "we must trouble this offensive person to apologize or--or put 'em up, begad!"

But hereupon the young Corinthian (who had been watching them languidly through the glass he carried at the end of a broad ribbon) stepped forward, though languidly, and laid a white and languid hand upon the Captain's arm.

"No, no, Sling," said he in a die-away voice, "he's a doocid fine 'bit of stuff'--look at those shoulders! and quick on his pins--remark those legs! No, no, my dear fellow, remember your knee, you hurt it, you know--fell on it when you were thrown,--must be doocid painful! Must let me take your place. Shall insist! Pleasure's all mine, 'sure you."

"Never, Jerningham!" fumed the Captain, "not to be thought of, my dear Bob--no begad, he's mine; why you heard him, he--he positively called me a--a fellow!"

"So you are, Sling," murmured the Corinthian, surveying Barnabas with an approving eye, "dev'lish dashing fellow, an 'out-and-outer' with the 'ribbons'--fiddle it with any one, by George, but no good with your mauleys, damme if you are! Besides, there's your knee, you know--don't forget your knee--"

"Curse my knee!"

"Certainly, dear fellow, but--"

"My knee's sound enough to teach this countryman manners, b'gad; you heard him say my coat was filthy?"

"So it is, Sling, my boy, devilish dirty! So are your knees--look at 'em! But if you will dismount head over heels into a muck-heap, my dear fellow, what the dooce can you expect?" The Captain merely swore.

"Doocid annoying, of course," his friend continued, "I mean your knee, you know, you can hardly walk, and this country fellow looks a regular, bang up milling cove. Let me have a try at him, do now. Have a little thought for others, and don't be so infernally selfish, Sling, my boy."

As he spoke, the Corinthian took off his hat, which he forced into the Captain's unwilling grasp, drew off his very tight-fitting coat, which he tossed over the Captain's unwilling arm, and, rolling back his snowy shirt-sleeves, turned to Barnabas with shining eyes and smiling lips.

"Sir," said he, "seeing my friend's knee is not quite all it should be, perhaps you will permit me to take his place, pleasure's entirely mine, 'sure you. Shall we have it here, or would you prefer

the stables--more comfortable, perhaps--stables?"

Now while Barnabas hesitated, somewhat taken aback by this unlooked-for turn of events, as luck would have it, there came a diversion. A high, yellow-wheeled curricle swung suddenly into the yard, and its two foam-spattered bays were pulled up in masterly fashion, but within a yard of the great, black horse, which immediately began to rear and plunge again; whereupon the bays began to snort, and dance, and tremble (like the thoroughbreds they were), and all was uproar and confusion; in the midst of which, down from the rumble of the dusty curricle dropped a dusty and remarkably diminutive groom, who, running to the leader's head, sprang up and, grasping the bridle, hung there manfully, rebuking the animal, meanwhile, in a voice astonishingly hoarse and gruff for one of his tender years.

"Dooce take me," exclaimed the Corinthian, feeling for his eye-glass, "it's Devenham!"

"Why, Dicky!" cried the Captain, "where have you sprung from?" and, forgetful of Barnabas, they hurried forward to greet the Viscount, who, having beaten some of the dust from his driving coat, sprang down from his high seat and shook hands cordially.

Then, finding himself unnoticed, Barnabas carefully loosed his neckerchief, and drew out the ends so that they dangled in full view.

"I've been rusticating with my 'Roman,'" the Viscount was proceeding to explain, keeping his eye upon his horses, "but found him more Roman than usual--Gad, I did that! Have 'em well rubbed down, Milo," he broke off suddenly, as the bays were led off to the stables, "half a bucket of water apiece, no more, mind, and--say, a dash of brandy!"

"Werry good, m'lud!" This from Milo of Crotona, portentous of brow and stern of eye, as he overlooked the ostlers who were busily unbuckling straps and traces.

"My 'Roman,' as I say," continued the Viscount, "was rather more so than usual, actually wanted me to give up the Race! After that of course I had to be firm with him, and we had a slight--ah, misunderstanding in consequence--fathers, as a rule, are so infernally parental and inconsiderate! Met Carnaby on the road, raced him for a hundred; ding-dong all the way, wheel and wheel to Bromley, though he nearly ditched me twice, confound him! Coming down Mason's Hill I gave him my dust, up the rise he drew level again. 'Ease up for the town, Carnaby,' says I, 'Be damned if I do!' says he, so at it we went, full tilt. Gad! to see the folk jump! Carnaby drove like a devil, had the lead to Southend, but, mark you, his whip was going! At Catford we were level again. At Lewisham I took the lead and kept it, and the last I saw of him he was cursing and lashing away at his cattle, like a brute. Carnaby's a devilish bad loser, I've noticed, and here I am. And oh! by the way--he's got a devil of an eye, and a split lip. Says he fell out of his curricle, but looks as though some one had--thrashed him."

"But my very dear fellow!" exclaimed the Corinthian, "thrash Carnaby? pooh!"

"Never in the world!" added the Captain.

"Hum!" said the Viscount, feeling a tender part of his own ribs thoughtfully, "ha! But, hallo, Jerningham! have you been at it too? Why are you buffed?" And he nodded to the Corinthian's bare arms.

"Oh, dooce take me, I forgot!" exclaimed the Marquis, looking about; "queer cove, doocid touchy, looks as if he might fib though. Ah, there he is! talking to the rough-looking customer over yonder;" and he pointed to Barnabas, who stood with his coat thrown open, and the objectionable neckcloth in full evidence. The Viscount looked, started, uttered a "view hallo," and, striding forward, caught Barnabas by the hand.

"Why, Bev, my dear fellow, this is lucky!" he exclaimed. Now Barnabas was quick to catch the glad ring in the Viscount's voice, and to notice that the neckcloth was entirely lost upon him, therefore he smiled as he returned the Viscount's hearty grip.

"When did you get here? what are you doing? and what the deuce is the trouble between you and Jerningham?" inquired the Viscount all in a breath. But before Barnabas could answer, the great, black horse, tired of comparative inaction, began again to snort and rear, and jerk his proud head viciously, whereupon the two ostlers fell to swearing, and the Viscount's bays at the other end of the yard to capering, and the Viscount's small groom to anathematizing, all in a moment.

"Slingsby!" cried his Lordship, "look to that black demon of yours!"

"He is no concern of mine, Devenham," replied the Captain airily, "sold him, b'gad!"

"And I bought him," added Barnabas.

"You did?" the Viscount exclaimed, "in heaven's name, what for?"

"To ride--"

"Eh? my dear fellow!"

"I should like to try him for the race on the fifteenth, if it could be managed, Dick."

"The race!" exclaimed the Viscount, staring.

"I 've been wondering if you could--get me entered for it," Barnabas went on, rather diffidently, "I'd give anything for the chance."

"What--with that brute! my dear fellow, are you mad?"

"No, Dick."

"But he's unmanageable, Bev; he's full of vice--a killer--look at him now!"

And indeed at this moment, as if to bear out this character, up went the great, black head again, eyes rolling, teeth gleaming, and ears laid back.

"I tell you, Bev, no one could ride that devil!" the Viscount repeated.

"But," said Barnabas, "I've bet your friend Captain Slingsby that I could."

"It would be madness!" exclaimed the Viscount. "Ha! look out! There--I told you so!" For in that moment the powerful animal reared suddenly--broke from the grip of one ostler, and swinging the other aside, stood free, and all was confusion. With a warning shout, the old groom sprang to his head, but Barnabas was beside him, had caught the hanging reins, and swung himself into the saddle.

"I've got him, sir," cried Martin, "find yer stirrups!"

"Your stick," said Barnabas, "quick, man! Now--let go!"

For a moment the horse stood rigid, then reared again, up and up--his teeth bared, his forefeet lashing; but down came the heavy stick between the flattened ears, once--twice, and brought him to earth again.

And now began a struggle between the man and the brute--each young, each indomitable, for neither had as yet been mastered, and therefore each was alike disdainful of the other. The head of the horse was high and proud, his round hoofs spurned the earth beneath, fire was in his eye, rage in his heart--rage and scorn of this presumptuous Two-legs who sought to pit his puny strength against his own quivering, four-legged might. Therefore he mocked Two-legs, scorned and contemned him, laughed ha! ha! (like his long-dead ancestor among the Psalmist's trumpets) and gathered himself together--eager for the battle.

But the eyes of Barnabas were wide and bright, his lips were curved, his jaw salient--his knees gripped tight, and his grasp was strong and sure upon the reins.

And now Four-legs, having voiced his defiance, tossed his crest on high, then plunged giddily forward, was checked amid a whirlwind of lashing hoofs, rose on his hind legs higher and higher, swinging giddily round and round, felt a stunning blow, staggered, and dropping on all fours, stove in the stable door with a fling of his hind hoofs. But the eyes of Barnabas were glowing, his lips still curved, and his grip upon the reins was more masterful. And, feeling all this, Four-legs, foaming with rage, his nostrils flaring, turned upon his foe with snapping teeth, found him out of reach, and so sought to play off an old trick that had served him more than once; he would smash his rider's leg against a post or wall, or brush him off altogether and get rid of him that way. But lo! even as he leapt in fulfilment of this manoeuvre, his head was wrenched round, further and further, until he must perforce, stop--until he was glaring up into the face above, the face of his bitter foe, with its smiling mouth, its glowing eye, its serene brow.

"Time's up!" cried the Captain, suddenly; "b'gad, sir, you win the bet!" But Barnabas scarcely heard.

"You've done it--you win; eleven and a half minutes, b'gad!" roared

the Captain again--"don't you hear, sir?--come off, before he breaks your neck!"

But Barnabas only shook his head, and, dropping the stick, leaned over and laid his hand upon that proud, defiant crest, a hand grown suddenly gentle, and drew it down caressingly from ear to quivering nostril, once, twice, and spoke words in a soft tone, and so, loosed the cruel grip upon the rein, and sat back--waiting. But Four-legs had become thoughtful; true, he still tossed his head and pawed an impatient hoof, but that was merely for the sake of appearances--Four-legs was thoughtful. No one had ever touched him so, before--indeed blows had latterly been his portion--but this Two-legs was different from his kind, besides, he had a pleasing voice--a voice to soothe ragged nerves--there it was again! And then surely, the touch of this hand awoke dim memories, reminded him of far-off times when two-legged creatures had feared him less; and there was the hand again! After all, things might be worse--the hand that could be so gentle could be strong also; his mouth was sore yet, and a strong man, strong-handed and gentle of voice, was better than--oh, well!

Whether of all this, or any part of it, the great, black horse was really thinking, who shall say? Howbeit Barnabas presently turned in his saddle and beckoned the old groom to his stirrup.

"He'll be quiet now, I think," said he.

"Ah! that he will, sir. You've larned the trick o' voice an' hand--it ain't many as has it--must be born in a man, I reckon, an' 'tis that as does more nor all your whips and spurs, an' curb-bits, sir. 'E'll be a babe wi' you arter this, sir, an' I'm thinkin' as you won't be wantin' me now, maybe? I ain't young enough nor smart enough, d' ye see."

Here Barnabas dismounted, and gave the reins into the old groom's eager hand.

"I shan't be wanting him for--probably three or four days, Gabriel, until then--look after him, exercise him regularly, for I'm hoping to do great things with him, soon, Gabriel, perhaps." And so Barnabas smiled, and as Martin led the horse to the stables, turned to find the young Corinthian at his elbow; he had resumed hat and coat, and now regarded Barnabas as smiling and imperturbable as ever.

"Sir," said he, "I congratulate you heartily. Sir, any friend of Viscount Devenham is also mine, I trust; and I know your name, and--hem!--I swear Slingsby does! Beverley, I think--hem!--son of old Beverley, and a devilish good name too! Eh, Sling my boy?"

Hereupon the Captain limped forward, if possible redder of face than ever, very much like a large schoolboy in fault.

"Sir," he began, "b'gad--!" here he paused to clear his throat loudly once or twice--"a devil incarnate! Fourteen minutes and a half, by my watch, and devil a spur! I'd have lent you my boots had there been time, I would, b'gad! As it is, if you've any desire to shake hands with a--ha!--with a fellow--hum!--in a dirty coat--why--here's mine, b'gad!"

"Captain the Honorable Marmaduke Slingsby--Mr. Beverley--The Marquis of Jerningham--Mr. Beverley. And now," said the Viscount, as Barnabas shook hands, "now tell 'em why you bought the horse, Bev."

"I was hoping, sirs," said Barnabas, rather diffidently, "that I might perhaps have the honor of riding in the Steeplechase on the fifteenth."

Hereupon the Captain struck his riding boot a resounding blow with his whip, and whistled; while the Marquis dangled his eyeglass by its riband, viewing it with eyes of mild surprise, and the Viscount glanced from one to the other with an enigmatical smile upon his lips.

"That would rest with Carnaby to decide, of course," said the Captain at last.

"Why so?" inquired Barnabas.

"Because--well, because he--is Carnaby, I suppose," the Captain answered.

"Though Jerningham has the casting-vote," added the Viscount.

"True," said the Marquis, rearranging a fold of his cravat with a self-conscious air, "but, as Sling says--Carnaby is--Carnaby."

"Sirs," began Barnabas, very earnestly, "believe me I would spare no expense--"

"Expense, sir?" repeated the Marquis, lifting a languid eyebrow; "of course it is no question of 'expense'!" Here the Viscount looked uncomfortable all at once, and Barnabas grew suddenly hot.

"I mean," he stammered, "I mean that my being entered so late in the day--the fees might be made proportionately heavier--double them if need be--I should none the less be--be inestimably indebted to you; indeed I--I cannot tell you--" Now as Barnabas broke off, the Marquis smiled and reached out his hand--a languid-seeming hand, slim and delicate, yet by no means languid of grip.

"My dear Beverley," said he, "I like your earnestness. A race--especially this one--is a doocid serious thing; for some of us, perhaps, even more serious than we bargain for. It's going to be a punishing race from start to finish, a test of endurance for horse and man, over the worst imaginable country. It originated in a match between Devenham on his 'Moonraker' and myself on 'Clinker,' but Sling here was hot to match his 'Rascal,' and Carnaby fancied his 'Clasher,' and begad! applications came so fast that we had a field in no time."

"Good fellows and sportsmen all!" nodded the Captain. "Gentlemen riders--no tag-rag, gamest of the game, sir."

"Now, as to yourself, my dear Beverley," continued the Marquis authoritatively, "you 're doocid late, y' know; but then--"

"He can ride," said the Viscount.

"And he's game," nodded the Captain.

"And, therefore," added the Marquis, "we'll see what can be done about it."

"And b'gad, here's wishing you luck!" said the Captain.

At this moment Peterby entered the yard, deep in converse with a slim, gentleman-like person, whose noble cravat immediately attracted the attention of the Marquis.

"By the way," pursued the Captain, "we three are dining together at my club; may I have a cover laid for you, Mr. Beverley?"

"Sir," answered Barnabas, "I thank you, but, owing to--circumstances" --here he cast a downward glance at his neckerchief--"I am unable to accept. But, perhaps, you will, all three of you, favor me to dinner at my house--say, in three days' time?"

The invitation was no sooner given than accepted.

"But," said the Viscount, "I didn't know that you had a place here in town, Bev. Where is it?"

"Why, indeed, now you come to mention it, I haven't the least idea; but, perhaps, my man can tell me."

"Eh--what?" exclaimed the Captain. "Oh, b'gad, he's smoking us!"

"Peterby!"

"Sir?" and having saluted the company, Peterby stood at respectful attention.

"I shall be giving a small dinner in three days' time."

"Certainly, sir."

"At my house, Peterby,--consequently I desire to know its location. Where do I live now, Peterby?"

"Number five, St. James's Square, sir."

"Thank you, Peterby."

"An invaluable fellow, that of yours," laughed the Marquis, as Peterby bowed and turned away.

"Indeed, I begin to think he is, my Lord," answered Barnabas, "and I shall expect you all, at six o'clock, on Friday next." So, having shaken hands again, Captain Slingsby took the arm of the Marquis, and limped off.

Now, when they were alone, the Viscount gazed at Barnabas, chin in hand, and with twinkling eyes.

"My dear Bev," said he, "you can hang me if I know what to make of you. Egad, you're the most incomprehensible fellow alive; you are, upon my soul! If I may ask, what the deuce did it all mean--about this house of yours?"

"Simply that until this moment I wasn't sure if I had one yet."

"But--your fellow--"

"Yes. I sent him out this morning to buy me one."

"To buy you--a house?"

"Yes; also horses and carriages, and many other things, chief among them--a tailor."

The Viscount gasped.

"But--my dear fellow--to leave all that to your--servant! Oh, Gad!"

"But, as the Marquis remarked, Peterby is an inestimable fellow."

The Viscount eyed Barnabas with brows wrinkled in perplexity; then all at once his expression changed.

"By the way," said he, "talking of Carnaby, he's got the most beautiful eye you ever saw!"

"Oh?" said Barnabas, beginning to tuck in the ends of his neckerchief.

"And a devil of a split lip!"

"Oh?" said Barnabas again.

"And his coat had been nearly ripped off him; I saw it under his cape!"

"Ah?" said Barnabas, still busy with his neckcloth.

"And naturally enough," pursued the Viscount, "I've been trying to imagine--yes, Bev, I've been racking my brain most damnably, wondering why you--did it?

"It was in the wood," said Barnabas.

"So it _was_ you, then?"

"Yes, Dick."

"But--he didn't even mark you?"

"He lost his temper, Dick."

"You thrashed--Carnaby! Gad, Bev, there isn't a milling cove in England could have done it."

"Yes--there are two--Natty Bell, and Glorious John."

"And I'll warrant he deserved it, Bev."

"I think so," said Barnabas; "it was in the wood, Dick."

"The wood? Ah! do you mean where you--"

"Where I found her lying unconscious."

"Unconscious! And with him beside her! My God, man!" cried the Viscount, with a vicious snap of his teeth. "Why didn't you kill him?"

"Because I was beside her--first, Dick."

"Damn him!" exclaimed the Viscount bitterly.

"But he is your friend, Dick."

"Was, Bev, was! We'll make it in the past tense hereafter."

"Then you agree with your father after all?"

"I do, Bev; my father is a cursed, long-sighted, devilish observant man! I'll back him against anybody, though he is such a Roman. But oh, the devil!" exclaimed the Viscount suddenly, "you can never ride in the race after this."

"Why not?"

"Because you'll meet Carnaby; and that mustn't happen."

"Why not?"

"Because he'll shoot you."

"You mean he'd challenge me? Hum," said Barnabas, "that is awkward! But I can't give up the race."

"Then what shall you do?"

"Risk it, Dick."

But now, Mr. Smivvle, who from an adjoining corner had been an interested spectator thus far, emerged, and flourishing off the curly-brimmed hat, bowed profoundly, and addressed himself to the Viscount.

"I believe," said he, smiling affably, "that I have the pleasure to behold Viscount Devenham?"

"The same, sir," rejoined the Viscount, bowing stiffly.

"You don't remember me, perhaps, my Lord?"

The Viscount regarded the speaker stonily, and shook his head.

"No, I don't, sir."

Mr. Smivvle drew himself up, and made the most of his whiskers.

"My Lord, my name is Smivvle, Digby Smivvle, at your service, though perhaps you don't remember my name, either?"

The Viscount took out his driving gloves and began to put them on.

"No, I don't, sir!" he answered dryly.

Mr. Smivvle felt for his whisker, found it, and smiled.

"Quite so, my Lord, I am but one of the concourse--the multitude--the ah--the herd, though, mark me, my Lord, a Smivvle, sir, --a Smivvle, every inch of me,--while you are the owner of 'Moonraker,' and Moonraker's the word just now, I hear. But, sir, I have a friend--"

"Indeed, sir," said the Viscount, in a tone of faint surprise, and beckoning a passing ostler, ordered out his curricle.

"As I say," repeated Mr. Smivvle, beginning to search for his whisker again, "I have a friend, my Lord--"

"Congratulate you," murmured the Viscount, pulling at his glove.

"A friend who has frequently spoken of your Lordship--"

"Very kind of him!" murmured the Viscount.

"And though, my Lord, though my name is not familiar, I think you will remember his; the name of my friend is "--here Mr. Smivvle, having at length discovered his whisker, gave it a fierce twirl,-- "Ronald Barrymaine."

The Viscount's smooth brow remained unclouded, only the glove tore in his fingers; so he smiled, shook his head, and drawing it off, tossed it away.

"Hum?" said he, "I seem to have heard some such name--somewhere or other--ah! there's my Imp at last, as tight and smart as they make 'em, eh, Bev? Well, good-by, my dear fellow, I shan't forget Friday next." So saying, the Viscount shook hands, climbed into his curricle, and, with a flourish of his whip, was off and away in a moment.

"A fine young fellow, that!" exclaimed Mr. Smivvle; "yes, sir, regular out-and-outer, a Bang up! by heaven, a Blood, sir! a Tippy! a Go! a regular Dash! High, sir, high, damned high, like my friend Barrymaine,--indeed, you may have remarked a similarity between 'em, sir?"

"You forget, I have never met your friend," said Barnabas.

"Ah, to be sure, a great pity! You'd like him, for Barrymaine is a cursed fine fellow in spite of the Jews, dammem! yes,--you ought to know my friend, sir."

"I should be glad to," said Barnabas.

"Would you though, would you indeed, sir? Nothing simpler; call a chaise! Stay though, poor Barry's not himself to-day, under a cloud, sir. Youthful prodigalities are apt to bring worries in their train--chiefly in the shape of Jews, sir, and devilish bad shapes too! Better wait a day--say to-morrow, or Thursday--or even Friday would do."

"Let it be Saturday," said Barnabas.

"Saturday by all means, sir, I'll give myself the pleasure of calling upon you."

"St. James's Square," said Barnabas, "number five."

But now Peterby, who had been eyeing Mr. Smivvle very much askance, ventured to step forward.

"Sir," said he, "may I remind you of your appointment?"

"I hadn't forgotten, Peterby; and good day, Mr. Smivvle."

"Au revoir, sir, delighted to have had the happiness. If you _should_ chance ever to be in Worcestershire, the Hall is open to you. Good afternoon, sir!" And so, with a prodigious flourish of the hat, Mr. Smivvle bowed, smiled, and swaggered off. Then, as he turned to follow Peterby into the inn, Barnabas must needs pause to glance towards the spot where lay the Viscount's torn glove.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CONCERNING, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE LEGS OF A GENTLEMAN-IN-POWDER

In that delightful book, "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments," one may read of Spirits good, and bad, and indifferent; of slaves of lamps, of rings and amulets, and talismanic charms; and of the marvels and wonders they performed. But never did Afrit, Djinn, or Genie perform greater miracles than steady-eyed, soft-voiced Peterby. For if the far away Orient has its potent charms and spells, so, in this less romantic Occident, have we also a spell whereby all things are possible, a charm to move mountains--a spell whereby kings become slaves, and slaves, kings; and we call it Money.

Aladdin had his wonderful Lamp, and lo! at the Genie's word, up sprang a palace, and the wilderness blossomed; Barnabas had his overflowing purse, and behold! Peterby went forth, and the dull room at the "George" became a mansion in the midst of Vanity Fair.

Thus, at precisely four o'clock on the afternoon of the third day, Barnabas stood before a cheval mirror in the dressing-room of his new house, surveying his reflection with a certain complacent satisfaction.

His silver-buttoned blue coat, high-waisted and cunningly rolled of collar, was a sartorial triumph; his black stockinette pantaloons, close-fitting from hip to ankle and there looped and buttoned, accentuated muscled calf and virile thigh in a manner somewhat disconcerting; his snowy waistcoat was of an original fashion and cut, and his cravat, folded and caressed into being by Peterby's fingers, was an elaborate masterpiece, a matchless creation never before seen upon the town. Barnabas had become a dandy, from the crown of his curly head to his silk stockings and polished shoes, and, upon the whole, was not ill-pleased with himself.

"But they're--dangerously tight, aren't they, Peterby?" he inquired

suddenly, speaking his thought aloud.

"Tight, sir!" repeated Mr. Barry, the tailor, reproachfully, and shaking his gentleman-like head, "impossible, sir,--with such a leg inside 'em."

"Tight, sir?" exclaimed Peterby, from where he knelt upon the floor, having just finished looping and buttoning the garments in question, "indeed, sir, since you mention it, I almost fear they are a trifle too--roomy. Can you raise your bent knee, sir?"

"Only with an effort, John."

"That settles it, Barry," said Peterby with a grim nod, "you must take them in at least a quarter of an inch."

"Take 'em in?" exclaimed Barnabas, aghast, "no, I'll be shot if you do,--not a fraction! I can scarcely manage 'em as it is." Peterby shook his head in grave doubt, but at this juncture they were interrupted by a discreet knock, and the door opening, a Gentleman-in-Powder appeared. He was a languid gentleman, an extremely superior gentleman, but his character lay chiefly in his nose, which was remarkably short and remarkably supercilious of tip, and his legs which were large and nobly shaped; they were, in a sense, eloquent legs, being given to divers tremors and quiverings when their possessor labored under any strong feeling or excitement; but, above all, they were haughty legs, contemptuous of this paltry world and all that therein is, yea, even of themselves, for their very calves seemed striving to turn their backs upon each other.

"Are you in, sir?" he inquired in an utterly impersonal tone.

"In?" repeated Barnabas, with a quick downward glance at his tight nether garments, "in?--in what?--in where?"

"Are you at 'ome, sir?"

"At home? Of course,--can't you see that?"

"Yes, sir," returned the Gentleman-in-Powder, his legs growing a little agitated.

"Then why do you ask?"

"There is a--person below, sir."

"A person?"

"Yes, sir,--very much so! Got 'is foot in the door--wouldn't take it out--had to let 'em in--waiting in the 'all, sir."

"What's he like, who is he?"

"Whiskers, sir,--name of Snivels,--no card!" Here might have been observed the same agitation of the plump legs.

"Ask him to wait."

"Beg pardon, sir--did you say--to wait?" (Agitation growing.)

"Yes. Say I'll be down at once." (Agitation extreme.)

"Meaning as you will--see 'im, sir?" (Agitation indescribable.)

"Yes," said Barnabas, "yes, of course."

The Gentleman-in-Powder bowed; his eye was calm, his brow unruffled, but his legs!!! And his nose was more supercilious than ever as he closed the door upon it.

Mr. Smivvle, meanwhile, was standing downstairs before a mirror, apparently lost in contemplation of his whiskers, and indeed they seemed to afford him a vast degree of pleasure, for he stroked them with caressing fingers, and smiled upon them quite benevolently.

"Six pair of silver candlesticks!" he murmured. "Persian rugs! Bric-a-brac, rare--costly pictures! He's a Nabob, by heaven,--yes he is,--a mysterious young Nabob, wallowing in wealth! Five shillings? --preposterous! we'll make it--ten,--and--yes, shall we say another five for the pampered menial? By all means let us make it another five shillings for the cursed flunkey,--here he comes!"

And indeed, at that moment the legs of the Gentleman-in-Powder might have been descried descending the stair rather more pompously than usual. As soon as they had become stationary, Mr. Smivvle directed a glance at the nearest, and addressed it.

"James!" said he.

The Gentleman-in-Powder became lost in dreamy abstraction, with the exception of his legs which worked slightly. Hereupon Mr. Smivvle reached out and poked him gently with the head of his tasselled cane.

"Awake, James?" said he.

"Name of Harthur--_if_ you please, sir!" retorted the Gentleman-in-Powder, brushing away the touch of the cane, and eyeing the place with much concern.

"If, James," continued Mr. Smivvle, belligerent of whisker, "if you would continue to ornament this lordly mansion, James, be more respectful, hereafter, to your master's old and tried friends," saying which Mr. Smivvle gave a twirl to each whisker, and turned to inspect a cabinet of old china.

"Sevres, by George!" he murmured, "we'll make it a pound!" He was still lost in contemplation of the luxurious appointments that everywhere met his view, and was seriously considering the advisability of "making it thirty shillings," when the appearance of Barnabas cut him short, and he at once became all smiles, flourishes and whiskers.

"Ah, Beverley, my boy!" he cried heartily, "pray forgive this horribly unseasonable visit, but--under the circumstances--I felt it my duty to--ah--to drop in on you, my dear fellow."

"What circumstances?" demanded Barnabas, a little stiffly, perhaps.

"Circumstances affecting our friend Barrymaine, sir."

"Ah?" said Barnabas, his tone changing, "what of him? though you forget, Mr. Barrymaine and I are still strangers."

"By heaven, you are right, sir, though, egad! I'm only a little previous,--eh, my dear fellow?" and, smiling engagingly, Mr. Smivvle followed Barnabas into a side room, and shutting the door with elaborate care, immediately shook his whiskers and heaved a profound sigh. "My friend Barrymaine is low, sir,--devilish low," he proceeded to explain, "indeed I'm quite distressed for the poor fellow, 'pon my soul and honor I am,--for he is--in a manner of speaking--in eclipse as it were, sir!"

"I fear I don't understand," said Barnabas.

"Why, then--in plain words, my dear Beverley,--he's suffering from an acute attack of the Jews, dammem!--a positive seizure, sir!"

"Do you mean he has been taken--for debt?"

"Precisely, my dear fellow. An old affair--ages ago--a stab in the dark! Nothing very much, in fact a mere bagatelle, only, as luck will have it, I am damnably short myself just now."

"How much is it?"

"Altogether exactly twenty-five pound ten. An absurd sum, but all my odd cash is on the race. So I ventured here on my young friend's behalf to ask for a trifling loan,--a pound--or say thirty shillings would be something."

Barnabas crossed to a cabinet, unlocked a drawer, and taking thence a smallish bag that jingled, began to count out a certain sum upon the table.

"You said twenty-five pounds ten, I think?" said Barnabas, and pushed that amount across the table. Mr. Smivvle stared from the money to Barnabas and back again, and felt for his whisker with fumbling fingers.

"Sir," he said, "you can't--you don't mean to--to--"

"Yes," said Barnabas, turning to re-lock the drawer. Mr. Smivvle's hand dropped from his whiskers, indeed, for the moment he almost seemed to have forgotten their existence.

"Sir," he stammered, "I cannot allow--no indeed, sir! Mr. Beverley, you overwhelm me--"

"Debts are necessary evils," said Barnabas, "and must be paid." Mr. Smivvle stared at Barnabas, his brow furrowed by perplexity, --stared like one who is suddenly at a loss; and indeed his usual knowing air was quite gone. Then, dropping his gaze to the money on the table, he swept it into his pocket, almost furtively, and took up his hat and cane, and, it is worthy of note, that he did it all without a flourish.

"Mr. Beverley," said he, "in the name of my friend Barrymaine, I

thank you, and--I--I thank you!" So he turned and went out of the room, and, as he went, he even forgot to swagger.

Then Barnabas crossed to a mirror, and, once more, fell to studying his reflection with critical eyes, in the midst of which examination he looked up to find Peterby beside him.

"Are you quite satisfied, sir?"

"They are wonderful, John."

"The coat," said Peterby, "y-e-s, the coat will pass well enough, but I have grave doubts as regard the pantaloons."

"I refuse to have 'em touched, John. And Natty Bell was quite right."

"Sir?" said Peterby.

"You don't know Natty Bell as yet, John, but you may; he is a very remarkable man! He told me, I remember, that in Town, a man had his clothes put on for him, and--remembered them,--and so he does,--the difficulty will be ever to forget 'em, they"--here Barnabas stole a glance at his legs--"they positively obtrude themselves, John! Yes, clothes are wonderful things, but I fear they will take a great deal of living up to!"

Here Barnabas drew a long sigh, in the midst of which he was interrupted by the calves of the Gentleman-in-Powder, which presented themselves at the doorway with the announcement:

"Viscount Deafenem, sir!"

Barnabas started and hurried forward, very conscious, very nervous, and for once uncertain of himself by reason of his new and unaccustomed splendor. But the look in the Viscount's boyish eyes, his smiling nod of frank approval, and the warm clasp of his hand, were vastly reassuring.

"Why, Bev, that coat's a marvel!" he exclaimed impulsively, "it is, I swear it is; turn round--so! Gad, what a fit!"

"I hoped you 'd approve of it, Dick," said Barnabas, a little flushed, "you see, I know very little about such things, and--"

"Approve of it! My dear fellow! And the cut!"

"Now--as for these--er--pantaloons, Dick--?"

"Dashing, my dear fellow,--devilish dashing!"

"But rather too--too tight, don't you think?"

"Can't be, Bev, tighter the better,--have 'em made too tight to get into, and you're right; look at mine, if I bend, I split,--deuced uncomfortable but all the mode, and a man must wear something! My fellow has the deuce of a time getting me into 'em, confound 'em. Oh, for ease, give me boots and buckskins!" Hereupon the Viscount having walked round Barnabas three times, and viewed him critically from every angle, nodded with an air of finality. "Yes, they do you

infinite credit, my dear fellow,--like everything else;" and he cast a comprehensive glance round the luxurious apartment.

"The credit of it all rests entirely with Peterby," said Barnabas. "John--where are you?" But Peterby had disappeared.

"You're the most incomprehensible fellow, Bev," said the Viscount, seating himself on the edge of the table and swinging his leg. "You have been a constant surprise to me ever since you found me--er--let us say--ruminating in the bilboes, and now"--here he shook his head gravely--"and now it seems you are to become a source of infernal worry and anxiety as well."

"I hope not, Dick."

"You are, though," repeated the Viscount, looking graver than ever.

"Why?"

"Because--well, because you are evidently bent upon dying young."

"How so, Dick?"

"Well, if you ride in the race and don't break your neck, Carnaby will want a word with you; and if he doesn't shoot you, why then Chichester certainly will--next time, damn him!"

"Next time?"

"Oh, I know all about your little affair with him--across the table. Gad, Beverley, what a perfectly reckless fellow you are!"

"But--how do you know of this?"

"From Clemency."

"So you've seen her again, Dick?"

"Yes, of course; that is, I took 'Moonraker' for a gallop yesterday, and--happened to be that way."

"Ah!" said Barnabas.

"And she told me--everything," said the Viscount, beginning to stride up and down the room, with his usual placidity quite gone, "I mean about--about the button you found, it was that devil Chichester's it seems, and--and--Beverley, give me your hand! She told me how you confronted the fellow. Ha! I'll swear you had him shaking in his villain's shoes, duellist as he is."

"But," said Barnabas, as the Viscount caught his hand, "it was not altogether on Clemency's account, Dick."

"No matter, you frightened the fellow off. Oh, I know--she told me; I made her! She had to fight with the beast, that's how he lost his button. I tell you, if ever I get the chance at him, he or I shall get his quietus. By God, Bev, I'm half-minded to send the brute a challenge, as it is."

"Because of Clemency, Dick?"

"Well--and why not?"

"The Earl of Bamborough's son fight a duel over the chambermaid of a hedge tavern!"

The Viscount's handsome face grew suddenly red, and as suddenly pale again, and his eyes glowed as he fronted Barnabas across the hearth.

"Mr. Beverley," said he very quietly, "how am I to take that?"

"In friendship, Dick, for the truth of it is that--though she is as brave, as pure, as beautiful as any lady in the land, she is a chambermaid none the less."

The Viscount turned, and striding to the window stood there, looking out with bent head.

"Have I offended you?" inquired Barnabas.

"You go--too far, Beverley."

"I would go farther yet for my friend, Viscount, or for our Lady Cleone."

Now when Barnabas said this, the Viscount's head drooped lower yet, and he stood silent. Then, all at once, he turned, and coming to the hearth, the two stood looking at each other.

"Yes, I believe you would, Beverley. But you have a way of jumping to conclusions that is--devilish disconcerting. As for Chichester, the world would be well rid of him. And, talking of him, I met another rascal as I came--I mean that fellow Smivvle; had he been here?"

"Yes."

"Begging, I suppose?"

"He borrowed some money for his friend Barrymaine."

The Viscount flushed hotly, and looked at Barnabas with a sudden frown.

"Perhaps you are unaware, that is a name I never allow spoken in my presence, Mr. Beverley."

"Indeed, Viscount, and pray, why not?"

"For one thing, because he is--what he is--"

"Lady Cleone's brother."

"Half-brother, sir, and none the less a--knave."

"How--?"

"I mean that he is a card-sharper, a common cheat."

"Her brother--?"

"Half-brother!"

"A cheat! Are you sure?"

"Certain! I had the misfortune to make the discovery. And it killed him in London, all the clubs shut their doors upon him of course, he was cut in the streets,--it is damning to be seen in his company or even to mention his name--now."

"And you--you exposed him?"

"I said I made the discovery; but I kept it to myself. The stakes were unusually high that night, and we played late. I went home with him, but Chichester was there, waiting for him. So I took him aside, and, in as friendly a spirit as I could, told him of my discovery. He broke down, and, never attempting a denial, offered restitution and promised amendment. I gave my word to keep silent and, on one pretext or another, the loser's money was returned. But next week, the whole town hummed with the news. One night--it was at White's--he confronted me, and--he gave me--the lie!" The Viscount's fists were tight clenched, and he stared down blindly at the floor. "And, sir, though you'll scarcely credit it of course, I--there, before them all--I took it."

"Of course," said Barnabas, "for Her sake."

"Beverley!" exclaimed the Viscount, looking up with a sudden light in his eyes. "Oh, Bev!" and their hands met and gripped.

"You couldn't do anything else, Dick."

"No, Bev, no, but I'm glad you understand. Later it got about that I--that I was--afraid of the fellow--he's a dead shot, they say, young as he is--and--well, it--it wasn't pleasant, Bev. Indeed it got worse until I called out one of Chichester's friends, and winged him--a fellow named Dalton."

"I think I've seen him," said Barnabas, nodding.

"Anyhow, Barrymaine was utterly discredited and done for--he's an outcast, and to be seen with him, or his friends, is to be damned also."

"And yet," said Barnabas, sighing and shaking his head, "I must call upon him to-morrow."

"Call upon him! Man--are you mad?"

"No; but he is her brother, and--"

"And, as I tell you, he is banned by society as a cheat!"

"And is that so great a sin, Dick?"

"Are there any--worse?"

"Oh, yes; one might kill a man in a duel, or dishonor a trusting woman, or blast a man's character; indeed it seems to me that there are many greater sins!"

The Viscount dropped back in his chair, and stared at Barnabas with horrified eyes.

"My--dear--Beverley," said he at last, "are you--serious?"

"My dear Viscount--of course I am."

"Then let me warn you, such views will never do here: any one holding such views will never succeed in London."

"Yet I mean to try," said Barnabas, squaring his jaw.

"But why," said the Viscount, impatiently, "why trouble yourself about such a fellow?"

"Because She loves him, and because She asked me to help him."

"She asked--you to?"

"Yes."

"And--do you think you can?"

"I shall try."

"How?"

"First, by freeing him from debt."

"Do you know him--have you ever met him?"

"No, Dick, but I love his sister."

"And because of this, you'd shoulder his debts? Ah, but you can't, and if you ask me why, I tell you, because Jasper Gaunt has got him, and means to keep him. To my knowledge Barrymaine has twice had the money to liquidate his debt--but Gaunt has put him off, on one pretext or another, until the money has all slipped away. I tell you, Bev, Jasper Gaunt has got him in his clutches--as he's got Sling, and poor George Danby, and--God knows how many more--as he'd get me if he could, damn him! Yes, Gaunt has got his claws into him, and he'll never let him go again--never."

"Then," said Barnabas, "I must see Jasper Gaunt as soon as may be."

"Oh, by all means," nodded the Viscount, "if you have a taste for snakes, and spiders, and vermin of that sort, Slingsby will show you where to find him--Slingsby knows his den well enough, poor old Sling! But look to yourself, for spiders sting and snakes bite, and Jasper Gaunt does both."

The knuckles of the Gentleman-in-Powder here made themselves heard, and thereafter the door opened to admit his calves, which were immediately eclipsed by the Marquis, who appeared to be in a state of unwonted hurry.

"What, have I beat Slingsby, then?" he inquired, glancing round the room, "he was close behind me in Piccadilly--must have had a spill--that's the worst of those high curricles. As a matter of fact," he proceeded to explain, "I rushed round here--that is we both did, but I've got here first, to tell you that--Oh, dooce take me!" and out came the Marquis's eyeglass. "Positively you must excuse me, my dear Beverley. Thought I knew 'em all, but no--damme if I ever saw the fellow to yours! Permit me!" Saying which the Marquis gently led Barnabas to the window, and began to study his cravat with the most profound interest.

"By George, Devenham," he exclaimed suddenly,--"it's new!"

"Gad!" said the Viscount, "now you come to mention it,--so it is!"

"Positively--new!" repeated the Marquis in an awestruck voice, staring at the Viscount wide-eyed. "D'you grasp the importance of this, Devenham?--d'you see the possibilities, Dick? It will create a sensation,--it will set all the clubs by the ears, by George! We shall have the Prince galloping up from Brighton. By heaven, it's stupendous! Permit me, my dear Beverley. See--here we have three folds and a tuck, then--oh, Jupiter, it's a positive work of art, --how the deuce d'you tie it? Never saw anything approaching this, and I've tried 'em all,--the Mail-coach, the Trone d'Amour, the Osbaldistone, the Napoleon, the Irish tie, the Mathematical tie, and the Oriental,--no, 'pon my honor it's unique, it's--it's--" the Marquis sighed, shook his head, and words failing him, took out his enamelled snuff-box. "Sir," said he, "I have the very highest regard for a man of refined taste, and if there is one thing in which that manifests itself more than another, it is the cravat. Sir, I make you free of my box, pray honor me." And the Marquis flicked open his snuff-box and extended it towards Barnabas with a bow.

"My Lord," said Barnabas, shaking his head, "I appreciate the honor you do me, but pray excuse me,--I never take it."

"No?" said the Marquis with raised brows, "you astonish me; but then--between ourselves--neither do I. Can't bear the infernal stuff. Makes me sneeze most damnably. And then, it has such a cursed way of blowing about! Still, one must conform to fashion, and--"

"Captain Slingsby!"

The Gentleman-in-Powder had scarcely articulated the words, when the Captain had gripped Barnabas by the hand.

"Congratulate you, Beverley, heartily."

"Thank you, but why?" inquired Barnabas.

"Eh--what? Hasn't Jerningham told you? B'gad, is it possible you don't know--"

"Why, dooce take me, Sling, if I didn't forget!" said the Marquis, clapping hand to thigh, "but his cravat put everything else out of my nob, and small wonder either! You tell him."

"No," answered the Captain. "I upset a cursed apple-stall on my way

here--you got in first--tell him yourself."

"Why, then, Beverley," said the Marquis, extending his hand, in his turn, as he spoke, "we have pleasure, Sling and I, to tell you that you are entered for the race on the fifteenth."

"The race!" exclaimed Barnabas, flushing. "You mean I'm to ride then?"

"Yes," nodded the Captain, "but b'gad! we mean more than that, we mean that you are one of us, that Devenham's friend must be ours because he's game--"

"And can ride," said the Viscount.

"And is a man of taste," added the Marquis.

Thus it was as one in a dream that Barnabas beheld the legs of the Gentleman-in-Powder, and heard the words:

"Dinner is served, gentlemen!"

But scarcely had they taken their places at the table when the Marquis rose, his brimming glass in his hand.

"Mr. Beverley," said he, bowing, "when Devenham, Slingsby, and I meet at table, it is our invariable custom to drink to one whom we all--hum--"

"Admire!" said the Viscount, rising.

"Adore!" said the Captain, rising also.

"Therefore, gentlemen," pursued the Marquis, "with our host's permission, we will--"

"Stay a moment, Jerningham," said the Viscount,--"it is only right to tell you that my friend Beverley is one with us in this,--he also is a suitor for the hand of Lady Cleone."

"Is he, b'gad!" exclaimed the Captain. "Dooce take me!" said the Marquis, "might have known it though. Ah, well! one more or less makes small difference among so many."

So Barnabas rose, and lifting his glass with the others, drank to--

"Our Lady Cleone--God bless her!"

CHAPTER XXIX

WHICH DESCRIBES SOMETHING OF THE MISFORTUNES OF RONALD BARRYMAINE

Holborn was in full song,--a rumbling, roaring melody, a clattering, rushing, blaring symphony made up of the grind of wheels upon resounding cobble-stones, the thudding beat of horse-hoofs, the tread of countless feet, the shrill note of voices; it was all there,

the bass and the treble blending together, harsh, discordant, yet the real symphony of life.

And, amidst it all, of it all, came Barnabas, eager-eyed, forgetful of his companion, lost to all but the stir and bustle, the rush and roar of the wonderful city about him. The which Mr. Smivvle duly remarked from under the curly-brimmed hat, but was uncommonly silent. Indeed, though his hat was at its usual rakish angle, though he swung his cane and strode with all his ordinary devil-may-care swagger, though his whiskers were as self-assertive as ever, yet Mr. Smivvle himself was unusually pensive, and in his bold black eyes was a look very like anxiety. But in a while, as they turned out of the rush of Holborn Hill, he sighed, threw back his shoulders, and spoke.

"Nearly there now, my dear fellow, this is the Garden."

"Garden?" said Barnabas, glancing about. "Where?"

"Here, sir; we're in it,--Hatton Garden. Charmingly rustic spot, you'll observe, delightfully rural retreat! Famous for strawberries once, I believe,--flowers too, of course. Talking of flowers, sir, a few of 'em still left to--ah--blush unseen? I'm one, Barrymaine's another--a violet? No. A lily? No. A blush-rose? Well, let us say a blush-rose, but damnably run to seed, like the rest of us. And--ah--talking of Barrymaine, I ought, perhaps, to warn you that we may find him a trifle--queer--a leetle touched perhaps." And Mr. Smivvle raised an invisible glass, and tossed down its imaginary contents with an expression of much beatitude.

"Is he given to--that sort of thing?"

"Sir," said Mr. Smivvle, "can you blame one who seeks forgetfulness in the flowing bowl--and my friend Barry has very much to forget--can you blame him?"

"No, poor fellow!"

"Sir, allow me to tell you my friend Barry needs no man's pity, though I confess I could wish Chichester was not quite so generous--in one respect."

"How?"

"In--ah--in keeping the flowing bowl continually brimming, my dear fellow."

"Is Mr. Chichester a friend of his?"

"The only one, with the exception of yours obediently, who has not deserted him in his adversity."

"Why?"

"Because, well,--between you and me, my dear fellow, I believe his regard for Barry's half-sister, the Lady Cleone, is largely accountable in Chichester's case; as for myself, because, as I think I mentioned, the hand of a Smivvle once given, sir, is never withdrawn, either on account of plague, poverty, pestilence, or Jews,

--dammem! This way, my dear fellow!" and turning into Cross Street, up towards Leather Lane, Mr. Smivvle halted at a certain dingy door, opened it, and showed Barnabas into a dingier hall, and so, leading the way up the dingiest stairs in the world, eventually ushered him into a fair-sized, though dingy, room; and being entered, immediately stood upon tip-toe and laid a finger on his lips.

"Hush! the poor fellow's asleep, but you'll excuse him, I know."

Barnabas nodded, and, softly approaching the couch, looked down upon the sleeper, and, with the look, felt his heart leap.

A young face he saw, delicately featured, a handsome face with disdainful lips that yet drooped in pitiful weariness, a face which, for all its youth, was marred by the indelible traces of fierce, ungoverned passions. And gazing down upon these features, so dissimilar in expression, yet so strangely like in their beauty and lofty pride, Barnabas felt his heart leap,--because of the long lashes that curled so black against the waxen pallor of the cheek; for in that moment he almost seemed to be back in the green, morning freshness of Annersley Wood, and upon his lips there breathed a name--"Cleone."

But all at once the sleeper stirred, frowned, and started up with a bitter imprecation upon his lips that ended in a vacant stare.

"Why, Barry," cried Mr. Smivvle leaning over him, "my dear boy, did we disturb you?"

"Ah, Dig--is that you? Fell asleep--brandy, perhaps, and--ha,--your pardon, sir!" and Ronald Barrymaine rose, somewhat unsteadily, and, folding his threadbare dressing-gown about him, bowed, and so stood facing Barnabas, a little drunk and very stately.

"This is my friend Beverley, of whom I told you," Mr. Smivvle hastened to explain. "Mr. Barnabas Beverley,--Mr. Ronald Barrymaine."

"You are--welcome, sir," said Mr. Barrymaine, speaking with elaborate care, as if to make quite sure of his utterance. "Pray be seated, Mr. Bev'ley. We--we are a little crowded I f-fear. Move those boots off the chair, Dig. Indeed my apartment might be a little more commodious, but it's all I have at p-present, and by God!" he cried, suddenly fierce, "I shouldn't have even this but for Dig here! Dig's the only f-friend I have in the world--except Chichester. Push the brandy over, Dig. Of course there's--Cleone, but she's only a sister, after all. Don't know what I should do if it wasn't for Dig--d-do I, Dig? And Chichester of course. Give Mr. Bev'ley a chair. Dig. I'll get him--glass!" Hereupon Mr. Smivvle hurried forward with a chair which, like all the rest of the furniture, had long ago seen its best days, during which manoeuvre he contrived to whisper hurriedly:

"Poor Barry's decidedly 'touched' to-day, a little more so than usual, but you'll excuse him I know, my dear fellow. Hush!" for Barrymaine, who had crossed to the other end of the room, now turned and came towards them, swaying a little, and with a glass in his hand.

"It's rickety, sir, you'll notice," said he, nodding. "I--I mean that chair--dev'lish rickety, like everything else 'bout

here--especially myself, eh, Dig? B-but don't be alarmed, it--will bear you, sir. D-devil of a place to ask--gentleman to sit down in, --but the Spanswick hasn't been round to clean the place this week--damn her! S-scarcely blame her, though--never gets paid--except when Dig remembers it. Don't know what I should do without D-Dig,--raised twenty pounds yesterday, damme if I know where! said it was watch--but watch went weeks ago. Couldn't ever pay the Spanswick. That's the accursed part of it--pay, pay! debt on debt, and--n-nothing to pay with. All swallowed up by that merciless bloodsucker--that--"

"Now, Barry!" Mr. Smivvle expostulated, "my dear boy--"

"He's a cursed v-vampire, I tell you!" retorted Barrymaine, his pale cheeks suddenly flushed, and his dark eyes flashing in swift passion, --"he's a snake."

"Now, my dear fellow, calm yourself."

"Calm myself. How can I, when everything I have is his, when everything I g-get belongs to him before--curse him--even before I get it! I tell you, Dig, he's--he's draining my life away, drop by drop! He's g-got me down with his foot on my neck--crushing me into the mud. I say he's stamping me down into hell--damn him!"

"Restrain yourself, Barry, my dear boy, remember Mr. Beverley is our guest--"

"Restrain myself--yes, Dig, yes. B-beg Mr. Beverley's pardon for me, Dig. Not myself to-day,--but must restrain myself--certainly. Give me some more brandy--ha! and pass bottle to Mr. Bev'ley, Dig. No, sir? Ah well, help yourself, Dig. Must forgive exhibition of feeling, sir, but I always do get carried away when I remember that inhuman monster--God's curse on him!"

"Sir," said Barnabas, "whom do you mean?"

"Mean? ha! ha! oh damme, hark to that, Dig! Dev'lish witty I call that--oh c-cursed rich! Whom do I mean? Why," cried Barrymaine, starting up from the couch, "whom should I mean but Gaunt! Gaunt! Gaunt!" and he shook his clenched fists passionately in the air. Then, as suddenly he turned upon Barnabas with a wild, despairing gesture, and stretching out his arms, pointed to each wrist in turn.
"D'ye see 'em?" he cried, "d'ye hear 'em; jangle? No? Ah, but they _are_ there! riveted on, never to come off, eating deeper into my flesh every day! I'm shackled, I tell you,--fettered hand and foot. Oh! egad, I'm an object lesson!--point a moral and adorn a tale, --beware of p-prodigality and m-money lenders. Shackled--shackled hand and foot, and must drag my chain until I f-fall into a debtor's grave."

"No!" cried Barnabas, so suddenly that Ronald Barrymaine started, and thereafter grew very high and haughty.

"Sir," said he with upflung head, "I don't permit my word to be--to be--contra--dicted,--never did and never will. Though you see before you a m-miserable wretch, yet that wretch is still a gentleman at heart, and that wretch tells you again he's shackled, sir, hand and foot--yes, damme, and so I am!"

"Well then," said Barnabas, "why not free yourself?"

Ronald Barrymaine sank down upon the couch, looked at Barnabas, looked at Smivvle, drained his glass and shook his head.

"My dear Dig," said he, "your friend's either mad or drunk--mos' probably drunk. Yes, that's it,--or else he's smoking me, and I won't be smoked, no man shall laugh at me now that I'm down. Show him the door, Dig. I--I won't have my private affairs discussed by s-strangers, no, by heaven!"

"Now, Barry," exclaimed Mr. Smivvle, "do be calm, Mr. Beverley only wants to help you--er--that is, in a friendly way, of course, and I 'm sure--"

"Damn his help! I'd rather die in the g-gutter than ask help or charity of any one."

"Yes, yes--of course, my dear fellow! But you're so touchy, Barry, so infernally proud, my dear boy. Mr. Beverley merely wishes to--"

"Be honored with your friendship," said Barnabas with his ingenuous smile.

"Why then, Dig," says his youthful Mightiness, beginning to relent, "pray beg Mr. Bev'ley's pardon for me again, and 'sure him the honor is mine."

"And I would have you trust me also," Barnabas pursued.

"Trust you?" repeated Barrymaine with a sudden laugh. "Gad, yes, willingly! Only it happens I've n-noth-ing left to trust you with, --no, not enough to pay the Spanswick."

"And yet, if you will, you may be free," said Barnabas the persistent.

"Free! He's at it again, Dig."

"Believe me it is my earnest desire to help you,--to--"

"Help me, sir! a stranger! by heaven,--no! A stranger, damme!"

"Let us say your friend."

"I tell you, sir," said Barrymaine, starting up unsteadily, "I seek no man's aid--s-scorn it! I'm not one to weep out my misfortunes to strangers. Damme, I'm man enough to manage my own affairs, what's left of 'em. I want nobody's accursed pity either--pah!" and he made a gesture of repudiation so fierce that he staggered and recovered himself only by clutching at Mr. Smivvle's ready arm. "The Past, sir," said he, supporting himself by that trusty arm, "the Past is done with, and the F-Future I'll face alone, as I have done all along, eh, Dig?"

"But surely--"

"Ay, surely, sir, I'm no object of charity whining for alms, no, by Gad! I--I'm--Dig, push the brandy!"

"If you would but listen--" Barnabas began again.

"Not--not a word. Why should I? Past's dead, and damn the Future. Dig, pass the brandy."

"And I tell you," said Barnabas, "that in the future are hope and the chance of a new life, once you are free of Gaunt."

"Free of Gaunt! Hark to that, Dig. Must be dev'lish drunk to talk such cursed f-folly! Why, I tell you again," he cried in rising passion, "that I couldn't get free of Gaunt's talons even if I had the money, and mine's all gone long ago, and half Cleone's beside, --her Guardian's tied up the rest. She can't touch another penny without his consent, damn him!--so I'm done. The future? In the future is a debtor's prison that opens for me whenever Jasper Gaunt says the word. Hope? There can be no hope for me till Jasper Gaunt's dead and shrieking in hell-fire."

"But your debts shall be paid,--if you will."

"Paid? Who--who's to pay 'em?"

"I will."

"You!--you?"

"Yes," nodded Barnabas, "on a condition."

Ronald Barrymaine sank back upon the couch, staring at Barnabas with eyes wide and with parted lips; then, leaned suddenly forward, sobered by surprise.

"Ah-h!" said he slowly. "I think I begin to understand. You have seen my--my sister."

"Yes."

"Do you know--how much I owe?"

"No, but I'll pay it,--on a condition."

"A condition?" For a long moment the passionate dark eyes met and questioned the steady gray; then Barrymaine's long lashes fluttered and fell.

"Of course it would be a loan. I--I'd pay you back," he muttered.

"At your own convenience."

"And you would advance the money at once?"

"On a condition!"

Once again their eyes met, and once again Barrymaine's dropped; his fingers clenched and unclenched themselves, he stirred restlessly, and, finally, spoke.

"And your condition. Is it--Cleone?"

"No!" said Barnabas vehemently.

"Then, what is it?"

"That from this hour you give up brandy and Mr. Chichester--both evil things."

"Well, and what more,--what--for yourself? How can this benefit you? Come, speak out,--what is your real motive?"

"The hope that you may, some day, be worthy of your sister's love."

"Worthy, sir!" exclaimed Barrymaine, flushing angrily. "Poverty is no crime!"

"No; but there remain brandy and Mr. Chichester."

"Ha! would you insult m-my friend?"

"Impossible. You have no friend, unless it be Mr. Smivvle here."

"Now by heaven," began Barrymaine passionately, "I tell you--"

"And I tell you that these are my only conditions," said Barnabas. "Accept them and you may begin a new life. It is in your power to become the man you might be, to regain the place in men's esteem that you have lost, for if you are but sufficiently determined, nothing is impossible."

Now as he spoke, Barnabas beheld Barrymaine's drooping head uplifted, his curving back grew straight, and a new light sprang into his eyes.

"A new life," he muttered, "to come back to it all, to outface them all after their cursed sneers and slights! Are you sure you don't promise too much,--are you sure it's not too late?"

"Sure and certain!" said Barnabas. "But remember the chance of salvation rests only with and by yourself, after all," and he pointed to the half-emptied bottle. "Do you agree to my conditions?"

"Yes, yes, by God I do!"

"Then, friend, give me your hand. To-day I go to see Jasper Gaunt."

So Ronald Barrymaine, standing square upon his feet, gave Barnabas his hand. But even in that moment Barnabas was conscious that the door had opened softly behind him, saw the light fade out of Barrymaine's eyes, felt the hand grow soft and lax, and turning about, beheld Mr. Chichester smiling at them from the threshold.

CHAPTER XXX

IN WHICH RONALD BARRYMAINE MAKES HIS CHOICE

There was a moment of strained silence, then, as Barnabas sank back on the rickety chair, Mr. Chichester laughed softly, and stepped into the room.

"Salvation, was it, and a new life?" he inquired, "are you the one to be saved, Ronald, or Smivvle here, or both?"

Ronald Barrymaine was dumb, his eyes sought the floor, and his pale cheek became, all at once, suffused with a burning, vivid scarlet.

"I couldn't help but overhear as I came upstairs," pursued Mr. Chichester pleasantly, "and devilish dark stairs they are--"

"Though excellent for eavesdropping, it appears!" added Barnabas.

"What?" cried Barrymaine, starting up, "listening, were you--s-spying on me--is that your game, Chichester?" But hereupon Mr. Smivvle started forward.

"Now, my dear Barry," he remonstrated, "be calm--"

"Calm? I tell you nobody's going to spy on me,--no, by heaven! neither you, nor Chichester, nor the d-devil himself--"

"Certainly not, my dear fellow," answered Mr. Smivvle, drawing Barrymaine's clenched fist through his arm and holding it there, "nobody wants to. And, as for you, Chichester--couldn't come at a better time--let me introduce our friend Mr. Beverley--"

"Thank you, Smivvle, but we've met before," said Mr. Chichester dryly, "last time he posed as Rustic Virtue in homespun, to-day it seems he is the Good Samaritan in a flowered waistcoat, very anxiously bent on saving some one or other--conditionally, of course!"

"And what the devil has it to do with you?" cried Barrymaine passionately.

"Nothing, my dear boy, nothing in the world,--except that until to-day you have been my friend, and have honored me with your confidence."

"Yes, by heavens! So I have--utterly--utterly,--and what I haven't told you--y-you've found out for yourself--though God knows how. N-not that I've anything to f-fear,--not I!"

"Of course not," smiled Mr. Chichester, "I am--your friend, Ronald, --and I think you will always remember that." Mr. Chichester's tone was soothing, and the pat he bestowed upon Barrymaine's drooping shoulder was gentle as a caress, yet Barrymaine flinched and drew away, and the hand he stretched out towards the bottle was trembling all at once.

"Yes," Mr. Chichester repeated more softly than before, "yes, I am your friend, Ronald, you must always remember that, and indeed I--fancy--you always will." So saying, Mr. Chichester patted the drooping shoulder again, and turned to lay aside his hat and cane. Barrymaine was silent, but into his eyes had crept a look--such a look as Barnabas had never seen--such a look as Barnabas could never afterwards forget; then Barrymaine stooped to reach for the bottle.

"Well," said he, without looking up again, "s-suppose you are my friend,--what then?"

"Why, then, my dear fellow, hearing you are to be saved--on a condition--I am, naturally enough, anxious to know what that condition may be?"

"Sir," said Barnabas, "let me hasten to set your anxiety at rest. My condition is merely that Mr. Barrymaine gives up two evil things--namely, brandy and yourself."

And now there fell a silence so utter that Barnabas could distinctly hear the tick of Natty Bell's great watch in his fob; a silence in which Mr. Smivvle stared with wide-eyed dismay, while Barrymaine sat motionless with his glass half-way to his lips. Then Mr. Chichester laughed again, but the scar glowed upon his pallid cheek, and the lurking demon peeped out of his narrowed eyes.

"And for this," said he, shaking his head in gentle disbelief, "for this our young Good Samaritan is positively eager to pay twenty thousand odd pounds--"

"As a loan," muttered Barrymaine, "it would be only a loan, and I--I should be free of Jasper Gaunt f-for good and all, damn him!"

"Let us rather say you would try a change of masters--"

"Now--by God--Chichester--!"

"Ah!--ah, to be sure, Ronald, our young Good Samaritan having purchased the brother, would naturally expect the sister--"

"Have a c-care, Chichester, I say!"

"The sister to be grateful, my dear boy. Pah! don't you see it, Ronald? a sprat to catch a whale! The brother saved, the sister's gratitude gained--Oh, most disinterested, young Good Samaritan!"

"Ha! by heaven, I never thought of that!" cried Barrymaine, turning upon Barnabas, "is it Cleone--is it? is it?"

"No," said Barnabas, folding his arms--a little ostentatiously, "I seek only to be your friend in this."

"Friend!" exclaimed Mr. Chichester, laughing again, "friend, Ronald? Nay, let us rather say your guardian angel in cords and Hessians."

"Since you condescend to mention my boots, sir," said Barnabas growing polite, "may I humbly beg you to notice that, in spite of their polish and tassels, they are as strong, as serviceable for kicking purposes as those I wore when we last--sat at table together."

Mr. Chichester's iron self-control wavered for a moment, his brows twitched together, and he turned upon Barnabas with threatening gesture but, reading the purpose in the calm eye and smiling lip of Barnabas, he restrained himself; yet seeming aware of the glowing mark upon his cheek, he turned suddenly and, coming to the dingy casement, stood with his back to the room, staring down into the

dingy street. Then Barnabas leaned forward and laid his hand upon Barrymaine's, and it so happened it was the hand that yet held the slopping wineglass.

"Think--think!" said Barnabas earnestly, "once you are free of Gaunt, life will begin afresh for you, you can hold up your head again--"

"Though never in London, Ronald, I fear," added Mr. Chichester over his shoulder.

"Once free of Gaunt, you may attain to higher things than you ever did," said Barnabas.

"Unless the dead past should happen to come to life again, and find a voice some day," added Mr. Chichester over his shoulder.

"No, no!" said Barnabas, feeling the quiver of the fingers within his own, "I tell you it would mean a new beginning--a new life--a new ending for you--"

"And for Cleone!" added Mr. Chichester over his shoulder, "our young, disinterested Good Samaritan knows she is too proud to permit a stranger to shoulder her brother's responsibilities--"

"Proud, eh?" cried Barrymaine, leaping up in sudden boyish passion, "well, am I not proud? Did you ever know me anything else--did you?"

"Never, my dear Ronald," cried Mr. Chichester, turning at last. "You are unfortunate, but you have always met disaster--so far, with the fortitude of a gentleman, scorning your detractors and--abominating charity."

"C-charity! damn you, Chichester, d' ye think I-I'd accept any man's c-charity? D' you think I'd ever drag Cleone to that depth--do you?"

"Never, Barrymaine, never, I swear."

"Why then--leave me alone, I can m-manage my own affairs--"
"Perfectly, my dear fellow, I am sure of it."

"Then sir," said Barnabas, rising, "seeing it really is no concern of yours, after all, suppose you cease to trouble yourself any further in the matter, and allow Mr. Barrymaine to choose for himself--"

"I--I have decided!" cried Barrymaine, "and I tell you--"

"Wait!" said Barnabas.

"Speak!" said Mr. Chichester.

"Wait!" repeated Barnabas, "Mr. Chichester is--going, I think. Let us wait until we are alone." Then, bowing to Mr. Chichester, Barnabas opened the door wide. "Sir," said he, "may I venture to suggest that your presence is--not at all necessary?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Chichester, "you will certainly compel me to kill you, some day."

"'Sufficient unto the day,' sir!" Barnabas retorted; "in the meantime I shall most certainly give myself the pleasure of kicking you downstairs unless you choose to walk--at once."

As he spoke, Barnabas took a stride towards Mr. Chichester's rigid figure, but, in that moment, Barrymaine snatched up the bottle and sprang between them.

"Ah!--would you?" he cried, "who are you to order my f-friends about--and in m-my own place too! Ha! did you think you could buy me, d-did you? Did you think I--I'd sacrifice my sister--did you? Ha! drunk, am I? Well, I'm sober enough to--to 'venge my honor and hers; by God I'll kill you! Ah--let go, Dig! Let go, I say! Didn't you hear? Tempt me with his cursed money, will he! Oh, let go my arm! Damn him, I say--I'll kill him!"

But, as he struck, Mr. Smivvle caught his wrist, the bottle crashed splintering to the floor, and they were locked in a fierce grapple.

"Beverley--my dear fellow--go!" panted Mr. Smivvle, "must forgive--poor Barry--not himself. Go--go,--I can--manage him. Now Barry, do be calm! Go, my dear fellow--leave him to me--go!" So, perforce, Barnabas turned away and went down the dingy stairs, and in his ears was the echo of the boy's drunken ravings and Mr. Chichester's soft laughter.

And presently, being come into the dingy street, Barnabas paused to look up at the dingy house, and looking, sighed.

"She said it would be 'difficult, and dangerous, perhaps,'" said he to himself, "and indeed I think she was right."

Then he turned and went upon his way, heavy-footed and chin on breast. On he went, plunged in gloomy abstraction, turning corners at random, lost to all but the problem he had set himself, which was this:

How he might save Ronald Barrymaine in spite of Ronald Barrymaine.

CHAPTER XXXI

WHICH DESCRIBES SOME OF THE EVILS OF VINDICTIVENESS

Barnabas stumbled suddenly, dropped his cane, saw his hat spin through the air and roll on before him; staggered sideways, was brought up by a wall, and turning, found three men about him, --evil-faced men whose every move and look held a menace. A darting hand snatched at his fob-seals, but Barnabas smote, swift and hard, and the three were reduced, for the moment, to two. Thus with his back to the wall stood Barnabas, fists clenched, grim of mouth, and with eyes quick and bright; wherefore, beholding him in this posture, his assailants hesitated. But the diamonds sparkled at them from his cravat, the bunch of seals gleamed at them from his fob, and the fallen man having risen, albeit unsteadily, they began to close in upon him. Then, all at once, even as he poised himself to meet their rush, a distant voice uttered a sharp, warning cry, whereat the three,

spattering curses, incontinent took to their heels, and were gone with a thud of flying feet.

For a moment Barnabas stood dazed by the suddenness of it all, then, stooping to recover hat and cane, glanced about, and saw that he was in a dirty, narrow street, or rather alley. Now up this alley a man was approaching, very deliberately, for as he came, he appeared to be perusing a small book. He was a short, broad-shouldered man, a mild-faced man of a sober habit of dress, with a broad-brimmed hat upon his head--a hat higher in the crown than was the custom, and a remarkably nobbly stick beneath his arm; otherwise, and in all respects, he was a very ordinary-looking man indeed, and as he walked, book in hand, might have been some small tradesman busily casting up his profit and loss, albeit he had a bright and roving eye.

Being come up with Barnabas, he stopped, closed his book upon his finger, touched the broad rim of his hat, and looked at Barnabas, or to be exact, at the third left-hand button of his coat.

"Anything stole, sir?" he inquired hopefully.

"No," answered Barnabas, "no, I think not."

"Ah, then you won't be vantin' to mek a charge ag'in 'em, sir?"

"No,--besides, they've escaped."

"Escaped, Lord no, sir, they've only run avay, I can allus put my 'ooks on 'em,--I spotted 'em, d'ye see. And I know 'em, Lord love you! --like a feyther! They vas Bunty Fagan, Dancin' James, and Vistlin' Dick, two buzmen an' a prig."

"What do you mean?" inquired Barnabas, beginning to eye the man askance for all his obtrusive mildness.

"I means two pickpockets and a thief, sir. It vas Vistlin' Dick as you give such a 'leveller' to,--a rare pretty knock-down I vill say, sir,--never saw a cleaner--Oh! they're a bad lot, they are, 'specially Vistlin' Dick, an' it's lucky for you as I 'appened to come this vay."

"Why, do you mean to say," said Barnabas, staring at the mild-faced man, "do you want me to believe that it was the sight of you that sent them running?"

"Vell, there veren't nobody else to, as I could see, sir," said the man, with a gentle smile and shake of the head. "Volks ain't partial to me in these yere parts, and as to them three, they're a bad lot, they are, but Vistlin' Dick's the vorst--mark my vords, 'e'll come to be topped yet."

"What do you mean by 'topped'?"

"V'y, I means scragged, sir," answered the man, his roving eye glancing continually up and down the alley,

"I means 'anged, sir,--Lord love you, it's in 'is face--never see a more promising mug, consequent, I 've got Vistlin' Dick down in my little book 'ere, along vith a lot of other promising vuns."

"But why in your book?"

"Veil, d' ye see, I keeps a record of all the likely coves, Capital Coves as you might call 'em--" Here the mild man jerked his head convulsively to one side, rolled up his eyes, and protruded his tongue, all in hideous pantomime, and was immediately his placid self again.

"Ah! you mean--hanged?" said Barnabas.

"As ever vas, sir, capital punishment. And I goes round reg'lar jest to keep an eye on my capital coves. Lord! I vatches over 'em all--like a feyther. Theer's some volks as collects books, an' some volks as collects picters an' old coins, but I collects capital coves,--names and faces. The faces I keeps 'ere," and he tapped his placid forehead, "the names I keeps 'ere," and he tapped the little book. "It's my trade d' ye see, and though there's better trades, still there's trades as is vorse, an' that's summat, ain't it?"

"And what might your trade be?" inquired Barnabas, as they walked on together along the narrow alley.

"Veil, sir, I'm vot they calls a bashaw of the pigs--but I'm more than that."

"Pray," said Barnabas, "what do you mean?" For answer the man smiled, and half drew from his pocket a short staff surmounted by a crown.

"Ah!" said Barnabas, "a Bow Street Runner?"

"And my name is Shrig, sir, Jasper Shrig. You'll have heard it afore, o'course."

"No!" said Barnabas. Mr. Shrig seemed placidly surprised, and vented a gentle sigh.

"It's pretty vell known, in London, sir, though it ain't a pretty name, I'll allow. Ye-es, I've 'eard prettier, but then it's better than a good many, and that's sum-mat, ain't it? And then, as I said afore, it's pretty vell known."

"How so?"

"Vell, sir, there be some as 'as a leanin' to one branch o' the profession, and some to another,--now mine's murders."

"Murders?" said Barnabas, staring.

"Vith a werry big M., sir. V'y, Lord love you, there's been more murderers took and topped through me than any o' the other traps in London, it's a nat'ral gift vith me. Ye see, I collects 'em--afore the fact, as ye might say. I can smell 'em out, feel 'em out, taste

'em out, it's jest a nat'ral gift."

"But--how? What do you mean?"

"I means as I'll be valking along a street, say, looking at every

face as I pass. Vell, all at once I'll spot a cove or covess vith vot I calls a capital mug, I'll follow that cove or covess, and by 'ook or by crook I'll find out that there cove or covess's name, and--down it goes in my little book, d' ye see?" and he tapped the little book.

"But surely," said Barnabas, "surely they don't all prove to be murderers?"

"Vell no, sir--that's hardly to be expected,--ye see, some on 'em wanishes away, an' some goes an' dies, but they mostly turns out true capitals--if I only vaits for 'em long enough, and--up they goes."

"And are you always on the lookout for such faces?"

"Yes, sir,--v'en I ain't busy on some case. A man must 'ave some little relaxation, and that's mine. Lord love you, sir, scarcely a day goes by that I don't spot one or two. I calls 'em my children, an' a werry large, an' a werry mixed lot they are too! Rich an' poor, men an' women,--rolling in their coaches an' crawling along the kennel. Aha! if you could look into my little reader an' see the names o' some o' my most promisin' children they'd as-tonish you. I've been to 'ave a look at a couple of 'em this mornin'. Aha! it would a-maze you if you could look into my little reader."

"I should like to," said Barnabas, eyeing the small, shabby book with a new interest. But Mr. Shrig only blinked his wide, innocent eyes, and slipping the book into his pocket, led the way round a sudden corner into another alley narrower than the last, and, if possible, dirtier.

"Where are we going?" Barnabas demanded, for Mr. Shrig, though always placid, had suddenly taken on an air that was almost alert, his bright, roving eye wandered more than ever, and he appeared to be hearkening to distant sounds. "Where are we going?" repeated Barnabas.

"Gray's Inn is 'andiest, sir, and I must ask you to step out a bit, they're a rough crowd as lives 'ereabouts,--scamps an' hunters, didlers an' cly-fakers, so I must ask you to step out a bit, this is a bad country for me."

"Bad for you? Why?"

"On account o' windictiveness, sir!"

"Of what?"

"Windictiveness, sir--windictiveness in every shape an' form, but brick-ends mostly--vith a occasional chimbley-pot."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," Barnabas began.

"Veil then," explained Mr. Shrig as they strode along, "I vere the means o' four coves bein' topped d' ye see, 'ighvay robbery vith wiolence,--'bout a month ago, used to live round 'ere, they did, an' their famblies an' friends is windictive against me accordingly, an' werry nat'ral too, for 'uman natur' is only 'uman natur', ain't it? Werry good then. Now their windictiveness,--or as you might say,

'uman natur',--generally takes the shape of chimbley-pots and brick-ends, though I 'ave met windictiveness in the form o' b'iling vater and flat-irons, not to mention saucepans an' sich, afore now, and vunce a arm-cheer, all of vich is apt to vorry you a bit until you gets used to it. Then there's knives--knives is allus awk'ard, and bludgeons ain't to be sneezed at, neither. But, Lord! every perfession and trade 'as its drawbacks, an' there's a sight o' comfort in that, ain't there?"

All this time the eyes of Mr. Shrig were roving here, wandering there, now apparently glancing up at the strip of sky between the dingy house tops, now down at the cobbles beneath their feet; also Barnabas noticed that his step, all at once, grew slower and more deliberate, as one who hesitates, uncertain as to whether he shall go on, or turn back. It was after one of those swift, upward glances, that Mr. Shrig stopped all at once, seized Barnabas by the middle and dragged him into an adjacent doorway, as something crashed down and splintered within a yard of them.

"What now--what is it?" cried Barnabas.

"Win-dictiveness!" sighed Mr. Shrig, shaking his head at the missile, "a piece o' coping-stone, thirty pound if a ounce--Lord! Keep flat agin the door sir, same as me, they may try another--I don't think so--still they may, so keep close ag'in the door. A partic'lar narrer shave I calls it!" nodded Mr. Shrig; "shook ye a bit sir?"

"Yes," said Barnabas, wiping his brow.

"Ah well, it shook me--and I'm used to windictiveness. A brick now," he mused, his eyes wandering again, "a brick I could ha' took kinder, bricks an' sich I'm prepared for, but coping-stones--Lord love me!"

"But a brick would have killed you just the same--"

"Killed me? A brick? Oh no, sir!"

"But, if it had hit you on the head--"

"On the 'at sir, the 'at--or as you might say--the castor--this, sir," said Mr. Shrig; and glancing furtively up and down the gloomy alley he took off the broad-brimmed hat; "just run your ogles over this 'ere castor o' mine, an' you'll understand, perhaps."

"It's very heavy," said Barnabas, as he took the hat.

"Ah, it is a bit 'eavyish, sir. Peep inside of it."

"Why," exclaimed Barnabas, "it's lined with--"

"Iron, sir. My own inwention ag'in windictiveness in the shape o' bricks an' bludgeons, an' werry useful an comfortin' I've found it. But if they're going to begin on me vith coping-stones,--v'y Lord!" And Mr. Shrig sighed his gentle sigh, and rubbed his placid brow, and once more covered it with the "inwention."

"And now sir, you've got a pair o' good, long legs--can ye use 'em?"

"Use them,--yes. Why?"

"Because it's about time as we cut our stick an' run for it."

"What are we to run for?"

"Because they're arter me,--nine on 'em,--consequent they're arter you too, d' ye see. There's four on 'em be'ind us, an' five on 'em in front. You can't see 'em because they're layin' low. And they're bad uns all, an' they means business."

"What--a fight?"

"As ever vas, sir. I've 'ad my eye on 'em some time. That 'ere coping-stone vas the signal."

"Ha!" said Barnabas, buttoning up his coat.

"Now, are ye ready, sir?"

"Quite!"

"Then keep close be'ind me--go!" With the word Mr. Shrig began to run, always keeping close beside the wall; indeed he ran so fast and was so very nimble that Barnabas had some ado to keep up with him. They had gone but a little distance when five rough looking fellows started into view further up the alley, completely blocking their advance, and by the clatter of feet behind, Barnabas knew that their retreat was cut off, and instinctively he set his teeth, and gripped his cane more firmly. But on ran Mr. Shrig, keeping close beside the wall, head low, shoulders back, elbows well in, for all the world as if he intended to hurl himself upon his assailants in some desperate hope of breaking through them; but all at once, like a rabbit into his burrow, he turned short off in mid career, and vanished down a dark and very narrow entry or passage, and, as Barnabas followed, he heard, above the vicious thud of footsteps, hoarse cries of anger and disappointment. Half-way down the passage Mr. Shrig halted abruptly and turned, as the first of their pursuers appeared.

"This'll do!" he panted, swinging the nobbly stick in his hand, "can't come on more nor two at vunce. Be ready vith your stick--at their eyes--poke at 'em--no 'itting--" the rest was drowned in the echoing rush of heavy feet and the boom of hoarse voices. But now, seeing their quarry stand on the defensive, the pursuers checked their advance, their cries sank to growling murmurs, till, with a fierce shout, one of their number rushed forward brandishing a heavy stick, whereupon the others followed, and there, in the echoing dimness, the battle was joined, and waxed furious and grim.

Almost at the first onset the slender cane Barnabas wielded broke short off, and he was borne staggering back, the centre of a panting, close-locked, desperate fray. But in that narrow space his assailants were hampered by their very numbers, and here was small room for bludgeon-play,--and Barnabas had his fists.

There came a moment of thudding blows, trampling feet, oaths, cries, --and Barnabas was free, staring dazedly at his broken knuckles. He heard a sudden shout, a vicious roar, and the Bow Street Runner, dropping the nobbly stick, tottered weakly and fell,--strove to rise, was smitten down again, and, in that moment, Barnabas was astride him;

felt the shock of stinging blows, and laughing fierce and short, leapt in under the blows, every nerve and muscle braced and quivering; saw a scowling face,--smote it away; caught a bony wrist, wrenched the bludgeon from the griping fingers, struck and parried and struck again with untiring arm, felt the press thin out before him as his assailants gave back, and so, stood panting.

"Run! Run!" whispered Mr. Shrig's voice behind him. "Ve can do it now, --run!"

"No!" panted Barnabas, wiping the blood from his cheek. "Run!" cried Mr. Shrig again, "there's a place I knows on close by--ve can reach it in a jiff--this vay,--run!"

"No!"

"Not run? then v'ot vill ye do?"

"Make them!"

"Are ye mad? Ha!--look out!" Once more the echoing passage roared with the din of conflict, as their assailants rushed again, were checked, smote and were smitten, and fell back howling before the thrust of the nobbly stick and the swing of the heavy bludgeon.

"Now vill ye run?" panted Mr. Shrig, straightening the broad-brimmed hat.

"No!"

"V'y then, I vill!" which Mr. Shrig immediately proceeded to do.

But the scowl of Barnabas grew only the blacker, his lips but curled the fiercer, and his fingers tightened their grip upon the bludgeon as, alone now, he fronted those who remained of the nine.

Now chancing to glance towards a certain spot, he espied something that lay in the angle of the wall, and, instinctively stooping, he picked up Mr. Shrig's little book, slipped it into his pocket, felt a stunning blow, and reeled back, suddenly faint and sick. And now a mist seemed to envelop him, but in the mist were faces above, below, around him, faces to be struck at. But his blows grew weak and ever weaker, the cudgel was torn from his lax grip, he staggered back on stumbling feet knowing he could fight no more, and felt himself caught by a mighty arm, saw a face near by, comely and dimpled of chin, blue-eyed, and with whiskers trimmed into precise little tufts on either cheek. Thereafter he was aware of faint cries and shouts, of a rushing patter like rain among leaves, and of a voice speaking in his ear.

"Right about face,--march! Easy does it! mind me 'ook, sir, the p'int's oncommon sharp like. By your left--wheel! Now two steps up, sir--that's it! Now three steps down, easy does it! and 'ere we are. A cheer, sir, now water and a sponge!"

Here Barnabas, sinking back in the chair, leaned his head against the wall behind him, and the mist grew more dense, obliterating all things.

CHAPTER XXXII

OF CORPORAL RICHARD ROE, LATE OF THE GRENADIERS; AND FURTHER CONCERNING MR. SHRIG'S LITTLE READER

A small, dim chamber, with many glasses and bottles arrayed very precisely on numerous shelves; a very tall, broad-shouldered man who smiled down from the rafters while he pulled at a very precise whisker with his right hand, for his left had been replaced by a shining steel hook; and Mr. Shrig who shook his placid head as he leaned upon a long musket whose bayonet twinkled wickedly in the dim light; all this Barnabas saw as, sighing, he opened his eyes.

"'E's all right now!" nodded the smiling giant.

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Shrig, "but vith a lump on 'is 'ead like a negg. 'Run!' I sez. 'No!' sez 'e,--and 'ere's me vith vun eye a-going into mourning, and 'im vith a lump on 'is nob like a noo-laid egg!"

"'E's game though, Jarsper," said the benevolent giant.

"Game! I believe you, Corp!" nodded Mr. Shrig. "Run!' I sez. 'No!' sez 'e. 'Then v'ot vill you do?' sez I. 'Make them!' sez 'e. Game? Lord love me, I should say so!" Here, seeing Barnabas sit upright, Mr. Shrig laid by the musket and came towards him with his hand out.

"Sir," said he, "when them raskels got me down they meant to do for me; ah! they'd ha' given me my quietus for good an' all if you 'adn't stood 'em off. Sir, if it ain't too much, I should like to shake your daddle for that!"

"But you saved my life twice," said Barnabas, clasping the proffered hand.

"V'y the coping-stone I'll not go for to deny, sir," said Mr. Shrig, stroking his smooth brow, "but t'other time it were my friend and pal the Corp 'ere,--Corporal Richard Roe, late Grenadiers. 'E's only got an 'ook for an 'and, but vith that 'ook 'e's oncommonly 'andy, and as a veapon it ain't by no means to be sneezed at. No, 'e ain't none the worse for that 'ook, though they thought so in the army, and it vere 'im as brought you off v'ile I vos a-chasing of the enemy vith 'is gun, yonder."

"Why, then I should like to thank Corporal Richard Roe," said Barnabas,--(here the Corporal tugged at his precise and carefully trimmed whisker again), "and to shake his hand as well." Here the giant blushed and extended a huge fist.

"Honored, sir," said he, clicking his heels together.

"And now," said Mr. Shrig, "ve're all a-going to drink--at my expense."

"No, at mine," said Barnabas.

"Sir," said Mr. Shrig, round and placid of eye, "ven I says a thing I means it. Consequent you are now a-going to sluice your ivory vith a glass of the Vun an' Only, at my expense,--you must and you shall."

"Yes," said Barnabas, feeling in his pockets. "I must, my purse is gone."

"Purse!" exclaimed Mr. Shrig, his innocent eyes rounder than ever, "gone, sir?"

"Stolen," nodded Barnabas.

"Think o' that now!" sighed Mr. Shrig, "but I ain't surprised, no, I ain't surprised, and--by Goles!"

"What now?"

"Your cravat-sparkler!--that's wanished too!" Barnabas felt his rumpled cravat, and nodded. "And your vatch, now--don't tell me as they 've took--"

"Yes, my watch also," sighed Barnabas.

"A great pity!" said Mr. Shrig, "though it ain't to be vondered at,--not a bit."

"I valued the watch greatly, because it was given me by a very good friend," said Barnabas, sighing again.

"Walleyed it, hey?" exclaimed Mr. Shrig, "walleyed it, sir?--v'y then, 'ere it be!" and from a capacious side-pocket he produced Natty Bell's great watch, seals and all.

"Why--!" exclaimed Barnabas, staring.

"Also your purse, sir,--not forgetting the sparkler." Mr. Shrig continued, producing each article in turn.

"But--how in the world--?" began Barnabas.

"I took 'em from you v'ile you vos a-lookin' at my castor. Lord love me, a babe could ha' done it,--let alone a old 'and, like me!"

"Do you mean--?" began Barnabas, and hesitated.

"In my young days, sir," explained Mr. Shrig with his placid smile, "I vere a champion buzman, ah! and a prime rook at queering the gulls, too, but I ewentually turned honest all along of a flash, morning-sneak covess as got 'erself conwerted."

"What do you mean by a morning-sneak covess?"

"I means a area-sneak, sir, as vorks werry early in the morning. A fine 'andsome gal she vere, and vith nothing of the flash mollisher about 'er, either, though born on the streets, as ye might say, same as me. Vell, she gets con-werted, and she's alvays napping 'er bib over me,--as you'd say, piping 'er eye, d'ye see? vanting me to turn honest and be con-werted too. 'Turn honest,' says she, 'and ve'll be married ter-morrow,' says she."

"So you turned honest and married her?" said Barnabas, as Mr. Shrig paused.

"No, sir, I turned honest and she married a coal-v'ipper, v'ich, though it did come a bit 'ard on me at first, vos all for the best in the end, for she deweloped a chaffer,--as you might say, a tongue, d' ye see, sir, and I'm vun as is fond of a quiet life, v'en I can get it. Howsomever, I turned honest, and come werry near starving for the first year, but I kept honest, and I ain't never repented it--so fur. So, as for the prigs, and scamps, and buzmen, and flash leary coves, I'm up to all their dodges, 'aving been one of them, d'ye see. And now," said Mr. Shrig, as the big Corporal having selected divers bottles from his precise array, took himself off to concoct a jorum of the One and Only--"now sir, what do you think o' my pal Corporal Dick?"

"A splendid fellow!" said Barnabas.

"'E is that, sir,--so 'e is,--a giant, eh sir?"

"A giant, yes, and handsome too!" said Barnabas.

"V'y you're a sizable cove yourself, sir," nodded Mr. Shrig, "but you ain't much alongside my pal the Corp, are you? I'm nat'rally proud of 'im, d'ye see, for 't were me as saved 'im."

"Saved him from what? How?"

"Me being only a smallish chap myself, I've allus 'ad a 'ankering arter sizable coves. But I never seen a finer figger of a man than Corporal Dick--height, six foot six and a quarter, chest, fifty-eight and a narf, and sir--'e were a-going to drownd it all in the River, all along o' losing his 'and and being drove out o' the army, v'ich vould ha' been a great vaste of good material, as ye might say, seeing as there's so much of 'im. It vas a dark night, the night I found 'im, vith vind and rain, and there vos me and 'im a-grappling on the edge of a vharf--leastvays I vere a-holding onto 'is leg, d'ye see--ah, and a mortal 'ard struggle it vere too, and in the end I didn't save 'im arter all."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean as it vere 'im as saved me, for v'ot vith the vind, and the rain, and the dark, ve lost our footing and over ve vent into the River together--down and down till I thought as ve should never come up again, but ve did, o' course, and then, jest as 'ard as 'e'd struggled to throw 'imself in, 'e fought to get me out, so it vere 'im as really saved me, d'ye see?"

"No," said Barnabas, "it was you who really saved him."

"V'y, I'm as glad as you think so, sir, only d'ye see, I can't svim, and it vos 'im as pulled me out. And it all come along of 'im losing 'is 'and--come nigh to breaking 'is 'eart to be discharged, it did."

"Poor fellow!" said Barnabas, "and how did he lose his hand?"

"V'y, I could tell you, or you could read of it in the Gazette--jest

three or four lines o' printing--and they've spelt 'is name wrong at that, curse 'em! But Corporal Dick can tell you best. Let 'im. 'Ere 'e comes, vith a steaming brew o' the Vun and Only."

And indeed, at this moment the Corporal re-entered, bearing a jug that gave forth a most enticing and delicious aroma, and upon which Mr. Shrig cast amorous glances, what time he reached three glasses from the marshalled array on the shelves.

And now, sitting at the small table that stood in a snug corner beside the chimney, Mr. Shrig, having filled the three glasses with all due care, tendered one to Barnabas with the words:

"Jest give that a snuff with your sneezer, sir,--there's perfume, there's fray-grance for ye! There ain't a man in London as can brew a glass o' rum-punch like the Corp,--though 'e 'as only got vun 'and. And now, Corporal Dick, afore ve begin, three steamers."

"Ay, for sure, Jarsper!" said the Corporal; and opening a small corner cupboard he took thence three new pipes and a paper of tobacco.

"Will you smoke, sir?" he inquired diffidently of Barnabas.

"Thank you, yes, Corporal," said Barnabas, and taking the proffered pipe he filled and lighted it.

Now when the pipes were in full blast, when the One and Only had been tasted, and pronounced by Mr. Shrig to be "up to the mark," he nodded to Corporal Dick with the words:

"Tell our young gent 'ow you lost your 'and, Corp."

But hereupon the Corporal frowned, shuffled his feet, stroked his trim whiskers with his hook, and finally addressed Barnabas.

"I aren't much of a talker, sir,--and it aren't much of a story, but if you so wish--"

"I do so wish," said Barnabas heartily.

"Why, very good, sir!" Saying which the Corporal sat up, squared his mighty shoulders, coughed, and began:

"It was when they Cuirassiers broke our square at Quatre-bras, sir,--fine fellows those Cuirassiers! They rode into us, through us, over us,--the square was tottering, and it was 'the colors--rally!' Ah, sir! the colors means the life or death of a square at such times. And just then, when horses was a-trampling us and the air full o' the flash o' French steel, just then I see our colors dip and sway, and down they went. But still it's 'the colors--rally!' and there's no colors to rally to; and all the time the square is being cut to pieces. But I, being nearest, caught up the colors in this here left hand," here the Corporal raised his gleaming hook, "but a Cuirassier, 'e caught them too, and there's him at one end o' the staff and me at t'other, pulling and hauling, and then--all at once he'd got 'em. And because why? Because I hadn't got no left 'and to 'old with. But I'd got my right, and in my right was 'Brown Bess' there," and the Corporal pointed to the long musket in the corner. "My bayonet was gone, and there weren't no time to reload, so--I used the butt. Then

I picked up the colors again and 'eld 'em high over my head, for the smoke were pretty thick, and, 'To the colors,' I shouted,' Rally, lads, rally!' And oh, by the Lord, sir,--to hear our lads cheer! And so the square formed up again--what was left of it--formed up close and true round me and the colors, and the last thing I mind was the cheering. Ah! they was fine fellows, they Cuirassiers!"

"So that vere the end o' the Corp's soldiering!" nodded Mr. Shrig.

"Yes," sighed the Corporal, "a one-handed soldier ain't much good, ye see, sir."

"So they--throwed 'im out!" snarled Mr. Shrig.

"Now Jarsper," smiled the giant, shaking his head. "Why so 'ard on the sarvice? They give me m' stripe."

"And your dis-charge!" added Mr. Shrig.

"And a--pension," said the soldier.

"Pension," sniffed Mr. Shrig, "a fine, large vord, Dick, as means werry little to you!"

"And they mentioned me in the Gazette, Jarsper," said the Corporal looking very sheepish, and stroking his whisker again with his hook.

"And a lot o' good that done you, didn't it? Your 'eart vos broke the night I found you--down by the River."

"Why, I did feel as I weren't much good, Jarsper, I'll admit. You see, I 'adn't my hook then, sir. But I think I'd ha' give my other 'and--ah! that I would--to ha' been allowed to march on wi' the rest o' the lads to Waterloo."

"So you vos a-going to throw yerself into the River!"

"I were, Jarsper, should ha' done it but for you, comrade."

"But you didn't do it, so later on ve took this 'ere place."

"You did, Jarsper--"

"Ve took it together, Dick. And werry vell you're a-doing vith it, for both of us."

"I do my best, Jarsper."

"V'ich couldn't be bettered, Dick. Then look how you 'elp me vith my cases."

"Do I, Jarsper?" said the Corporal, his blue eyes shining.

"That you do, Dick. And now I've got another case as I'm a-vaiting for,--a extra-special Capital case it is too!"

"Another murder, Jarsper?"

"Ah, a murder, Dick,--a murder as ain't been committed yet, a murder

as I'm expecting to come off in--say a month, from information received this 'ere werry arternoon. A murder, Dick, as is going to be done by a capital cove as I spotted over a month ago. Now v'ot I 'm going to tell you is betwixt us--private and confidential and--" But here Barnabas pushed back his chair.

"Then perhaps I had better be going?" said he.

"Going, sir? and for v'y?"

"That you may be more private, and talk more freely."

"Sir," said Mr. Shrig. "I knows v'en to speak and v'en not. My eyes tells me who I can trust and who not. And, sir, I've took to you, and so's the Corp,--ain't you, Dick?"

"Yes, sir," said the giant diffidently.

"Sir," pursued Mr. Shrig, "you're a Nob, I know, a Corinthian by your looks, a Buck, sir, a Dash, a 'eavy Toddler, but also, I takes the liberty o' telling you as you're only a man, arter all, like the rest on us, and it's that man as I'm a-talking to. Now v'en a man 'as stood up for me, shed 'is good blood for me, I makes that man my pal, and my pal I allus trusts."

"And you shall find me worthy of your confidence," said Barnabas, "and there's my hand on it, though, indeed, you hardly know me--really."

"More than you think, sir. Besides, it ain't v'ot a cove tells me about 'imself as matters, nor v'ot other coves tell me about a cove, as matters, it's v'ot a cove carries in 'is face as I goes by,--the cock of 'is eye, an' all the rest of it. And then, I knows as your name's Barnabas Barty--"

"Barty!--you know that?" exclaimed Barnabas, starting,--"how--how in the world did you find out?"

"Took the liberty to look at your vatch, sir."

"Watch!" said Barnabas, drawing it from his fob, "what do you mean?"

"Give it 'ere, and I'll show ye, sir." So saying, Mr. Shrig took the great timepiece and, opening the back, handed it to Barnabas. And there, in the cavity between the two cases was a very small folded paper, and upon this paper, in Natty Bell's handwriting, these words:

> "To my dear lad Barnabas Barty, hoping that he may prove as fine a gentleman as he is--a man."

Having read this, Barnabas folded the paper very gently, and putting it back, closed the watch, and slipped it into his fob.

"And now," said Mr. Shrig, exhaling a vast cloud of smoke, "afore I go on to tell you about this 'ere murder as I'm a-vaiting for, I must show ye my little reader." Here Mr. Shrig thrust a hand into his pocket,--then his pipe shivered to fragments on the stone floor and he started up, mouth agape and eyes staring.

"Lord, Jarsper!" cried the Corporal, "what is it, comrade?"

"It's gone, Dick!" he gasped, "my little reader's been stole."

But now, even as he turned towards the door, Barnabas laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"Not stolen--lost!" said he, "and indeed, I'm not at all surprised!" Here Barnabas smiled his quick, bright smile.

"Sir--sir?" stammered Mr. Shrig, "oh, Pal, d'ye mean--?"

"That I found it, yes," said Barnabas, "and here it is."

Mr. Shrig took his little book, opened it, closed it, thrust it into his pocket, and took it out again.

"Sir," said he, catching Barnabas by the hand, "this here little book is more to me nor gold or rubies. Sir, you are my pal,--and consequent the Corp's also, and this 'ere chaffing-crib is allus open to you. And if ever you want a man at your back--I'm your man, and v'en not me--there's my pal Dick, ain't there, Di--"

Mr. Shrig stopped suddenly and stood with his head to one side as one that listens. And thus, upon the stillness came the sound of one who strode along the narrow passage-way outside, whistling as he went.

"'Sally in our Alley,' I think?" said Mr. Shrig.

"Yes," said Barnabas, wondering.

"V'ich means as I'm vanted, ah!--and vanted precious qvick too," saying which, Mr. Shrig caught up his "castor," seized the nobbly stick, crossed to the door, and came back again.

"Dick," said he, "I'll get you to look after my little reader for me, --I ain't a-going to risk losing it again."

"Right you are, Jarsper," nodded the Corporal.

"And sir," continued Mr. Shrig, turning towards Barnabas with the book in his hand, "you said, I think, as you'd like to see what I'd got inside o' this 'ere.--If so be you're in the same mind about it, why--'ere it is." And Mr. Shrig laid the little book on the table before Barnabas. "And v'ot's more, any time as you're passing, drop in to the 'Gun,' and drink a glass o' the Vun and Only vith Dick and me." So Mr. Shrig nodded, unlocked the door, shut it very gently behind him, and his footsteps died away along the echoing passage.

Then, while the Corporal puffed at his long pipe, Barnabas opened the little book, and turning the pages haphazard presently came to one where, painfully written in a neat, round hand, he read this:

CAPITAL COVES

EXTRA-SPECIALS

Name.	When spotted.	Date of Murder.	Sentence.	Date of Execution.

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
James Aston (Porter)	Feb. 2	March 30	Hanged	April 5
Digbeth Andover (Gent)	March 3	April 28	Transported	May 5
John Barnes (Sailor)	March 10	Waiting	Waiting	Waiting
Sir Richard Brock(Bart)	April 5	May 3	Hanged	May 30
Thomas Beal (Tinker)	March 23	April 15	Hanged	May 30
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

There were many such names all carefully set down in alphabetical order, and Barnabas read them through with perfunctory interest. But--half-way down the list of B's his glance was suddenly arrested, his hands clenched themselves, and he grew rigid in his chair--staring wide-eyed at a certain name. In a while he closed the little book, yet sat there very still, gazing at nothing in particular, until the voice of the Corporal roused him somewhat.

"A wonderful man, my comrade Jarsper, sir?"

"Yes," said Barnabas absently.

"Though he wouldn't ha' passed as a Grenadier,--not being tall enough, you see."

"No," said Barnabas, his gaze still fixed.

"But as a trap, sir,--as a limb o' the law, he ain't to be ekalled--nowheres nor nohow."

"No," said Barnabas, rising.

"What? are you off, sir--must you march?"

"Yes," said Barnabas, taking up his hat, "yes, I must go."

"'Olborn way, sir?"

"Yes."

"Why then--foller me, sir,--front door takes you into Gray's Inn Lane--by your left turn and 'Olborn lays straight afore you,--this way, sir." But, being come to the front door of the "Gun," Barnabas paused upon the threshold, lost in abstraction again, and staring at nothing in particular while the big Corporal watched him with a growing uneasiness.

"Is it your 'ead, sir?" he inquired suddenly.

"Head?" repeated Barnabas.

"Not troubling you, is it, sir?"

"No,--oh no, thank you," answered Barnabas, and stretched out his hand. "Good-by, Corporal, I'm glad to have met you, and the One and Only was excellent."

"Thankee, sir. I hope as you'll do me and my comrade the honor to try it again--frequent. Good-by, sir." But standing to watch Barnabas as he went, the Corporal shook his head and muttered to himself, for Barnabas walked with a dragging step, and his chin upon

his breast.

Holborn was still full of the stir and bustle, the rush and roar of thronging humanity, but now Barnabas was blind and deaf to it all, for wherever he looked he seemed to see the page of Mr. Shrig's little book with its list of carefully written names,--those names beginning with B.--thus:

Name.	When spotted.	Date of Murder.	Sentence.	Date of Execution.
Sir Richard Brock (Bart.)	April 5	May 3	Hanged	May 30
Thomas Beal (Tinker)	March 23	April 15	Hanged	May 30
Ronald Barrymaine	May 12	Waiting	Waiting	Waiting

CHAPTER XXXIII

CONCERNING THE DUTY OF FATHERS; MORE ESPECIALLY THE VISCOUNT'S "ROMAN"

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon that Barnabas knocked at the door of the Viscount's chambers in Half-moon Street and was duly admitted by a dignified, albeit somewhat mournful gentleman in blue and silver, who, after a moment of sighing hesitancy, ushered him into a small reception room where sat a bullet-headed man with one eye and a remarkably bristly chin, a sinister looking person who stared very hard with his one eye, and sucked very hard, with much apparent relish and gusto, at the knob of the stick he carried. At sight of this man the mournful gentleman averted his head, and vented a sound which, despite his impressive dignity, greatly resembled a sniff, and, bowing to Barnabas, betook himself upstairs to announce the visitor. Hereupon the one-eyed man having surveyed Barnabas from head to foot with his solitary orb, drew the knob of his stick from his mouth, dried it upon his sleeve, looked at it, gave it a final rub, and spoke.

"Sir," said he in a jovial voice that belied his sinister aspect, "did you 'ear that rainbow sniff?"

"Rainbow?" said Barnabas.

"Well,--wallet, then,--footman--the ornamental cove as jest popped you in 'ere. Makes one 'undred and eleven of 'em!"

"One hundred and eleven what?"

"Sniffs, sir,--s-n-i-double-f-s! I've took the trouble to count 'em, --nothing else to do. I ain't got a word out of 'im yet, an' I've

been sittin' 'ere ever since eight o'clock s'mornin'. I'm a conwivial cock, I am,--a sociable cove, yes, sir, a s-o-s-h-able cove as ever wore a pair o' boots. Wot I sez is,--though a bum, why not a sociable bum, and try to make things nice and pleasant, and I does my best, give you my word! But Lord! all my efforts is wasted on that 'ere rainbow--nothing but sniffs!"

"Why then--who--what are you?"

"I'm Perks and Condy, wines and sperrits,--eighty-five pound, eighteen, three--that's me, sir."

"Do you mean that you are--in possession--here?"

"Just that, sir,--ever since eight o'clock s'morning--and nothing but sniffs--so fur." Here the bullet-headed man nodded and eyed the knob of his stick hungrily. But at this moment the door opened, and the dignified (though mournful) gentleman appeared, and informed Barnabas (with a sigh) that "his Lordship begged Mr. Beverley would walk upstairs."

Upstairs accordingly Barnabas stepped, and guided by a merry whistling, pushed open a certain door, and so found the Viscount busily engaged in the manufacture of a paper dart, composed of a sheet of the Gazette, in the midst of which occupation he paused to grip Barnabas by the hand.

"Delighted to see you, Bev," said he heartily, "pray sit down, my dear fellow--sit anywhere--no, not there--that's the toast, deuce take it! Oh, never mind a chair, bed'll do, eh? Yes, I'm rather late this morning, Bev,--but then I was so late last night that I was devilish early, and I'm making up for it,--must have steady nerves for the fifteenth, you know. Ah, and that reminds me!" Here the Viscount took up his unfinished dart and sighed over it. "I'm suffering from a rather sharp attack of Romanism, my dear fellow, my Honored Parent has been at it again, Bev, and then, I dropped two hundred pounds in Jermyn Street last night."

"Dropped it! Do you mean you lost it, or were you robbed?" inquired Barnabas the Simple. Now when he said this, the Viscount stared at him incredulously, but, meeting the clear gaze of the candid gray eyes, he smiled all at once and shook his head.

"Gad!" he exclaimed, "what a strange fellow you are, Bev. And yet I wouldn't have you altered, no, damme! you're too refreshing. You ask me 'did I lose it, or was I robbed?' I answer you,--both, my dear fellow. It was a case of sharps and flats, and--I was the flat."

"Ah,--you mean gambling, Dick?"

"Gambling, Bev,--at a hell in Jermyn Street."

"Two hundred pounds is a great deal of money to lose at cards," said Barnabas, shaking his head gravely.

"Humph!" murmured the Viscount, busied upon his paper dart again, "you should congratulate me, I think, that it was no more,--might just as easily have been two thousand, you see, indeed I wonder it wasn't. Egad! the more I think of it, the more fortunate I consider

myself. Yes, I certainly think you should congratulate me. Now--watch me hit Sling!" and the Viscount poised his completed dart.

"Captain Slingsby--here?" exclaimed Barnabas, glancing about.

"Under the settee, yonder," nodded the Viscount, "wrapped up in the table-cloth."

"Table-cloth!" repeated Barnabas.

"By way of military cloak," explained the Viscount. "You see--Sling was rather--mellow, last night, and--at such times he always imagines he's campaigning again--insists upon sleeping on the floor."

Now, looking where the Viscount pointed, Barnabas espied the touzled head of Captain Slingsby of the Guards protruding from beneath the settee, and reposing upon a cushion. The Captain's features were serene, and his breathing soft and regular, albeit deepening, ever and anon, into a gentle snore.

"Poor old Sling!" said the Viscount, leaning forward the better to aim his missile, "in two hours' time he must go and face the Ogre, --poor old Sling! Now watch me hit him!" So saying Viscount Devenham launched his paper dart which, gliding gracefully through the air, buried its point in the Captain's whisker, whereupon that warrior, murmuring plaintively, turned over and fell once more gently a-snoring.

"Talking about the Ogre--" began the Viscount.

"You mean--Jasper Gaunt?" Barnabas inquired.

"Precisely, dear fellow, and, talking of him, did you happen to notice a--fellow, hanging about downstairs,--a bristly being with one eye, Bev?"

"Yes, Dick."

"Ha!" said the Viscount nodding, "and talking of him, brings me back to my Honored Roman--thus, Bev. Chancing to find myself in--ha--hum--a little difficulty, a--let us say--financial tightness, Bev. I immediately thought of my father, which,--under the circumstances was, I think, very natural--and filial, my dear fellow. I said to myself, here is a man, the author of my being, who, though confoundedly Roman, is still my father, and, as such, owes certain duties to his son, sacred duties, Bev, not to be lightly esteemed, blinked, or set aside,--eh, Bev?"

"Undoubtedly!" said Barnabas.

"I, therefore, ventured to send him a letter, post-haste, gently reminding him of those same duties, and acquainting him with my--ah--needy situation,--which was also very natural, I think."

"Certainly!" said Barnabas, smiling.

"But--would you believe it, my dear fellow, he wrote, or rather, indited me an epistle, or, I should say, indictment, in his most Roman manner which--but egad! I'll read it to you, I have it here

somewhere." And the Viscount began to rummage among the bedclothes, to feel and fumble under pillow and bolster, and eventually dragged forth a woefully crumpled document which he smoothed out upon his knees, and from which he began to read as follows:

MY DEAR HORATIO.

"As soon as I saw that' t--i--o,' Bev, I knew it was no go. Had it been merely a--c--e I should have nourished hopes, but the 't--i--o' slew 'em--killed 'em stone dead and prepared me for a screed in my Honored Roman's best style, bristling with the Divine Right of Fathers, and, Bev--I got it. Listen:"

Upon reading your long and very eloquent letter, I was surprised to learn, firstly, that you required money, and secondly to observe that you committed only four solecisms in spelling,

("Gives me one at the very beginning, you'll notice, Bev.")

As regards the money, you will, I am sure, be amazed, nay astounded, to learn that you have already exceeded your allowance by some five hundred pounds--

("So I was, Bev, begad--I thought it was eight.")

As regards your spelling--

("Ah! here he leads again with his left, and gets one in,--low, Bev, low!")

As regards your spelling, as you know, I admire originality in all things; but it has, hitherto, been universally conceded that the word "eliminate" shall not and cannot begin with the letters i-l-l! "Vanquish" does not need a k. "Apathy" is spelled with but one p-- while never before have I beheld "anguish" with a w.

("Now, Bev, that's what I call coming it a bit too strong!" sighed the Viscount, shaking his head; "'anguish' is anguish however you spell it! And, as for the others, let me tell you when a fellow has a one-eyed being with bristles hanging about his place, he isn't likely to be over particular as to his p's and q's, no, damme! Let's see, where were we? ah! here it is,--'anguish' with a 'w'!")

I quite agree with your remarks, viz. that a father's duties to his son are sacred and holy--

("This is where I counter, Bev, very neatly,--listen! He quite agrees that,--")

--a father's duties to his son are sacred and holy, and not to be lightly esteemed, blinked, or set aside--

("Aha! had him there, Bev,--inside his guard, eh?")

I also appreciate, and heartily endorse your statement that it is to his father that a son should naturally turn for help--

("Had him again--a leveller that time, egad!")

naturally turn for help, but, when the son is constantly turning, then, surely, the father may occasionally turn too, like the worm. The simile, though unpleasant, is yet strikingly apt.

("Hum! there he counters me and gets one back, I suppose, Bev? Oh, I'll admit the old boy is as neat and quick with his pen as he used to be with his hands. He ends like this:")

I rejoice to hear that you are well in health, and pray that, despite the forthcoming steeplechase, dangerous as I hear it is, you may so continue. Upon this head I am naturally somewhat anxious, since I possess only one son. And I further pray that, wilfully reckless though he is, he may yet be spared to be worthy of the name that will be his when I shall have risen beyond it.

BAMBOROUGH AND REVELSDEN.

The Viscount sighed, and folded up his father's letter rather carefully.

"He's a deuced old Roman, of course," said he, "and yet--!" Here the Viscount turned, and slipped the letter back under his pillow with a hand grown suddenly gentle. "But there you are, Bev! Not a word about money,--so downstairs Bristles must continue to sit until--"

"If," said Barnabas diffidently, "if you would allow me to lend--"

"No, no, Bev--though I swear it's uncommon good of you. But really I couldn't allow it. Besides, Jerningham owes me something, I believe, at least, if he doesn't he did, and it's all one anyway. I sent the Imp over to him an hour ago; he'll let me have it, I know. Though I thank you none the less, my dear fellow, on my soul I do! But--oh deuce take me--you've nothing to drink! what will you take--?"

"Nothing, thanks, Dick. As a matter of fact, I came to ask you a favor--"

"Granted, my dear fellow!"

"I want you to ask Captain Slingsby to introduce me to Jasper Gaunt."

"Ah?" said the Viscount, coming to his elbow, "you mean on behalf of that--"

"Of Barrymaine, yes."

"It's--it's utterly preposterous!" fumed the Viscount.

"So you said before, Dick."

"You mean to--go on with it?"

"Of course!"

"You are still determined to befriend a--"

"More than ever, Dick."

"For--Her sake?"

"For Her sake. Yes, Dick," said Barnabas, beginning to frown a little. "I mean to free him from Gaunt, and rescue him from Chichester--if I can."

"But Chichester is about the only friend he has left, Bev."

"On the contrary, I think Chichester is his worst enemy."

"But--my dear fellow! Chichester is the only one who has stood by him in his disgrace, though why, I can't imagine."

"I think I can tell you the reason, and in one word," said Barnabas, his face growing blacker.

"Well, Bev,--what is it?"

"Cleone!" The Viscount started.

"What,--you think--? Oh, impossible! The fellow would never have a chance, she despises him, I know."

"And fears him too, Dick."

"Fears him? Gad! what do you mean, Bev?"

"I mean that, unworthy though he may be, she idolizes her brother."

"Half-brother, Bev."

"And for his sake, would sacrifice her fortune,--ah! and herself!"

"Well?"

"Well, Dick, Chichester knows this, and is laying his plans accordingly."

"How?"

"He's teaching Barrymaine to drink, for one thing--"

"He didn't need much teaching, Bev."

"Then, he has got him in his power,--somehow or other, anyhow, Barrymaine fears him, I know. When the time comes, Chichester means to reach the sister through her love for her brother, and--before he shall do that, Dick--" Barnabas threw up his head and clenched his fists.

"Well, Bev?"

"I'll--kill him, Dick."

"You mean--fight him, of course?"

"It would be all one," said Barnabas grimly.

"And how do you propose to--go about the matter--to save Barrymaine?"

"I shall pay off his debts, first of all."

"And then?"

"Take him away with me."

"When?"

"To-morrow, if possible--the sooner the better."

"And give up the race, Bev?"

"Yes," said Barnabas, sighing, "even that if need be."

Here the Viscount lay back among his pillows and stared up at the tester of the bed, and his gaze was still directed thitherwards when he spoke:

"And you would do all this--"

"For--Her sake," said Barnabas softly, "besides, I promised, Dick."

"And you have seen her--only once, Bev!"

"Twice, Dick."

Again there was silence while the Viscount stared up at the tester and Barnabas frowned down at the clenched fist on his knee.

"Gad!" said the Viscount suddenly, "Gad, Beverley, what a deuced determined fellow you are!"

"You see--I love her, Dick."

"And by the Lord, Bev, shall I tell you what I begin to think?"

"Yes, Dick."

"Well, I begin to think that in spite of--er--me, and hum--all the rest of 'em, in spite of everything--herself included, if need be, --you'll win her yet."

"And shall I tell you what I begin to think, Dick?"

"Yes."

"I begin to think that you have never--loved her at all."

"Eh?" cried the Viscount, starting up very suddenly, "what?--never lov--oh, Gad, Beverley! what the deuce should make you think that?"

"Clemency!" said Barnabas.

The Viscount stared, opened his mouth, shut it, ran his fingers through his hair, and fell flat upon his pillows again.

"So now," said Barnabas the persistent, "now you know why I am so anxious to meet Jasper Gaunt."

"Gaunt!" said the Viscount dreamily, "Gaunt!"

"Captain Slingsby has to see him this afternoon,--at least so you said, and I was wondering--"

"Slingsby! Oh, egad I forgot! so he has,--curricle's ordered for half-past three. Will you oblige me by prodding him with your cane, Bev? Don't be afraid,--poke away, my dear fellow, Sling takes a devil of a lot of waking."

Thus admonished, Barnabas presently succeeded in arousing the somnolent Slingsby, who, lifting a drowsy head, blinked sleepily, and demanded in an injured tone:

"Wha' the dooce it was all about, b'gad?" Then having yawned prodigiously and come somewhat to himself, he proceeded to crawl from under the settee, when, catching sight of Barnabas, he sprang lightly to his feet and greeted him cordially.

"Ah, Beverley!" he cried,--"how goes it? Glad you woke me--was having a devil of a dream. Thought the 'Rascal' had strained his 'off' fore-leg, and was out of the race! What damnable things dreams are, b'gad!"

"My dear Sling," said the Viscount, "it is exactly a quarter past three."

"Oh, is it, b'gad! Well?"

"And at four o'clock I believe you have an appointment with Gaunt."

"Gaunt!" repeated the Captain, starting, and Barnabas saw all the light and animation die out of his face, "Gaunt,--yes, I--b'gad!--I 'd forgotten, Devenham."

"You ordered your curricle for half-past three, didn't you?"

"Yes, and I've no time to bathe--ought to shave, though, and oh, damme,--look at my cravat!"

"You'll find everything you need in my dressing-room, Sling."

The Captain nodded his thanks, and forthwith vanished into the adjacent chamber, whence he was to be heard at his ablutions, puffing and blowing, grampus-like. To whom thus the Viscount, raising his voice: "Oh, by the way, Sling, Beverley wants to go with you." Here the Captain stopped, as it seemed in the very middle of a puff, and when he spoke it was in a tone of hoarse incredulity:

"Eh,--b'gad, what's that?"

"He wants you to introduce him to Jasper Gaunt."

Here a sudden explosive exclamation, and, thereafter, the Captain appeared as in the act of drying himself, his red face glowing from between the folds of the towel while he stared from the Viscount to Barnabas with round eyes.

"What!" he exclaimed at last, "you, too, Beverley! Poor devil, have you come to it--and so soon?"

"No," said Barnabas, shaking his head, "I wish to see him on behalf of another--"

"Eh? Another? Oh--!"

"On behalf of Mr. Ronald Barrymaine."

"Of Barrym--" Here the Captain suddenly fell to towelling himself violently, stopped to stare at Barnabas again, gave himself another futile rub or two, and, finally, dropped the towel altogether. "On behalf of--oh b'gad!" he exclaimed, and incontinent vanished into the dressing-room. But, almost immediately he was back again, this time wielding a shaving brush. "Wish to see--Gaunt, do you?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Barnabas.

"And," said the Captain, staring very hard at the shaving brush, "not--on your own account?"

"No," answered Barnabas.

"But on behalf--I think you said--of--"

"Of Ronald Barrymaine," said Barnabas.

"Oh!" murmured the Captain, and vanished again. But now Barnabas followed him.

"Have you any objection to my going with you?" he inquired.

"Not in the least," answered the Captain, making hideous faces at himself in the mirror as he shaved, "oh, no--delighted, 'pon my soul, b'gad--only--"

"Well?"

"Only, if it's time you're going to ask for--it's no go, my boy--hard-fisted old rasper, you know the saying,--(Bible, I think), figs, b'gad, and thistles, bread from stones, but no mercy from Jasper Gaunt."

"I don't seek his mercy," said Barnabas.

"Why, then, my dear Beverley--ha! there's Jenk come up to say the curricle's at the door."

Sure enough, at the moment, the Viscount's gentleman presented himself to announce the fact, albeit mournfully and with a sigh. He was about to bow himself out again when the Viscount stayed him with an upraised finger.

"Jenkins," said he, "my very good Jenk!"

"Yes, m'lud?" said Jenkins.

"Is the person with the--ah--bristles--still downstairs?"

"He is, m'lud," said Jenkins, with another sigh.

"Then tell him to possess his soul in patience, Jenk,--for I fear he will remain there a long, long time."

CHAPTER XXXIV

OF THE LUCK OF CAPTAIN SLINGSBY, OF THE GUARDS

"You don't mind if we--drive about a bit, do you, Beverley?"

"Not in the least."

"I--er--I generally go the longest way round when I have to call on--"

"On Gaunt?"

"Yes."

Now as they went, Barnabas noticed that a change had come over his companion, his voice had lost much of its jovial ring, his eye its sparkle, while his ruddy cheeks were paler than their wont; moreover he was very silent, and sat with bent head and with his square shoulders slouched dejectedly. Therefore Barnabas must needs cast about for some means of rousing him from this depression.

"You drive a very handsome turnout," said he at last.

"It is neat, isn't it?" nodded Slingsby, his eye brightening.

"Very!" said Barnabas, "and the horses--"

"Horses!" cried the Captain, almost himself again, "ha, b'gad--there's action for you--and blood too! I was a year matching 'em. Cost me eight hundred guineas--and cheap at the money--but--"

"Well?"

"After all, Beverley, they--aren't mine, you see."

"Not yours?"

"No. They're--his!"

"You mean--Gaunt's?"

The Captain nodded gloomily.

"Yes," said he, "my horses are his, my curricle's his, my clothes are his--everything's his. So am I, b'gad! Oh, you needn't look so infernal incredulous--fact, I assure you. And, when you come to think of it--it's all cursed humorous, isn't it?" and here the Captain contrived to laugh, though it rang very hollow, to be sure.

"You owe--a great deal then?" said Barnabas.

"Owe?" said the Captain, turning to look at him, "I'm in up to my neck, and getting deeper. Owe! B'gad, Beverley--I believe you!" But now, at sight of gravefaced Barnabas, he laughed again, and this time it sounded less ghoul-like. "Debt is a habit," he continued sententiously, "that grows on one most damnably, and creditors are the most annoying people in the world--so confoundedly unreasonable! Of course I pay 'em--now and then--deserving cases, y' know. Fellow called on me t' other day,--seemed to know his face. 'Who are you?' says I. 'I'm the man who makes your whips, sir,' says he. 'And devilish good whips too!' says I, 'how much do I owe you?' 'Fifteen pounds, sir,' says he, 'I wouldn't bother you only'--well, it seemed his wife was sick--fellow actually blubbered! So of course I rang for my rascal Danby, Danby's my valet, y' know. 'Have you any money, Danby?' says I. 'No sir,' says he; queer thing, but Danby never has, although I pay him regularly--devilish improvident fellow, Danby! So I went out and unearthed Jerningham--and paid the fellow on the spot--only right, y' know."

"But why not pay your debts with your own money?" Barnabas inquired.

"For the very good reason that it all went,--ages ago!"

"Why, then," said Barnabas, "earn more."

"Eh?" said the Captain, staring, "earn it? My dear Beverley, I never earned anything in my life, except my beggarly pay, and that isn't enough even for my cravats."

"Well, why not begin?"

"Begin? To earn money? How?"

"You might work," suggested Barnabas.

"Work?" repeated the Captain, starting, "eh, what? Oh, I see, you're joking, of course,--deuced quaint, b'gad!"

"No, I'm very serious," said Barnabas thoughtfully.

"Are you though! But what the deuce kind of work d'you suppose I'm fit for?"

"All men can work!" said Barnabas, more thoughtfully than before.

"Well,--I can ride, and shoot, and drive a coach with any one."

"Anything more?"

"No,--not that I can think of."

"Have you never tried to work, then,--hard work, I mean?"

"Oh Lord, no! Besides, I've always been too busy, y'know. I've never had to work. Y' see, as luck would have it, I was born a gentleman, Beverley."

"Yes," nodded Barnabas, more thoughtful than ever, "but--what is a gentleman?"

"A gentleman? Why--let me think!" said the Captain, manoeuvring his horses skilfully as they swung into the Strand.

And when he had thought as far as the Savoy he spoke:

"A gentleman," said he, "is a fellow who goes to a university, but doesn't have to learn anything; who goes out into the world, but doesn't have to--work at anything; and who has never been blackballed at any of the clubs. I've done a good many things in my time, but I've never had to work."

"That is a great pity!" sighed Barnabas.

"Oh! is it, b'gad! And why?"

"Because hard work ennobles a man," said Barnabas.

"Always heard it was a deuce of a bore!" murmured the Captain.

"Exertion," Barnabas continued, growing a little didactic perhaps, "exertion is--life. By idleness come degeneration and death."

"Sounds cursed unpleasant, b'gad!" said the Captain.

"The work a man does lives on after him," Barnabas continued, "it is his monument when he is no more, far better than your high-sounding epitaphs and stately tombs, yes, even though it be only the furrow he has ploughed, or the earth his spade has turned."

"But,--my dear fellow, you surely wouldn't suggest that I should take up--digging?"

"You might do worse," said Barnabas, "but--"

"Ha!" said the Captain, "well now, supposing I was a--deuced good digger,--a regular rasper, b'gad! I don't know what a digger earns, but let's be moderate and say five or six pounds a week. Well, what the deuce good d'you suppose that would be to me? Why, I still owe Gaunt, as far as I can figure it up, about eighty thousand pounds, which is a deuced lot more than it sounds. I should have been rotting in the Fleet, or the Marshalsea, years ago if it hadn't been for my uncle's gout, b'gad!"

"His gout?"

"Precisely! Every twinge he has--up goes my credit. I'm his only heir, y'know, and he's seventy-one. At present he's as sound as a bell, --actually rode to hounds last week, b'gad! Consequently my credit's--nowhere. Jolly old boy, though--deuced fond of him--ha! there's Haynes! Over yonder! Fellow driving the phaeton with the black-a-moor in the rumble."

"You mean the man in the bright green coat?"

"Yes. Call him 'Pea-green Haynes'--one of your second-rate, ultra dandies. Twig his vasty whiskers, will you! Takes his fellow hours

to curl 'em. And then his cravat, b'gad!"

"How does he turn his head?" inquired Barnabas.

"Never does,--can't! I lost a devilish lot to him at hazard a few years ago--crippled me, y' know. But talking of my uncle--devilish fond of him--always was."

"But mark you, Beverley, a man has no right--no business to go on living after he's seventy, at least, it shows deuced bad taste, I think--so thoughtless, y'know. Hallo! why there's Ball Hughes--driving the chocolate-colored coach, and got up like a regular jarvey. Devilish rich, y'know--call him 'The Golden Ball'--deuce of a fellow! Pitch and toss, or whist at five pound points, damme! Won small fortune from Petersham at battledore and shuttlecock,--played all night too."

"And have you lost to him also?"

"Of course?"

"Do you ever win?"

"Oh, well--now and then, y'know, though I'm generally unlucky. Must have been under--Aldeboran, is it?--anyhow, some cursed star or other. Been dogged by ill-luck from my cradle, b'gad! On the turf, in the clubs and bells, even in the Peninsular!"

"So you fought in the Peninsular?"

"Oh, yes."

"And did you gamble there too?"

"Naturally--whenever I could."

"And did you lose?"

"Generally. Everything's been against me, y'know--even my size."

"How so?"

"Well, there was a fellow in the Eighty-eighth, name of Crichton. I'd lost to him pretty heavily while we were before Ciudad Rodrigo. The night before the storming--we both happened to have volunteered, y'know--'Crichton,' says I, 'I'll go you double or quits I'm into the town to-morrow before you are.' 'Done!' says he. Well, we advanced to the attack about dawn, about four hundred of us. The breach was wide enough to drive a battery through, but the enemy had thrown up a breast-work and fortified it during the night. But up we went at the 'double,' Crichton and I in front, you may be sure. As soon as the Frenchies opened fire, I began to run,--so did Crichton, but being longer in the leg, I was at the breach first, and began to scramble over the debris. Crichton was a little fellow, y' know, but game all through, and active as a cat, and b'gad, presently above the roar and din, I could hear him panting close behind me. Up we went, nearer and nearer, with our fellows about a hundred yards in our rear, clambering after us and cheering as they came. I was close upon the confounded breastwork when I took a musket-ball through my

leg, and over I went like a shot rabbit, b'gad! Just then Crichton panted up. 'Hurt?' says he. 'Only my leg,' says I, 'go on, and good luck to you.' 'Devilish rough on you, Sling!' says he, and on he went. But he'd only gone about a couple of yards when he threw up his arms and pitched over on his face. 'Poor Crichton's done for!' says I to myself, and made shift to crawl over to him. But b'gad! he saw me coming, and began to crawl too. So there we were, on our hands and knees, crawling up towards the Frenchies as hard as we could go. My leg was deuced--uncomfortable, y' know, but I put on a spurt, and managed to draw level with him. 'Hallo, Sling!' says he, 'here's where you win, for I'm done!' and over he goes again. 'So am I, for that matter,' says I--which was only the truth, Beverley. So b'gad, there we lay, side by side, till up came our fellows, yelling like fiends, past us and over us, and charged the breastwork with the bayonet,--and carried it too! Presently, up came two stragglers,--a corporal of the Eighty-eighth and a sergeant of 'Ours.' 'Hi, Corporal,' yells Crichton, 'ten pounds if you can get me over the breastwork--quick's the word!' 'Sergeant,' says I, 'twenty pounds if you get me over first.' Well, down went the Corporal's musket and the Sergeant's pike, and on to their backs we scrambled--a deuced painful business for both of us, I give you my word, Beverley. So we began our race again--mounted this time. But it was devilish bad going, and though the Sergeant did his best, I came in a very bad second. You see, I'm no light weight, and Crichton was."

"You lost, then?"

"Oh, of course, even my size is against me, you see." Hereupon, once more, and very suddenly, the Captain relapsed into his gloomy mood, nor could Barnabas dispel it; his efforts were rewarded only by monosyllables until, swinging round into a short and rather narrow street, he brought his horses to a walk.

"Here we are, Beverley!"

"Where?" Barnabas inquired.

"Kirby Street,--his street. And there's the house,--his house," and Captain Slingsby pointed his whip at a high, flat-fronted house. It was a repellent-looking place with an iron railing before it, and beyond this railing a deep and narrow area, where a flight of damp steps led down to a gloomy door. The street was seemingly a quiet one, and, at this hour, deserted save for themselves and a solitary man who stood with his back to them upon the opposite side of the way, apparently lost in profound thought. A very tall man he was, and very upright, despite the long white hair that showed beneath his hat, which, like his clothes, was old and shabby, and Barnabas noticed that his feet were bare. This man Captain Slingsby incontinent hailed in his characteristic fashion.

"Hi,--you over there!" he called. "Hallo!" The man never stirred. "Oho! b'gad, are you deaf? Just come over here and hold my horses for me, will you?" The man raised his head suddenly and turned. So quickly did he turn that the countless gleaming buttons that he wore upon his coat rang a jingling chime. Now, looking upon this strange figure, Barnabas started up, and springing from the curricle, crossed the street and looked upon the man with a smile.

"Have you forgotten me?" said Barnabas. The man smiled in turn, and

sweeping off the weather-beaten hat, saluted him with an old-time bow of elaborate grace.

"Sir." he answered in his deep, rich voice, "Billy Button never forgets--faces. You are Barnaby Bright--Barnabas, 't is all the same. Sir, Billy Button salutes you."

"Why, then," said Barnabas, rather diffidently, seeing the other's grave dignity, "will you oblige me by--by holding my friend's horses? They are rather high-spirited and nervous."

"Nervous, sir? Ah, then they need me. Billy Button shall sing to them, horses love music, and, like trees, are excellent listeners." Forthwith Billy Button crossed the street with his long, stately stride, and taking the leader's bridle, fell to soothing the horses with soft words, and to patting them with gentle, knowing hands.

"B'gad!" exclaimed the Captain, staring, "that fellow has been used to horses--once upon a time. Poor devil!" As he spoke he glanced from Billy Button's naked feet and threadbare clothes to his own glossy Hessians and immaculate garments, and Barnabas saw him wince as he turned towards the door of Jasper Gaunt's house. Now when Barnabas would have followed, Billy Button caught him suddenly by the sleeve.

"You are not going--there?" he whispered, frowning and nodding towards the house.

"Yes."

"Don't!" he whispered, "don't! An evil place, a place of, sin and shadows, of sorrow, and tears, and black despair. Ah, an evil place! No place for Barnaby Bright."

"I must," said Barnabas.

"So say they all. Youth goes in, and leaves his youth behind; men go in, and leave all strength and hope behind; age goes in, and creeps out--to a grave. Hear me, Barnaby Bright. There is one within there already marked for destruction. Death follows at his heel, for evil begetteth evil, and the sword, the sword. He is already doomed. Listen,--blood! I've seen it upon the door yonder,--a bloody hand! I know, for They have told me--They--the Wise Ones. And so I come here, sometimes by day, sometimes by night, and I watch--I watch. But this is no place for you,--'t is the grave of youth, don't go--don't go!"

"I must," repeated Barnabas, "for another's sake."

"Then must the blighting shadow fall upon you, too,--ah, yes, I know. Oh, Barnaby,--Barnaby Bright!"

Here, roused by the Captain's voice, rather hoarser than usual, Barnabas turned and saw that the door of the house was open, and that Captain Slingsby stood waiting for him with a slender, youthful-seeming person who smiled; a pale-faced, youngish man, with colorless hair, and eyes so very pale as to be almost imperceptible in the pallor of his face. Now, even as the door closed, Barnabas could hear Billy Button singing softly to the horses.

CHAPTER XXXV

HOW BARNABAS MET JASPER GAUNT, AND WHAT CAME OF IT

Barnabas followed the Captain along a somewhat gloomy hall, up a narrow and winding staircase, and here, halfway up, was a small landing with an alcove where stood a tall, wizen-faced clock with skeleton hands and a loud, insistent, very deliberate tick; so, up more stairs to another hall, also somewhat gloomy, and a door which the pale-eyed, smiling person obligingly opened, and, having ushered them into a handsomely furnished chamber, disappeared. The Captain crossed to the hearth, and standing before the empty grate, put up his hand and loosened his high stock with suddenly petulant fingers, rather as though he found some difficulty in breathing; and, looking at him, Barnabas saw that the debonair Slingsby had vanished quite; in his place was another--a much older man, haggard of eye, with a face peaked, and gray, and careworn beneath the brim of the jaunty hat.

"My dear Beverley," said he, staring down into the empty grate, "if you 're ever in need--if you're ever reduced to--destitution, then, in heaven's name, go quietly away and--starve! Deuced unpleasant, of course, but it's--sooner over, b'gad!"

At this moment the smiling person reappeared at a different door, and uttered the words:

"Captain Slingsby,--if _you_ please." Hereupon the Captain visibly braced himself, squared his shoulders, took off his hat, crossed the room in a couple of strides, and Barnabas was alone.

Now as he sat there waiting, he gradually became aware of a sound that stole upon the quiet, a soft, low sound, exactly what he could not define, nevertheless it greatly perturbed him. Therefore he rose, and approaching that part of the room whence it proceeded, he saw another door. And then, all at once, as he stood before this door, he knew what the sound was, and why it had so distressed him; and, even as the knowledge came, he opened the door and stepped into the room beyond.

And this is what he saw:

A bare little room, or office; the pale, smiling gentleman, who lounged in a cushioned chair, a comb in one hand, and in the other a small pocket mirror, by the aid of which he was attending to a diminutive tuft of flaxen whisker; and a woman, in threadbare garments, who crouched upon a bench beside the opposite wall, her face bowed upon her hands, her whole frame shaken by great, heart-broken, gasping sobs,--a sound full of misery, and of desolation unutterable.

At the opening of the door, the pale gentleman started and turned, and the woman looked up with eyes swollen and inflamed by weeping.

"Sir," said the pale gentleman, speaking softly, yet in the tone of

one used to command, "may I ask what this intrusion means?" Now as he looked into the speaker's pallid eyes, Barnabas saw that he was much older than he had thought. He had laid aside the comb and mirror, and now rose in a leisurely manner, and his smile was more unpleasant than ever as he faced Barnabas.

"This place is private, sir--you understand, private, sir. May I suggest that you--go, that you--leave us?" As he uttered the last two words, he thrust out his head and jaw in a very ugly manner, therefore Barnabas turned and addressed himself to the woman.

"Pray, madam," said he, "tell me your trouble; what is the matter?" But the woman only wrung her hands together, and stared with great, frightened eyes at the colorless man, who now advanced, smiling still, and tapped Barnabas smartly on the shoulder.

"The trouble is her own, sir, the matter is--entirely a private one," said he, fixing Barnabas with his pale stare, "I repeat, sir,--a private one. May I, therefore, suggest that you withdraw--at once?"

"As often as you please, sir," retorted Barnabas, bowing.

"Ah!" sighed the man, thrusting out his head again, "and what do you want--here?"

"First, is your name Jasper Gaunt?"

"No; but it is as well known as his--better to a great many."

"And your name is--?"

"Quigly."

"Then, Mr. Quigly, pray be seated while I learn this poor creature's sorrow."

"I think--yes, I think you'd better go," said Mr. Quigly,--"ah, yes--and at once, or--"

"Or?" said Barnabas, smiling and clenching his fists.

"Or it will be the worse--for you--"

"Yes?"

"And for your friend the Captain."

"Yes?"

"And you will give this woman more reason for her tears!"

Then, looking from the pale, threatening eyes, and smiling lips of the man, to the trembling fear of the weeping woman, and remembering Slingsby's deathly cheek and shaking hand, a sudden, great anger came upon Barnabas; his long arm shot out and, pinning Mr. Quigly by the cravat, he shook him to and fro in a paroxysm of fury. Twice he raised his cane to strike, twice he lowered it, and finally loosing his grip, Mr. Quigly staggered back to the opposite wall, and leaned

there, panting.

Hereupon Barnabas, somewhat shocked at his own loss of self-restraint, re-settled his cuff, straightened his cravat, and, when he spoke, was more polite than ever.

"Mr. Quigly, pray sit down," said he; "I have no wish to thrash you,--it would be a pity to spoil my cane, so--oblige me by sitting down."

Mr. Quigly opened his mouth as if to speak, but, glancing at Barnabas, thought better of it; yet his eyes grew so pale that they seemed all whites as he sank into the chair.

"And now," said Barnabas, turning to the crouching woman, "I don't think Mr. Quigly will interrupt us again, you may freely tell your trouble--if you will."

"Oh, sir,--it's my husband! He's been in prison a whole year, and now--now he's dying--they've killed him. It was fifty pounds a year ago. I saved, and scraped, and worked day and night, and a month ago--I brought the fifty pounds. But then--Oh, my God!--then they told me I must find twenty more--interest, they called it. Twenty pounds! why, it would take me months and months to earn so much, --and my husband was dying!--dying! But, sir, I went away despairing. Then I grew wild,--desperate--yes, desperate--oh, believe it, sir, and I,--I--Ah, sir--what won't a desperate woman do for one she loves? And so I--trod shameful ways! To-day I brought the twenty pounds, and now--dear God! now they say it must be twenty-three. Three pounds more, and I have no more--and I can't--Oh, I--can't go back to it again--the shame and horror--I--can't, sir!" So she covered her face again, and shook with the bitter passion of her woe.

And, after a while, Barnabas found voice, though his voice was very hoarse and uneven.

"I think," said he slowly, "yes, I think my cane could not have a worthier end than splintering on your villain's back, Mr. Quigly."

But, even as Barnabas advanced with very evident purpose, a tall figure stood framed in the open doorway.

"Ah, Quigly,--pray what is all this?" a chill, incisive voice demanded. Barnabas turned, and lowering the cane, stood looking curiously at the speaker. A tall, slender man he was, with a face that might have been any age,--a mask-like face, smooth and long, and devoid of hair as it was of wrinkles; an arresting face, with its curving nostrils, thin-lipped, close-shut mouth, high, prominent brow, and small, piercingly-bright eyes; quick eyes, that glinted between their red-rimmed, hairless lids, old in their experience of men and the ways of men. For the rest, he was clad in a rich yet sober habit, unrelieved by any color save for the gleaming seals at his fob, and the snowy lace at throat and wrist; his hair--evidently a wig--curled low on either cheek, and his hands were well cared for, with long, prehensile fingers.

"You are Jasper Gaunt, I think?" said Barnabas at last.

"At your service, sir, and you, I know, are Mr. Barnabas Beverley."

So they stood, fronting each other, the Youth, unconquered as yet, and therefore indomitable, and the Man, with glittering eyes old in their experience of men and the ways of men.

"You wished to see me on a matter of business, Mr. Beverley?"

"Yes."

"Then pray step this way."

"No," said Barnabas, "first I require your signature to this lady's papers."

Jasper Gaunt smiled, and shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Such clients as this, sir,--I leave entirely to Mr. Quigly."

"Then, in this instance, sir, you will perhaps favor me by giving the matter your personal attention!"

Jasper Gaunt hesitated, observed the glowing eye, flushed cheek, and firm-set lips of the speaker, and being wise in men and their ways,--bowed.

"To oblige you, Mr. Beverley, with pleasure. Though I understand from Mr. Quigly that she is unable to meet--"

"Seventy-eight pounds, sir! She can pay it all--every blood-stained, tear-soaked farthing. She should meet it were it double--treble the sum!" said Barnabas, opening his purse.

"Ah, indeed, I see! I see!" nodded Jasper Gaunt. "Take the money, Quigly, I will make out the receipt. If you desire, you shall see me sign it, Mr. Beverley." So saying, he crossed to the desk, wrote the document, and handed it to Barnabas, with a bow that was almost ironical.

Then Barnabas gave the precious paper into the woman's eager fingers, and looked down into the woman's shining eyes.

"Sir," said she between trembling lips, "I cannot thank you,--I--I cannot. But God sees, and He will surely repay."

"Indeed," stammered Barnabas, "I--it was only three pounds, after all, and--there,--go,--hurry away to your husband, and--ah! that reminds me,--he will want help, perhaps!" Here Barnabas took out his card, and thrust it into her hand. "Take that to my house, ask to see my Steward, Mr. Peterby,--stay, I'll write the name for you, he will look after you, and--good-by!"

"It is a truly pleasant thing to meet with heartfelt gratitude, sir," said Jasper Gaunt, as the door closed behind the woman. "And now I am entirely at your service,--this way, sir."

Forthwith Barnabas followed him into another room, where sat the Captain, his long legs stretched out before him, his chin on his breast, staring away at vacancy.

"Sir," said Jasper Gaunt, glancing from Barnabas to the Captain and

back again, "he will not trouble us, I think, but if you wish him to withdraw--?"

"Thank you--no," answered Barnabas, "Captain Slingsby is my friend!"
Jasper Gaunt bowed, and seated himself at his desk opposite Barnabas. His face was in shadow, for the blind had been half-drawn to exclude the glare of the afternoon sun, and he sat, or rather lolled, in a low, deeply cushioned chair, studying Barnabas with his eyes that were so bright and so very knowing in the ways of mankind; very still he sat, and very quiet, waiting for Barnabas to begin. Now on the wall, immediately behind him, was a long, keen-bladed dagger, that glittered evilly where the light caught it; and as he sat there so very quiet and still, with his face in the shadow, it seemed to Barnabas as though he lolled there dead, with the dagger smitten sideways through his throat, and in that moment Barnabas fancied he could hear the deliberate tick-tock of the wizen-faced clock upon the stairs.

"I have come," began Barnabas at last, withdrawing his eyes from the glittering steel with an effort, "I am here on behalf of one--in whom I take an interest--a great interest."

"Yes, Mr. Beverley?"

"I have undertaken to--liquidate his debts."

"Yes, Mr. Beverley."

"To pay--whatever he may owe, both principal and interest."

"Indeed, Mr. Beverley! And--his name?"

"His name is Ronald Barrymaine."

"Ronald--Barrymaine!" There was a pause between the words, and the smooth, soft voice had suddenly grown so harsh, so deep and vibrant, that it seemed incredible the words could have proceeded from the lips of the motionless figure lolling in the chair with his face in the shadow and the knife glittering behind him.

"I have made out to you a draft for more than enough, as I judge, to cover Mr. Barrymaine's liabilities."

"For how much, sir?"

"Twenty-two thousand pounds."

Then Jasper Gaunt stirred, sighed, and leaned forward in his chair.

"A handsome sum, sir,--a very handsome sum, but--" and he smiled and shook his head.

"Pray what do you mean by 'but'?" demanded Barnabas.

"That the sum is--inadequate, sir."

"Twenty-two thousand pounds is not enough then?"

"It is--not enough, Mr. Beverley."

"Then, if you will tell me the precise amount, I will make up the deficiency." But, here again, Jasper Gaunt smiled his slow smile and shook his head.

"That, I grieve to say, is quite impossible, Mr. Beverley."

"Why?"

"Because I make it a rule never to divulge my clients' affairs to a third party; and, sir,--I never break my rules."

"Then--you refuse to tell me?"

"It is--quite impossible."

So there fell a silence while the wide, fearless eyes of Youth looked into the narrow, watchful eyes of Experience. Then Barnabas rose, and began to pace to and fro across the luxurious carpet; he walked with his head bent, and the hands behind his back were tightly clenched. Suddenly he stopped, and throwing up his head faced Jasper Gaunt, who sat lolling back in his chair again.

"I have heard," said he, "that this sum was twenty thousand pounds, but, as you say, it may be more,--a few pounds more, or a few hundreds more."

"Precisely, Mr. Beverley."

"I am, therefore, going to make you an offer--"

"Which I must--refuse."

"And my offer is this: instead of twenty thousand pounds I will double the sum."

Jasper Gaunt's lolling figure grew slowly rigid, and leaning across the desk, he stared up at Barnabas under his hairless brows. Even Captain Slingsby stirred and lifted his heavy head.

"Forty thousand pounds!" said Jasper Gaunt, speaking almost in a whisper.

"Yes," said Barnabas, and sitting down, he folded his arms a little ostentatiously. Jasper Gaunt's head drooped, and he stared down at the papers on the desk before him, nor did he move, only his long, white fingers began to tap softly upon his chair-arms, one after the other.

"I will pay you forty thousand pounds," said Barnabas. Then, all in one movement as it seemed, Gaunt had risen and turned to the window, and stood there awhile with his back to the room.

"Well?" inquired Barnabas at last.

"I--cannot, sir."

"You mean--will not!" said Barnabas, clenching his fists.

"Cannot, sir." As Gaunt turned, Barnabas rose and approached him until barely a yard separated them, until he could look into the eyes that glittered between their hairless lids, very like the cruel-looking dagger on the wall.

"Very well," said Barnabas, "then I'll treble it. I'll pay you sixty thousand pounds! What do you say? Come--speak!" But now, the eyes so keen and sharp to read men and the ways of men wavered and fell before the indomitable steadfastness of unconquered Youth; the long, white hands beneath their ruffles seemed to writhe with griping, contorted fingers, while upon his temple was something that glittered a moment, rolled down his cheek, and so was gone.

"Speak!" said Barnabas.

Yet still no answer came, only Jasper Gaunt sank down in his chair with his elbows on the desk, his long, white face clasped between his long, white hands, staring into vacancy; but now his smooth brow was furrowed, his narrow eyes were narrower yet, and his thin lips moved as though he had whispered to himself "sixty thousand pounds!"

"Sir,--for the last time--do you accept?" demanded Barnabas.

Without glancing up, or even altering the direction of his vacant stare, and with his face still framed between his hands, Jasper Gaunt shook his head from side to side, once, twice, and thrice; a gesture there was no mistaking.

Then Barnabas fell back a step, with clenched fist upraised, but in that moment the Captain was before him and had caught his arm.

"By Gad, Beverley!" he exclaimed in a shaken voice, "are you mad?"

"No," said Barnabas, "but I came here to buy those bills, and buy them I will! If trebling it isn't enough, then--"

"Ah!" cried Slingsby, pointing to the usurer's distorted face, "can't you see? Don't you guess? He can't sell! No money-lender of 'em all could resist such an offer. I tell you he daren't sell, the bills aren't his! Come away--"

"Not his!" cried Barnabas, "then whose?"

"God knows! But it's true,--look at him!"

"Tell me," cried Barnabas, striving to see Gaunt's averted eyes, "tell me who holds these bills,--if you have one spark of generosity--tell me!"

But Jasper Gaunt gave no sign, only the writhing fingers crept across his face, over staring eyes and twitching lips.

So, presently, Barnabas suffered Captain Slingsby to lead him from the room, and down the somewhat dark and winding stair, past the wizen-faced clock, out into the street already full of the glow of evening.

"It's a wonder to me," said the Captain, "yes, it's a great wonder to me, that nobody has happened to kill Gaunt before now."

So the Captain frowned, sighed, and climbed up to his seat. But, when Barnabas would have followed, Billy Button touched him on the arm.

"Oh, Barnaby!" said he, "oh, Barnaby Bright, look--the day is dying, the shadows are coming,--in a little while it will be night. But, oh Youth, alas! alas! I can see the shadows have touched you already!" And so, with a quick upflung glance at the dismal house, he turned, waved his hand, and sped away on noiseless feet, and so was gone.

CHAPTER XXXVI

OF AN ETHICAL DISCUSSION, WHICH THE READER IS ADVISED TO SKIP

Oho! for the rush of wind in the hair, for the rolling thunder of galloping hoofs, now echoing on the hard, white road, now muffled in dewy grass.

Oho! for the horse and his rider and the glory of them; for the long, swinging stride that makes nothing of distance, for the tireless spring of the powerful loins, for the masterful hand on the bridle, strong, yet gentle as a caress, for the firm seat--the balance and sway that is an aid to speed, and proves the born rider. And what horse should this be but Four-legs, his black coat glossy and shining in the sun, his great, round hoofs spurning the flying earth, all a-quiver with high courage, with life and the joy of it? And who should be the rider but young Barnabas?

He rides with his hat in his whip-hand, that he may feel the wind, and with never a look behind, for birds are carolling from the cool freshness of dewy wood and copse, in every hedge and tree the young sun has set a myriad gems flashing and sparkling; while, out of the green distance ahead, Love is calling; brooks babble of it, birds sing of it, the very leaves find each a small, soft voice to whisper of it.

So away--away rides Barnabas by village green and lonely cot, past hedge and gate and barn, up hill and down hill,--away from the dirt and noise of London, away from its joys and sorrows, its splendors and its miseries, and from the oncoming, engulfing shadow. Spur and gallop, Barnabas,--ride, youth, ride! for the shadow has already touched you, even as the madman said.

Therefore while youth yet abides, while the sun yet shines,--ride, Barnabas, ride!

Now as he went, Barnabas presently espied a leafy by-lane, and across this lane a fence had been erected,--a high fence, but with a fair "take-off" and consequently, a most inviting fence. At this, forthwith, Barnabas rode, steadied Four-legs in his stride, touched him with the spur, and cleared it with a foot to spare. Then, all at once, he drew rein and paced over the dewy grass to where, beneath the hedge, was a solitary man who knelt before a fire of twigs fanning it to a blaze with his wide-eaved hat.

He was a slender man, and something stooping of shoulder, and his hair shone silver-white in the sunshine. Hearing Barnabas approach, he looked up, rose to his feet, and so stood staring as one in doubt. Therefore Barnabas uncovered his head and saluted him with grave politeness.

"Sir," said he, reining in his great horse, "you have not forgotten me, I hope?"

"No indeed, young sir," answered the Apostle of Peace, with a dawning smile of welcome. "But you are dressed very differently from what I remember. The quiet, country youth has become lost, and transfigured into the dashing Corinthian. What a vast difference clothes can make in one! And yet your face is the same, your expression unchanged. London has not altered you yet, and I hope it never may. No, sir, your face is not one to be forgotten,--indeed it reminds me of other days."

"But we have only met once before," said Barnabas.

"True! And yet I seem to have known you years ago,--that is what puzzles me! But come, young sir,--if you have time and inclination to share a vagrant's breakfast, I can offer you eggs and new milk, and bread and butter,--simple fare, but more wholesome than your French ragouts and highly-seasoned dishes."

"You are very kind," said Barnabas, "the ride has made me hungry, --besides, I should like to talk with you."

"Why, then--light down from that great horse of yours, and join me. The grass must be both chair and table, but here is a tree for your back, and the bank for mine."

So, having dismounted and secured his horse's bridle to a convenient branch, Barnabas sat himself down with his back to the tree, and accepted the wandering Preacher's bounty as freely as it was offered. And when the Preacher had spoken a short grace, they began to eat, and while they ate, to talk, as follows:

Barnabas. "It is three weeks, I think, since we met?"

The Preacher. "A month, young sir."

Barnabas. "So long a time?"

The Preacher. "So short a time. You have been busy, I take it?"

Barnabas. "Yes, sir. Since last we met I have bought a house and set up an establishment in London, and I have also had the good fortune to be entered for the Gentleman's Steeplechase on the fifteenth."

The Preacher. "You are rich, young sir?"

Barnabas. "And I hope to be famous also."

The Preacher. "Then indeed do I begin to tremble for you."

Barnabas (staring). "Why so?"

The Preacher. "Because wealth is apt to paralyze effort, and Fame is generally harder to bear, and far more dangerous, than failure."

Barnabas. "How dangerous, sir?"

The Preacher. "Because he who listens too often to the applause of the multitude grows deaf to the voice of Inspiration, for it is a very small, soft voice, and must be hearkened for, and some call it Genius, and some the Voice of God--"

Barnabas. "But Fame means Power, and I would succeed for the sake of others beside myself. Yes,--I must succeed, and, as I think you once said, all things are possible to us! Pray, what did you mean?"

The Preacher. "Young sir, into each of us who are born into this world God puts something of Himself, and by reason of this Divine part, all things are possible."

Barnabas. "Yet the world is full of failures."

The Preacher. "Alas! yes; but only because men do not realize power within them. For man is a selfish creature, and Self is always grossly blind. But let a man look within himself, let him but become convinced of this Divine power, and the sure and certain knowledge of ultimate success will be his. So, striving diligently, this power shall grow within him, and by and by he shall achieve great things, and the world proclaim him a Genius."

Barnabas. "Then--all men might succeed."

The Preacher. "Assuredly! for success is the common heritage of Man. It is only Self, blind, ignorant Self, who is the coward, crying 'I cannot! I dare not! It is impossible!'"

Barnabas. "What do you mean by 'Self'?"

The Preacher. "I mean the grosser part, the slave that panders to the body, a slave that, left unchecked, may grow into a tyrant, a Circe, changing Man to brute."

Here Barnabas, having finished his bread and butter, very thoughtfully cut himself another slice.

Barnabas (still thoughtful). "And do you still go about preaching Forgetfulness of Self, sir?"

The Preacher. "And Forgiveness, yes. A good theme, young sir, but--very unpopular. Men prefer to dwell upon the wrongs done them, rather than cherish the memory of benefits conferred. But, nevertheless, I go up and down the ways, preaching always."

Barnabas. "Why, then, I take it, your search is still unsuccessful."

The Preacher. "Quite! Sometimes a fear comes upon me that she may be beyond my reach--"

Barnabas. "You mean--?"

The Preacher. "Dead, sir. At such times, things grow very black until I remember that God is a just God, and therein lies my sure and certain hope. But I would not trouble you with my griefs, young sir, more especially on such a glorious morning,--hark to the throstle yonder, he surely sings of Life and Hope. So, if you will, pray tell me of yourself, young sir, of your hopes and ambitions."

Barnabas. "My ambitions, sir, are many, but first,--I would be a gentleman."

The Preacher (nodding). "Good! So far as it goes, the ambition is a laudable one."

Barnabas (staring thoughtfully at his bread and butter). "The first difficulty is to know precisely what a gentleman should be. Pray, sir, what is your definition?"

The Preacher. "A gentleman, young sir, is (I take it) one born with the Godlike capacity to think and feel for others, irrespective of their rank or condition."

Barnabas. "Hum! One who is unselfish?"

The Preacher. "One who possesses an ideal so lofty, a mind so delicate, that it lifts him above all things ignoble and base, yet strengthens his hands to raise those who are fallen--no matter how low. This, I think, is to be truly a gentleman, and of all gentle men Jesus of Nazareth was the first."

Barnabas (shaking his head). "And yet, sir, I remember a whip of small cords."

The Preacher. "Truly, for Evil sometimes so deadens the soul that it can feel only through the flesh."

Barnabas. "Then--a man may fight and yet be a gentleman?"

The Preacher. "He who can forgive, can fight."

Barnabas. "Sir, I am relieved to know that. But must Forgiveness always come after?"

The Preacher. "If the evil is truly repented of."

Barnabas. "Even though the evil remain?"

The Preacher. "Ay, young sir, for then Forgiveness becomes truly divine."

Barnabas. "Hum!"

The Preacher. "But you eat nothing, young sir."

Barnabas. "I was thinking."

The Preacher. "Of what?"

Barnabas. "Sir, my thought embraced you."

The Preacher. "How, young sir?"

Barnabas. "I was wondering if you had ever heard of a man named Chichester?"

The Preacher (speaking brokenly, and in a whisper). "Sir!--young sir,--you said--?"

Barnabas (rising). "Chichester!"

The Preacher (coming to his knees). "Sir,--oh, sir,--this man--Chichester is he who stole away--my daughter,--who blasted her honor and my life,--who--"

Barnabas. "No!"

The Preacher (covering his face). "Yes,--yes! God help me, it's true! But in her shame I love her still, oh, my pride is dead long ago. I remember only that I am her father, with all a father's loving pity, and that she--"

Barnabas. "And that she is the stainless maid she always was--"

"Sir," cried the Preacher, "oh, sir,--what do you mean?" and Barnabas saw the thin hands clasp and wring themselves, even as he remembered Clemency's had done.

"I mean," answered Barnabas, "that she fled from pollution, and found refuge among honest folk. I mean that she is alive and well, that she lives but to bless your arms and feel a father's kiss of forgiveness. If you would find her, go to the 'Spotted Cow,' near Frittenden, and ask for 'Clemency'!"

"Clemency!" repeated the Preacher, "Clemency means mercy. And she called herself--Clemency!" Then, with a sudden, rapturous gesture, he lifted his thin hands, and with his eyes upturned to the blue heaven, spoke.

"Oh, God!" he cried, "Oh, Father of Mercy, I thank Thee!" And so he arose from his knees, and turning about, set off through the golden morning towards Frittenden, and Clemency.

CHAPTER XXXVII

IN WHICH THE BO'SUN DISCOURSES ON LOVE AND ITS SYMPTOMS

Oho! for the warmth and splendor of the mid-day sun; for the dance and flurry of leafy shadows on the sward; for stilly wayside pools whose waters, deep and dark in the shade of overhanging boughs, are yet dappled here and there with glory; for merry brooks leaping and laughing along their stony beds; for darkling copse and sunny upland,--oho! for youth and life and the joy of it.

To the eyes of Barnabas, the beauty of the world about him served only to remind him of the beauty of her who was compounded of all

things beautiful,--the One and Only Woman, whose hair was yellow like the ripening corn, whose eyes were deep and blue as the infinite heaven, whose lips were red as the poppies that bloomed beside the way, and whose body was warm with youth, and soft and white as the billowy clouds above.

Thus on galloped Barnabas with the dust behind and the white road before, and with never a thought of London, or its wonders, or the gathering shadow.

It was well past noon when he beheld a certain lonely church where many a green mound and mossy headstone marked the resting-place of those that sleep awhile. And here, beside the weather-worn porch, were the stocks, that "place of thought" where Viscount Devenham had sat in solitary, though dignified meditation. A glance, a smile, and Barnabas was past, and galloping down the hill towards where the village nestled in the valley. Before the inn he dismounted, and, having seen Four-legs well bestowed, and given various directions to a certain sleepy-voiced ostler, he entered the inn, and calling for dinner, ate it with huge relish. Now, when he had done, came the landlord to smoke a pipe with him,--a red-faced man, vast of paunch and garrulous of tongue.

"Fine doin's there be up at t' great 'ouse, sir," he began.

"You mean Annersley House?"

"Ay, sir. All the quality is there,--my son's a groom there an' 'e told me, so 'e did. Theer ain't nobody as ain't either a Markus or a Earl or a Vi'count, and as for Barry-nets, they're as thick as flies, they are,--an' all to meet a little, old 'ooman as don't come up to my shoulder! But then--she's a Duchess, an' that makes all the difference!"

"Yes, of course," said Barnabas.

"A little old 'ooman wi' curls, as don't come no-wise near so 'igh as my shoulder! Druv up to that theer very door as you see theer, in 'er great coach an' four, she did,--orders the steps to be lowered, --comes tapping into this 'ere very room with 'er little cane, she do, --sits down in that theer very chair as you're a-sittin' in, she do, fannin' 'erself with a little fan--an' calls for--now, what d' ye suppose, sir?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"She calls, sir,--though you won't believe me, it aren't to be expected,--no, not on my affer-daver,--she being a Duchess, ye see--"

"Well, what did she call for?" inquired Barnabas, rising.

"Sir, she called for--on my solemn oath it's true--though I don't ax ye to believe me, mind,--she sat in that theer identical chair,--an' mark me, 'er a Duchess,--she sat in that cheer, a-fannin' 'erself with 'er little fan, an' calls for a 'arf of Kentish ale--'Westerham brew,' says she; an' 'er a Duchess! In a tankard! But I know as you won't believe me,--nor I don't ax any man to,--no, not if I went down on my bended marrer-bones--"

"But I do believe you," said Barnabas.

"What--you do?" cried the landlord, almost reproachfully.

"Certainly! A Duchess is, sometimes, almost human."

"But you--actooally--believe me?"

"Yes."

"Well--you surprise me, sir! Ale! A Duchess! In a tankard! No, it aren't nat'ral. Never would I ha' believed as any one would ha' believed such a--"

But here Barnabas laughed, and taking up his hat, sallied out into the sunshine.

He went by field paths that led him past woods in whose green twilight thrushes and blackbirds piped, by sunny meadows where larks mounted heavenward in an ecstasy of song, and so, eventually he found himself in a road where stood a weather-beaten finger-post, with its two arms wide-spread and pointing:

TO LONDON. TO HAWKHURST

Here Barnabas paused a while, and bared his head as one who stands on hallowed ground. And looking upon the weather-worn finger-post, he smiled very tenderly, as one might who meets an old friend. Then he went on again until he came to a pair of tall iron gates, hospitable gates that stood open as though inviting him to enter. Therefore he went on, and thus presently espied a low, rambling house of many gables, about which were trim lawns and stately trees. Now as he stood looking at this house, he heard a voice near by, a deep, rolling bass upraised in song, and the words of it were these:

"What shall we do with the drunken sailor,
Heave, my lads, yo-ho!
Why, put him in the boat and roll him over,
Put him in the boat till he gets sober,
Put him in the boat and roll him over,
With a heave, my lads, yo-ho!"

Following the direction of this voice, Barnabas came to a lawn screened from the house by hedges of clipped yew. At the further end of this lawn was a small building which had been made to look as much as possible like the after-cabin of a ship. It had a door midway, with a row of small, square windows on either side, and was flanked at each end by a flight of wooden steps, with elaborately carved hand-rails, that led up to the quarterdeck above, which was protected by more carved posts and rails. Here a stout pole had been erected and rigged with block and fall, and from this, a flag stirred lazily in the gentle wind.

Now before this building, his blue coat laid by, his shirt sleeves rolled up, his glazed hat on the back of his head, was the Bo'sun, polishing away at a small, brass cannon that was mounted on a platform, and singing lustily as he worked. So loudly did he sing, and so engrossed was he, that he did not look up until he felt Barnabas touch him. Then he started, turned, stared, hesitated, and,

finally, broke into a smile.

"Ah, it's you, sir,--the young gemman as bore away for Lon'on alongside Master Horatio, his Lordship!"

"Yes," said Barnabas, extending his hand, "how are you, Bo'sun?"

"Hearty, sir, hearty, I thank ye!" Saying which he touched his forehead, rubbed his hand upon his trousers, looked at it, rubbed it again, and finally gave it to Barnabas, though with an air of apology. "Been making things a bit ship-shape, sir, 'count o' this here day being a occasion,--but I'm hearty, sir, hearty, I thank ye."

"And the Captain," said Barnabas with some hesitation. "How is the Captain?"

"The Cap'n, sir," answered the Bo'sun, "the Cap'n is likewise hearty."

"And--Lady Cleone--is she well, is she happy?"

"Why, sir, she's as 'appy as can be expected--under the circumstances."

"What circumstances?"

"Love, sir."

"Love!" exclaimed Barnabas, "why, Bo'sun--what do you mean?"

"I mean, sir, as she's fell in love at last--

"How do you know--who with--where is she--?"

"Well, sir, I know on account o' 'er lowness o' sperrits,--noticed it for a week or more. Likewise I've heered 'er sigh very frequent, and I've seen 'er sit a-staring up at the moon--ah, that I have! Now lovers is generally low in their sperrits, I've heered tell, and they allus stare very 'ard at the moon,--why, I don't know, but they do,--leastways, so I've--"

"But--in love--with whom? Can I see her? Where is she? Are you sure?"

"And sartain, sir. Only t' other night, as I sat a-smoking my pipe on the lawn, yonder,--she comes out to me, and nestles down under my lee--like she used to years ago. 'Jerry, dear,' says she, 'er voice all low and soft-like, 'look at the moon,--how beautiful it is!' says she, and--she give a sigh. 'Yes, my lady,' says I. 'Oh, Jerry,' says she, 'call me Clo, as you used to do.' 'Yes, my Lady Clo,' says I. But she grapples me by the collar, and stamps 'er foot at me, all in a moment. 'Leave out the 'lady,'' says she. 'Yes, Clo,' says I. So she nestles an' sighs and stares at the moon again. 'Jerry, dear,' says she after a bit, 'when will the moon be at the full?' 'To-morrer, Clo,' says I. And after she's stared and sighed a bit longer--'Jerry, dear,' says she again, 'it's sweet to think that while we are looking up at the moon--others perhaps are looking at it too, I mean others who are far away. It--almost seems to bring them nearer, doesn't it? Then I knowed as 't were love, with a big L, sartin and sure, and--"

"Bo'sun," said Barnabas, catching him by the arm, "who is it she

loves?"

"Well, sir,--I aren't quite sure, seeing as there are so many on 'em in 'er wake, but I think,--and I 'ope, as it's 'is Lordship, Master Horatio."

"Ah!" said Barnabas, his frowning brow relaxing.

"If it ain't 'im,--why then it's mutiny,--that's what it is, sir!"

"Mutiny?"

"Ye see, sir," the Bo'sun went on to explain, "orders is orders, and if she don't love Master Horatio--well, she ought to."

"Why?"

"Because they was made for each other. Because they was promised to each other years ago. It were all arranged an' settled 'twixt Master Horatio's father, the Earl, and Lady Cleone's guardian, the Cap'n."

"Ah!" said Barnabas, "and where is she--and the Captain?"

"Out, sir; an' she made him put on 'is best uniform, as he only wears on Trafalgar Day, and such great occasions. She orders out the fam'ly coach, and away they go, 'im the very picter o' what a post-captain o' Lord Nelson should be (though to be sure, there's a darn in his white silk stocking--the one to starboard, just abaft the shoe-buckle, and, therefore, not to be noticed, and I were allus 'andy wi' my needle), and her--looking the picter o' the handsomest lady, the loveliest, properest maid in all this 'ere world. Away they go, wi' a fair wind to sarve 'em, an' should ha' dropped anchor at Annersley House a full hour ago."

"At Annersley?" said Barnabas. "There is a reception there, I hear?"

"Yes, sir, all great folk from Lon'on, besides country folk o' quality,--to meet the Duchess o' Camberhurst, and she's the greatest of 'em all. Lord! There's enough blue blood among 'em to float a Seventy-four. Nat'rally, the Cap'n wanted to keep a good offing to windward of 'em. 'For look ye, Jerry,' says he, 'I'm no confounded courtier to go bowing and scraping to a painted old woman, with a lot of other fools, just because she happens to be a duchess,--no, damme!' and down 'e sits on the breech o' the gun here. But, just then, my lady heaves into sight, brings up alongside, and comes to an anchor on his knee. 'Dear,' says she, with her round, white arm about his neck, and her soft, smooth cheek agin his, 'dear, it's almost time we began to dress.' 'Dress?' says he, 'what for, Clo,--I say, what d'ye mean?' 'Why, for the reception,' says she. 'To-day is my birthday' (which it is, sir, wherefore the flag at our peak, yonder), 'and I know you mean to take me,' says she, 'so I told Robert we should want the coach at three. So come along and dress,--like a dear.' The Cap'n stared at 'er, dazed-like, give me a look, and,--well--" the Bo'sun smiled and shook his head. "Ye see, sir, in some ways the Cap'n 's very like a ordinary man, arter all!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

HOW BARNABAS CLIMBED A WALL

Now presently, as he went, he became aware of a sound that was not the stir of leaves, nor the twitter of birds, nor the music of running waters, though all these were in his ears,--for this was altogether different; a distant sound that came and went, that swelled to a murmur, sank to a whisper, yet never wholly died away. Little by little the sound grew plainer, more insistent, until, mingled with the leafy stirrings, he could hear a plaintive melody, rising and falling, faint with distance.

Hereupon Barnabas halted suddenly, his chin in hand, his brow furrowed in thought, while over his senses stole the wailing melody of the distant violins. A while he stood thus, then plunged into the cool shadow of a wood, and hurried on by winding tracks, through broad glades, until the wood was left behind, until the path became a grassy lane; and ever the throbbing melody swelled and grew. It was a shady lane, tortuous and narrow, but on strode Barnabas until, rounding a bend, he beheld a wall, an ancient, mossy wall of red brick; and with his gaze upon this, he stopped again. But the melody called to him, louder now and more insistent, and mingled with the throb of the violins was the sound of voices and laughter.

Then, standing on tip-toe, Barnabas set his hands to the coping of the wall, and drawing himself up, caught a momentary vision of smiling gardens, of green lawns where bright figures moved, of winding walks and neat trimmed hedges, ere, swinging himself over, he dropped down among a bed of Sir George Annersley's stocks.

Before him was a shady walk winding between clipped yews, and, following this, Barnabas presently espied a small arbor some distance away. Now between him and this arbor was a place where four paths met, and where stood an ancient sun-dial with quaintly carved seats. And here, the sun making a glory of her wondrous hair, was my Lady Cleone, with the Marquis of Jerningham beside her. She sat with her elbow on her knee and her dimpled chin upon her palm, and, even from where he stood, Barnabas could see again the witchery of her lashes that drooped dark upon the oval of her cheek.

The Marquis was talking earnestly, gesturing now and then with his slender hand that had quite lost its habitual languor, and stooping that he might look into the drooping beauty of her face, utterly regardless of the havoc he thus wrought upon the artful folds of his marvellous cravat. All at once she looked up, laughed and shook her head, and, closing her fan, pointed with it towards the distant house, laughing still, but imperious. Hereupon the Marquis rose, albeit unwillingly, and bowing, hurried off to obey her behest. Then Cleone rose also, and turning, went on slowly toward the arbor, with head drooping as one in thought.

And now, with his gaze upon that shapely back, all youthful loveliness from slender foot to the crowning glory of her hair, Barnabas sighed, and felt his heart leap as he strode after her. But, even as he followed, oblivious of all else under heaven, he beheld another back that obtruded itself suddenly upon the scene, a broad,

graceful back in a coat of fine blue cloth,--a back that bore itself with a masterful swing of the shoulders. And, in that instant, Barnabas recognized Sir Mortimer Carnaby.

Cleone had reached the arbor, but on the threshold turned to meet Sir Mortimer's sweeping bow. And now she seemed to hesitate, then extended her hand, and Sir Mortimer followed her into the arbor. My lady's cheeks were warm with rich color, her eyes were suddenly and strangely bright as she sank into a chair, and Sir Mortimer, misinterpreting this, had caught and imprisoned her hands.

"Cleone," said he, "at last!" The slender hands fluttered in his grasp, but his grasp was strong, and, ere she could stay him, he was down before her on his knee, and speaking quick and passionately.

"Cleone!--hear me! nay, I will speak! All the afternoon I have tried to get a word with you, and now you must hear me--you shall. And yet you know what I would say. You know I love you, and have done from the first hour I saw you. And from that hour I've hungered for your, Cleone, do you hear? Ah, tell me you love me!"

But my lady sat wide-eyed, staring at the face amid the leaves beyond the open window,--a face so handsome, yet so distorted; saw the gleam of clenched teeth, the frowning brows, the menacing gray eyes.

Sir Mortimer, all unconscious, had caught her listless hands to his lips, and was speaking again between his kisses.

"Speak, Cleone! You know how long I have loved you,--speak and bid me hope! What, silent still? Why, then--give me that rose from your bosom,--let it be hope's messenger, and speak for you."

But still my lady sat dumb, staring up at the face amid the leaves, the face of Man Primeval, aglow with all the primitive passions; beheld the drawn lips and quivering nostrils, the tense jaw savage and masterful, and the glowing eyes that threatened her. And, in that moment, she threw tip her head rebellious, and sighed, and smiled,--a woman's smile, proud, defiant; and, uttering no word, gave Sir Mortimer the rose. Then, even as she did so, sprang to her feet, and laughed, a little tremulously, and bade Sir Mortimer Go! Go! Go! Wherefore, Sir Mortimer, seeing her thus, and being wise in the ways of women, pressed the flower to his lips, and so turned and strode off down the path. And when his step had died away Cleone sank down in the chair, and spoke.

"Come out--spy!" she called. And Barnabas stepped out from the leaves. Then, because she knew what look was in his eyes, she kept her own averted; and because she was a woman young, and very proud, she lashed him with her tongue.

"So much for your watching and listening!" said she.

"But--he has your rose!" said Barnabas.

"And what of that?"

"And he has your promise!"

"I never spoke--"

"But the rose did!"

"The rose will fade and wither--"

"But it bears your promise--"

"I gave no promise, and--and--oh, why did you--look at me!"

"Look at you?"

"Why did you frown at me?"

"Why did you give him the rose?"

"Because it was so my pleasure. Why did you frown at me with eyes like--like a devil's?"

"I wanted to kill him--then!"

"And now?"

"Now, I wish him well of his bargain, and my thanks are due to him."

"Why?"

"Because, without knowing it, he has taught me what women are."

"What do you mean?"

"I--loved you, Cleone. To me you were one apart--holy, immaculate--"

"Yes?" said Cleone very softly.

"And I find you--"

"Only a--woman, sir,--who will not be watched, and frowned at, and spied upon."

"--a heartless coquette--" said Barnabas.

"--who despises eavesdroppers, and will not be spied upon, or frowned at!"

"I did not spy upon you," cried Barnabas, stung at last, "or if I did, God knows it was well intended."

"How, sir?"

"I remembered the last time we three were together,--in Annersley Wood." Here my lady shivered and hid her face. "And now, you gave him the rose! Do you want the love of this man, Cleone?"

"There is only one man in all the world I despise more, and his name is--Barnabas," said she, without looking up.

"So you--despise me, Cleone?"

"Yes--Barnabas."

"And I came here to tell you that I--loved you--to ask you to be my wife--"

"And looked at me with Devil's eyes--"

"Because you were mine, and because he--"

"Yours, Barnabas? I never said so."

"Because I loved you--worshipped you, and because--"

"Because you were--jealous, Barnabas!"

"Because I would have my wife immaculate--"

"But I am not your--wife."

"No," said Barnabas, frowning, "she must be immaculate."

Now when he said this he heard her draw a long, quivering sigh, and with the sigh she rose to her feet and faced him, and her eyes were wide and very bright, and the fan she held snapped suddenly across in her white fingers.

"Sir," she said, very softly, "I whipped you once, if I had a whip now, your cheek should burn again."

"But I should not ask you to kiss it,--this time!" said Barnabas.

"Yes," she said, in the same soft voice, "I despise you--for a creeping spy, a fool, a coward--a maligner of women. Oh, go away,--pray go. Leave me, lest I stifle."

But now, seeing the flaming scorn of him in her eyes, in the passionate quiver of her hands, he grew afraid, cowed by her very womanhood.

"Indeed," he stammered, "you are unjust. I--I did not mean--"

"Go!" said she, cold as ice, "get back over the wall. Oh! I saw you climb over like a--thief! Go away, before I call for help--before I call the grooms and stable-boys to whip you out into the road where you belong--go, I say!" And frowning now, she stamped her foot, and pointed to the wall. Then Barnabas laughed softty, savagely, and, reaching out, caught her up in his long arms and crushed her to him.

"Call if you will, Cleone," said he, "but listen first! I said to you that my wife should come to me immaculate--fortune's spoiled darling though she be,--petted, wooed, pampered though she is,--and, by God, so you shall! For I love you, Cleone, and if I live, I will some day call you 'wife,'--in spite of all your lovers, and all the roses that ever bloomed. Now, Cleone,--call them if you will." So saying he set her down and freed her from his embrace. But my lady, leaning breathless in the doorway, only looked at him once,--frowning a little, panting a little,--a long wondering look beneath her lashes, and, turning, was gone among the leaves. Then Barnabas picked up the broken fan, very tenderly, and put it into

his bosom, and so sank down into the chair, his chin propped upon his fist, frowning blackly at the glory of the afternoon.

CHAPTER XXXIX

IN WHICH THE PATIENT READER IS INTRODUCED TO AN ALMOST HUMAN DUCHESS

"Very dramatic, sir! Though, indeed, you missed an opportunity, and--gracious heaven, how he frowns!" A woman's voice, sharp, high-pitched, imperious.

Barnabas started, and glancing up, beheld an ancient lady, very small and very upright; her cheeks were suspiciously pink, her curls suspiciously dark and luxuriant, but her eyes were wonderfully young and handsome; one slender mittened hand rested upon the ivory head of a stick, and in the other she carried a small fan.

"Now, he stares!" she exclaimed, as she met his look. "Lud, how he stares! As if I were a ghost, or a goblin, instead of only an old woman with raddled cheeks and a wig. Oh, yes! I wear a wig, sir, and very hideous I look without it! But even I was young once upon a time--many, many years ago, and quite as beautiful as She, indeed, rather more so, I think,--and I should have treated you exactly as She did--only more so,--I mean Cleone. Your blonde women are either too cold or overpassionate,--I know, for my hair was as yellow as Cleone's, hundreds of years ago, and I think, more abundant. To-day, being only a dyed brunette, I am neither too cold nor over-passionate, and I tell you, sir, you deserved it, every word."

Here Barnabas rose, and, finding nothing to say, bowed.

"But," continued the ancient lady, sweeping him with a quick, approving gaze, "I like your face, and y-e-s, you have a very good leg. You also possess a tongue, perhaps, and can speak?"

"Given the occasion, madam," said Barnabas, smiling.

"Ha, sir! do I talk so much then? Well, perhaps I do, for when a woman ceases to talk she's dead, and I'm very much alive indeed. So you may give me your arm, sir, and listen to me, and drop an occasional remark while I take breath,--your arm, sir!" And here the small, ancient lady held out a small, imperious hand, while her handsome young eyes smiled up into his.

"Madam, you honor me!"

"But I am only an old woman,--with a wig!"

"Age is always honorable, madam."

"Now that is very prettily said, indeed you improve, sir. Do you know who I am?"

"No, madam; but I can guess."

"Ah, well,--you shall talk to me. Now, sir,--begin. Talk to me of Cleone."

"Madam--I had rather not."

"Eh, sir,--you won't?"

"No, madam."

"Why, then, I will!" Here the ancient lady glanced up at Barnabas with a malicious little smile. "Let me see, now--what were her words? 'Spy,' I think. Ah, yes--'a creeping spy,' 'a fool' and 'a coward.' Really, I don't think I could have bettered that--even in my best days,--especially the 'creeping spy.'"

"Madam," said Barnabas in frowning surprise, "you were listening?"

"At the back of the arbor," she nodded, "with my ear to the panelling, --I am sometimes a little deaf, you see."

"You mean that you were--actually prying--?"

"And I enjoyed it all very much, especially your 'immaculate' speech, which was very heroic, but perfectly ridiculous, of course. Indeed, you are a dreadfully young, young sir, I fear. In future, I warn you not to tell a woman, too often, how much you respect her, or she'll begin to think you don't love her at all. To be over-respectful doesn't sit well on a lover, and 'tis most unfair and very trying to the lady, poor soul!"

"To hearken to a private conversation doesn't sit well on a lady, madam, or an honorable woman."

"No, indeed, young sir. But then, you see, I'm neither. I'm only a Duchess, and a very old one at that, and I think I told you I wore a wig? But 'all the world loves a lover,' and so do I. As soon as ever I saw you I knew you for a lover of the 'everything-or-nothing' type. Oh, yes, all lovers are of different types, sir, and I think I know 'em all. You see, when I was young and beautiful--ages ago--lovers were a hobby of mine,--I studied them, sir. And, of 'em all, I preferred the 'everything-or-nothing, fire-and-ice, kiss-me-or-kill-me' type. That was why I followed you, that was why I watched and listened, and, I grieve to say, I didn't find you as deliciously brutal as I had hoped."

"Brutal, madam? Indeed, I--"

"Of course! When you snatched her up in your arms,--and I'll admit you did it very well,--when you had her there, you should have covered her with burning kisses, and with an oath after each. Girls like Cleone need a little brutality and--Ah! there's the Countess! And smiling at me quite lovingly, I declare! Now I wonder what rod she has in pickle for me? Dear me, sir, how dusty your coat is! And spurred boots and buckskins are scarcely the mode for a garden fete. Still, they're distinctive, and show off your leg to advantage, better than those abominable Cossack things,--and I doat upon a good leg--" But here she broke off and turned to greet the Countess,--a large, imposing, bony lady in a turban, with the eye and the beak of a hawk.

"My dearest Letitia!"

"My dear Duchess,--my darling Fanny, you 're younger than ever, positively you are,--I'd never have believed it!" cried the Countess, more hawk-like than ever. "I heard you were failing fast, but now I look at you, dearest Fanny, I vow you don't look a day older than seventy."

"And I'm seventy-one, alas!" sighed the Duchess, her eyes young with mischief. "And you, my sweetest creature,--how well you look! Who would ever imagine that we were at school together, Letitia!"

"But indeed I was--quite an infant, Fanny."

"Quite, my love, and used to do my sums for me. But let me present to you a young friend of mine, Mr.--Mr.--dear, dear! I quite forget--my memory is going, you see, Letitia! Mr.--"

"Beverley, madam," said Barnabas.

"Thank you,--Beverley, of course! Mr. Beverley--the Countess of Orme."

Hereupon Barnabas bowed low before the haughty stare of the keen, hawk-like eyes.

"And now, my sweet Letty," continued the Duchess, "you are always so delightfully gossipy--have you any news,--any stories to laugh over?"

"No, dear Fanny, neither the one nor the other--only--"

"'Only,' my love?"

"Only--but you've heard it already, of course,--you would be the very first to know of it!"

"Letitia, my dear--I always hated conundrums, you'll remember."

"I mean, every one is talking of it, already."

"Heigho! How warm the sun is!"

"Of course it may be only gossip, but they do say Cleone Meredith has refused the hand of your grandnephew."

"Jerningham, oh yes," added the Duchess, "on the whole, it's just as well."

"But I thought--" the hawk-eyes were very piercing indeed. "I feared it would be quite a blow to you--"

The Duchess shook her head, with a little ripple of laughter.

"I had formed other plans for him weeks ago,--they were quite unsuited to each other, my love."

"I'm delighted you take it so well, my own Fanny," said the Countess, looking the reverse. "We leave almost immediately,--but when you pass through Sevenoaks, you must positively stay with me for a day

or two. Goodby, my sweet Fanny!" So the two ancient ladies gravely curtsied to each other, pecked each other on either cheek, and, with a bow to Barnabas, the Countess swept away with an imposing rustle of her voluminous skirts.

"Cat!" exclaimed the Duchess, shaking her fan at the receding figure; "the creature hates me fervently, and consequently, kisses me--on both cheeks. Oh, yes, indeed, sir, she detests me--and quite naturally. You see, we were girls together,--she's six months my junior, and has never let me forget it,--and the Duke--God rest him--admired us both, and, well,--I married him. And so Cleone has actually refused poor Jerningham,--the yellow-maned minx!"

"Why, then--you didn't know of it?" inquired Barnabas.

"Oh, Innocent! of course I didn't. I'm not omniscient, and I only ordered him to propose an hour ago. The golden hussy! the proud jade! Refuse my grand-nephew indeed! Well, there's one of your rivals disposed of, it seems,--count that to your advantage, sir!"

"But," said Barnabas, frowning and shaking his head, "Sir Mortimer Carnaby has her promise!"

"Fiddlesticks!"

"She gave him the rose!" said Barnabas, between set teeth. The Duchess tittered.

"Dear heart! how tragic you are!" she sighed. "Suppose she did,--what then? And besides--hum! This time it is young D'Arcy, it seems,--callow, pink, and quite harmless."

"Madam?" said Barnabas, wondering.

"Over there--behind the marble faun,--quite harmless, and very pink, you'll notice. I mean young D'Arcy--not the faun. Clever minx! Now I mean Cleone, of course--there she is!" Following the direction of the Duchess's pointing fan, Barnabas saw Cleone, sure enough. Her eyes were drooped demurely before the ardent gaze of the handsome, pink-cheeked young soldier who stood before her, and in her white fingers she held--a single red rose. Now, all at once, (and as though utterly unconscious of the burning, watchful eyes of Barnabas) she lifted the rose to her lips, and, smiling, gave it into the young soldier's eager hand. Then they strolled away, his epaulette very near the gleaming curls at her temple.

"Lud, young sir!" exclaimed the Duchess, catching Barnabas by the coat, "how dreadfully sudden you are in your movements--"

"Madam, pray loose me!"

"Why?"

"I'm going--I cannot bear--any more!"

"You mean--?"

"I mean that--she has--"

"A very remarkable head, she is as resourceful as I was--almost."

"Resourceful!" exclaimed Barnabas, "she is--"

"An extremely clever girl--"

"Madam, pray let me go."

"No, sir! my finger is twisted in your buttonhole,--if you pull yourself away I expect you'll break it, so pray don't pull; naturally, I detest pain. And I have much to talk about."

"As you will, madam," said Barnabas, frowning.

"First, tell me--you're quite handsome when you frown,--first, sir, why weren't you formally presented to me with the other guests?"

"Because I'm not a guest, madam."

"Sir--explain yourself."

"I mean that I came--over the wall, madam."

"The wall! Climbed over?"

"Yes, madam!"

"Dear heaven! The monstrous audacity of the man! You came to see Cleone, of course?"

"Yes, madam."

"Ah, very right,--very proper! I remember I had a lover--in the remote ages, of course,--who used to climb--ah, well,--no matter! Though his wall was much higher than yours yonder." Here the Duchess sighed tenderly. "Well, you came to see Cleone, you found her,--and nicely you behaved to each other when you met! Youth is always so dreadfully tragic! But then what would love be without a little tragedy? And oh--dear heaven!--how you must adore each other! Oh, Youth! Youth!--and there's Sir George Annersley--!"

"Then, madam, you must excuse me!" said Barnabas, glancing furtively from the approaching figures to the adjacent wall.

"Oh dear, no. Sir George is with Jerningharn and Major Piper, a heavy dragoon--the heaviest in all the world, I'm sure. You must meet them."

"No, indeed--I--"

"Sir," said the Duchess, buttonholing him again, "I insist! Oh, Sir George--gentlemen!" she called. Hereupon three lounging figures turned simultaneously, and came hurrying towards them.

"Why, Duchess!" exclaimed Sir George, a large, mottled gentleman in an uncomfortable cravat, "we have all been wondering what had become of your Grace, and--" Here Sir George's sharp eye became fixed upon Barnabas, upon his spurred boots, his buckskins, his dusty coat; and Sir George's mouth opened, and he gave a tug at his cravat.

"Deuce take me--it's Beverley!" exclaimed the Marquis, and held out his hand.

"What--you know each other?" the Duchess inquired.

"Mr. Beverley is riding in the steeplechase on the fifteenth," the Marquis answered. Hereupon Sir George stared harder than ever, and gave another tug at his high cravat, while Major Piper, who had been looking very hard at nothing in particular, glanced at Barnabas with a gleam of interest and said "Haw!"

As for the Duchess, she clapped her hands.

"And he never told me a word of it!" she exclaimed. "Of course all my money is on Jerningham,--though 'Moonraker' carries the odds, but I must have a hundred or two on Mr. Beverley for--friendship's sake."

"Friendship!" exclaimed the Marquis, "oh, begad!" Here he took out his snuff-box, tapped it, and put it in his pocket again.

"Yes, gentlemen," smiled the Duchess, "this is a friend of mine who--dropped in upon me, as it were, quite unexpectedly--over the wall, in fact."

"Wall!" exclaimed Sir George.

"The deuce you did, Beverley!" said the Marquis.

As for Major Piper, he hitched his dolman round, and merely said:

"Haw!"

"Yes," said Barnabas, glancing from one to the other, "I am a trespasser here, and, Sir George, I fear I damaged some of your flowers!"

"Flowers!" repeated Sir George, staring from Barnabas to the Duchess and back again, "Oh!"

"And now--pray let me introduce you," said the Duchess. "My friend Mr. Beverley--Sir George Annersley. Mr. Beverley--Major Piper."

"A friend of her Grace is always welcome here, sir," said Sir George, extending a mottled hand.

"Delighted!" smiled the Major, saluting him in turn. "Haw!"

"But what in the world brings you here, Beverley?" inquired the Marquis.

"I do," returned his great-aunt. "Many a man has climbed a wall on my account before to-day, Marquis, and remember I'm only just--seventy-one, and growing younger every hour,--now am I not, Major?"

"Haw!--Precisely! Not a doubt, y' Grace. Soul and honor! Haw!"

"Marquis--your arm, Mr. Beverley--yours! Now, Sir George, show us

the way to the marquee; I'm dying for a dish of tea, I vow I am!"

Thus, beneath the protecting wing of a Duchess was Barnabas given his first taste of Quality and Blood. Which last, though blue beyond all shadow of doubt, yet manifested itself in divers quite ordinary ways as,--in complexions of cream and roses; in skins sallow and wrinkled; in noses haughtily Roman or patricianly Greek, in noses mottled and unclassically uplifted; in black hair, white hair, yellow, brown, and red hair;--such combinations as he had seen many and many a time on village greens, and at country wakes and fairs. Yes, all was the same, and yet--how vastly different! For here voices were softly modulated, arms and hands gracefully borne, heads carried high, movement itself an artful science. Here eyes were raised or lowered with studied effect; beautiful shoulders, gracefully shrugged, became dimpled and irresistible; faces with perfect profiles were always--in profile. Here, indeed, Age and Homeliness went clothed in magnificence, and Youth and Beauty walked hand in hand with Elegance; while everywhere was a graceful ease that had been learned and studied with the Catechism. Barnabas was in a world of silks and satins and glittering gems, of broadcloth and fine linen, where such things are paramount and must be lived up to; a world where the friendship of a Duchess may transform a nobody into a SOMEBODY, to be bowed to by the most elaborate shirtfronts, curtsied to by the haughtiest of turbans, and found worthy of the homage of bewitching eyes, seductive dimples, and entrancing profiles.

In a word, Barnabas had attained--even unto the World of Fashion.

CHAPTER XL

WHICH RELATES SUNDRY HAPPENINGS AT THE GARDEN FETE

"Gad, Beverley! how the deuce did y' do it?"

"Do what, Marquis?"

"Charm the Serpent! Tame the Dragon!"

"Dragon?"

"Make such a conquest of her Graceless Grace of Camberhurst, my great-aunt? I didn't know you were even acquainted,--how long have you known her?"

"About an hour," said Barnabas.

"Eh--an hour? But, my dear fellow, you came to see her--over the wall, you know,--she said so, and--"

"She said so, yes, Marquis, but--"

"But? Oh, I see! Ah, to be sure! She is my great-aunt, of course, and my great-aunt, Beverley, generally thinks, and does, and says--exactly what she pleases. Begad! you never can tell what she' 11 be up to next,--consequently every one is afraid of her, even

those high goddesses of the beau monde, those exclusive grandes dames, my Ladies Castlereagh, Jersey, Cowper and the rest of 'em--they're all afraid of my small great-aunt, and no wonder! You see, she's old--older than she looks, and--with a perfectly diabolical memory! She knows not only all their own peccadillos, but the sins of their great-grandmothers as well. She fears nothing on the earth, or under the earth, and respects no one--not even me. Only about half an hour ago she informed me that I was a--well, she told me precisely what I was,--and she can be painfully blunt, Beverley,--just because Cleone happens to have refused me again."

"Again?" said Barnabas inquiringly.

"Oh, yes! She does it regularly. Begad! she's refused me so often that it's grown into a kind of formula with us now. I say, 'Cleone, do!' and she answers, 'Bob, don't!' But even that's something,--lots of 'em haven't got so far as that with her."

"Sir Mortimer Carnaby, for instance!" said Barnabas, biting his lip.

"Hum!" said the Marquis dubiously, deftly re-settling his cravat, "and what of--yourself, Beverley?"

"I have asked her--only twice, I think."

"Ah, and she--refused you?"

"No," sighed Barnabas, "she told me she--despised me."

"Did she so? Give me your hand--I didn't think you were so strong in the running. With Cleone's sort there's always hope so long as she isn't sweet and graciously indifferent."

"Pray," said Barnabas suddenly, "pray where did you get that rose, Marquis?"

"This? Oh, she gave it to me."

"Cleone?"

"Of course."

"But--I thought she'd refused you?"

"Oh, yes--so she did; but that's just like Cleone, frowning one moment, smiling the next--April, you know."

"And did she--kiss it first?"

"Kiss it? Why--deuce take me, now I come to think of it,--so she did,--at least--What now, Beverley?"

"I'm--going!" said Barnabas.

"Going? Where?"

"Back--over the wall!"

"Eh!--run away, is it?"

"As far," said Barnabas, scowling, "as far as possible. Good-by, Marquis!" And so he turned and strode away, while the Marquis stared after him, open-mouthed. But as he went, Barnabas heard a voice calling his name, and looking round, beheld Captain Chumly coming towards him. A gallant figure he made (despite grizzled hair and empty sleeve), in all the bravery of his white silk stockings, and famous Trafalgar coat, which, though a little tarnished as to epaulettes and facings, nevertheless bore witness to the Bo'sun's diligent care; he was, indeed, from the crown of his cocked hat down to his broad, silver shoe-buckles, the very pattern of what a post-captain of Lord Nelson should be.

"Eh, sir!" he exclaimed, with his hand outstretched in greeting, "are ye blind, I say are ye blind and deaf? Didn't you hear her Grace hailing you? Didn't ye see me signal you to 'bring to'?"

"No, sir," answered Barnabas, grasping the proffered hand.

"Oho!" said the Captain, surveying Barnabas from head to foot, "so you've got 'em on, I see, and vastly different you look in your fine feathers. But you can sink me,--I say you can scuttle and sink me if I don't prefer you in your homespun! You'll be spelling your name with as many unnecessary letters, and twirls, and flourishes as you can clap in, nowadays, I'll warrant."

"Jack Chumly, don't bully the boy!" said a voice near by; and looking thitherward, Barnabas beheld the Duchess seated at a small table beneath a shady tree, and further screened by a tall hedge; a secluded corner, far removed from the throng, albeit a most excellent place for purposes of observation, commanding as it did a wide view of lawns and terraces. "As for you, Mr. Beverley," continued the Duchess, with her most imperious air, "you may bring a seat--here, beside me,--and help the Captain to amuse me."

"Madam," said Barnabas, his bow very solemn and very deep, "I am about to leave, and--with your permission--I--"

"You have my permission to--sit here beside me, sir. So! A dish of tea? No? Ah, well--we were just talking of you; the Captain was describing how he first met you--"

"Bowing to a gate-post, mam,--on my word as a sailor and a Christian, it was a gate-post,--I say, an accurs--a confoundedly rotten old stick of a gate-post."

"I remember," sighed Barnabas.

"And to-day, sir," continued the Captain, "to-day you must come clambering over a gentleman's garden wall to bow and scrape to a--"

"Don't dare to say--another stick, Jack Chumly!" cried the Duchess.

"I repeat, sir, you must come trespassing here, to bow--I say bah! and scrape--"

"I say tush!" interpolated the Duchess demurely.

"To an old--"

"Painted!" suggested the Duchess.

"Hum!" said the Captain, a little hipped, "I say--ha!--lady, sir--"

"With a wig!" added the Duchess.

"And with a young and handsome,--I say a handsome and roguish pair of eyes, sir, that need no artificial aids, mam, nor ever will!"

"Three!" cried the Duchess, clapping her hands. "Oh, Jack! Jack Chumly! you, like myself, improve with age! As a midshipman you were too callow, as a lieutenant much too old and serious, but now that you are a battered and wrinkled young captain, you can pay as pretty a compliment as any other gallant youth. Actually three in one hour, Mr. Beverley."

"Compliments, mam!" snorted the Captain, with an angry flap of his empty sleeve, "Compliments, I scorn 'em! I say pish, mam,--I say bah! I speak only the truth, mam, as well you know."

"Four!" cried the Duchess, with a gurgle of youthful laughter. "Oh, Jack! Jack! I protest, as you sit there you are growing more youthful every minute."

"Gad so, mam! then I'll go before I become a mewling infant--I say a puling brat, mam."

"Stay a moment, Jack. I want you to explain your wishes to Mr. Beverley in regard to Cleone's future."

"Certainly, your Grace--I say by all means, mam."

"Very well, then I'll begin. Listen--both of you. Captain Chumly, being a bachelor and consequently an authority on marriage, has, very properly, chosen whom his ward must marry; he has quite settled and arranged it all, haven't you, Jack?"

"Quite, mam, quite."

"Thus, Cleone is saved all the bother and worry of choosing for herself, you see, Mr. Beverley, for the Captain's choice is fixed,-- isn't it, Jack?"

"As a rock, mam--I say as an accurs--ha! an adamantine crag, mam. My ward shall marry my nephew, Viscount Devenham, I am determined on it--"

"Consequently, Mr. Beverley, Cleone will, of course, marry--whomsoever she pleases!"

"Eh, mam? I say, what?--I say--"

"Like the feminine creature she is, Mr. Beverley!"

"Now by Og,--I say by Og and Gog, mam! She is my ward, and so long as I am her guardian she shall obey--"

"I say boh! Jack Chumly,--I say bah!" mocked the Duchess, nodding

her head at him. "Cleone is much too clever for you--or any other man, and there is only one woman in this big world who is a match for her, and that woman is--me. I've watched her growing up--day by day--year after year into--just what I was--ages ago,--and to-day she is--almost as beautiful,--and--very nearly as clever!"

"Clever, mam? So she is, but I'm her guardian and--she loves me--I think, and--"

"Of course she loves you, Jack, and winds you round her finger whenever she chooses--"

"Finger, mam! finger indeed! No, mam, I can be firm with her."

"As a candle before the fire, Jack. She can bend you to all the points of your compass. Come now, she brought you here this afternoon against your will,--now didn't she?"

"Ah!--hum!" said the Captain, scratching his chin.

"And coaxed you into your famous Trafalgar uniform, now didn't she?"

"Why as to that, mam, I say--"

"And petted you into staying here much longer than you intended, now didn't she?"

"Which reminds me that it grows late, mam," said the Captain, taking out his watch and frowning at it. "I must find my ward. I say I will bring Cleone to make you her adieux." So saying, he bowed and strode away across the lawn.

"Poor Jack," smiled the Duchess, "he is such a dear, good, obedient child, and he doesn't know it. And so your name is Beverley, hum! Of the Beverleys of Ashleydown? Yet, no,--that branch is extinct, I know. Pray what branch are you? Why, here comes Sir Mortimer Carnaby,--heavens, how handsome he is! And you thrashed him, I think? Oh, I know all about it, sir, and I know--why!"

"Then," said Barnabas, somewhat taken aback, "you'll know he deserved it, madam."

"Mm! Have you met him since?"

"No, indeed, nor have I any desire to!"

"Oh, but you must," said the Duchess, and catching Sir Mortimer's gaze, she smiled and beckoned him, and next moment he was bowing before her. "My dear Sir Mortimer," said she, "I don't think you are acquainted with my friend, Mr. Beverley?"

"No," answered Sir Mortimer with a perfunctory glance at Barnabas.

"Ah! I thought not. Mr. Beverley--Sir Mortimer Carnaby."

"Honored, sir," said Sir Mortimer, as they bowed.

"Mr. Beverley is, I believe, an opponent of yours, Sir Mortimer?" pursued the Duchess, with her placid smile.

"An opponent! indeed, your Grace?" said he, favoring Barnabas with another careless glance.

"I mean--in the race, of course," smiled the Duchess. "But oh, happy man! So you have been blessed also?"

"How, Duchess?"

"I see you wear Cleone's favor,--you've been admitted to the Order of the Rose, like all the others." And the Duchess tittered.

"Others, your Grace! What others?"

"Oh, sir, their name is Legion. There's Jerningham, and young Denton, and Snelgrove, and Ensign D'Arcy, and hosts beside. Lud, Sir Mortimer, where are your eyes? Look there! and there! and there again!" And, with little darting movements of her fan, she indicated certain young gentlemen, who strolled to and fro upon the lawn; now, in the lapel of each of their coats was a single, red rose. "There's safety in numbers, and Cleone was always cautious!" said the Duchess, and tittered again.

Sir Mortimer glanced from those blooms to the flower in his own coat, and his cheek grew darkly red, and his mouth took on a cruel look.

"Ah, Duchess," he smiled, "it seems our fair Cleone has an original idea of humor,--very quaint, upon my soul!" And so he laughed, and bowing, turned away.

"Now--watch!" said the Duchess, "there!" As she spoke, Sir Mortimer paused, and with a sudden fierce gesture tore the rose from his coat and tossed it away. "Now really," said the Duchess, leaning back and fanning herself placidly, "I think that was vastly clever of me; you should be grateful, sir, and so should Cleone--hush!--here she comes, at last."

"Where?" inquired Barnabas, glancing up hastily.

"Ssh! behind us--on the other side of the hedge--clever minx!"

"Why then--"

"Sit still, sir--hush, I say!"

"So that is the reason," said Cleone's clear voice, speaking within a yard of them, "that is why you dislike Mr. Beverley?"

"Yes, and because of his presumption!" said a second voice, at the sound of which Barnabas flushed and started angrily, whereupon the Duchess instantly hooked him by the buttonhole again.

"His presumption in what, Mr. Chichester?"

"In his determined pursuit of you."

"Is he in pursuit of me?"

"Cleone--you know he is!"

"But how do you happen to know?"

"From his persecution of poor Ronald, for one thing."

"Persecution, sir?"

"It amounted to that. He found his way to Ronald's wretched lodging, and tempted the poor fellow with his gold,--indeed almost commanded Ronald to allow him to pay off his debts--"

"But Ronald refused, of course?" said Cleone quickly.

"Of course! I was there, you see, and this Beverley is a stranger!"

"A stranger--yes."

"And yet, Cleone, when your unfortunate brother refused his money,--this utter stranger, this Good Samaritan,--actually went behind Ronald's back and offered to buy up his debts! Such a thing might be done by father for son, or brother for brother, but why should any man do so much for an utter stranger--?"

"Either because he is very base, or very--noble!" said Cleone.

"Noble! I tell you such a thing is quite impossible--unheard of! No man would part with a fortune to benefit a stranger--unless he had a powerful motive!"

"Well?" said Cleone softly.

"Well, Cleone, I happen to know that motive is--yourself!" Here the Duchess, alert as usual, caught Barnabas by the cravat, and only just in time.

"Sit still--hush!" she whispered, glancing up into his distorted face, for Mr. Chichester was going on in his soft, deliberate voice:

"Oh, it is all very simple, Cleone, and very clumsy,--thus, see you. In the guise of Good Samaritan this stranger buys the debts of the brother, trusting to the gratitude of the sister. He knows your pride, Cleone, so he would buy your brother and put you under lasting obligation to himself. The scheme is a little coarse, and very clumsy,--but then, he is young."

"And you say--he tried to pay these debts--without Ronald's knowledge? Are you sure--quite sure?"

"Quite! And I know, also, that when Ronald's creditor refused, he actually offered to double--to treble the sum! But, indeed, you would be cheap at sixty thousand pounds, Cleone!"

"Oh--hateful!" she cried.

"Crude, yes, and very coarse, but, as I said before, he is young--what, are you going?"

"Yes--no. Pray find my guardian and bring him to me."

"First, tell me I may see you again, Cleone, before I leave for London?"

"Yes," said Cleone, after a momentary hesitation.

Thereafter came the tread of Mr. Chichester's feet upon the gravel, soft and deliberate, like his voice.

Then Barnabas sighed, a long, bitter sigh, and looking up--saw Cleone standing before him.

"Ah, dear Godmother!" said she lightly, "I hope your Grace was able to hear well?"

"Perfectly, my dear, thank you--every word," nodded the Duchess, "though twice Mr. Beverley nearly spoilt it all. I had to hold him dreadfully tight,--see how I've crumpled his beautiful cravat. Dear me, how impetuous you are, sir! As for you, Cleone, sit down, my dear,--that's it!--positively I'm proud of you,--kiss me,--I mean about the roses. It was vastly clever! You are myself over again."

"Your Grace honors me!" said Cleone, her eyes demure, but with a dimple at the corner of her red mouth.

"And I congratulate you. I was a great success--in my day. Ah me! I remember seeing you--an hour after you were born. You were very pink, Cleone, and as bald as--as I am, without my wig. No--pray sit still,--Mr. Beverley isn't looking at you, and he was just as bald, once, I expect--and will be again, I hope. Even at that early age you pouted at me, Cleone, and I liked you for it. You are pouting now, Miss! To-day Mr. Beverley frowns at me, and I like him for it,--besides, he's very handsome when he frowns, don't you think, Cleone?"

"Madam--" began Barnabas, with an angry look.

"Ah! now you're going to quarrel with me,--well there's the Major,--I shall go. If you must quarrel with some one,--try Cleone, she's young, and, I think, a match for you. Oh, Major! Major Piper, pray lend your arm and protection to a poor, old, defenceless woman." So saying, the Duchess rose, and the Major, bowing gallantly gave her the limb she demanded, and went off with her, 'haw'-ing in his best and most ponderous manner.

Barnabas sat, chin in hand, staring at the ground, half expecting that Cleone would rise and leave him. But no! My lady sat leaning back in her chair, her head carelessly averted, but watching him from the corners of her eyes. A sly look it was, a searching, critical look, that took close heed to all things, as--the fit and excellence of his clothes; the unconscious grace of his attitude; the hair that curled so crisp and dark at his temples; the woeful droop of his lips;--a long, inquisitive look, a look wholly feminine. Yes, he was certainly handsome, handsomer even than she had thought. And finding him so, she frowned, and, frowning, spoke:

"So you meant to buy me, sir--as you would a horse or dog?"

"No," said Barnabas, without looking up, and speaking almost humbly.

"It would have been the same thing, sir," she continued, a little more haughtily in consequence. "You would have put upon me an obligation I could never, never have hoped to repay?"

"Yes, I see my error now," said Barnabas, his head sinking lower. "I acted for the best, but I am a fool, and a clumsy one it seems. I meant only to serve you, to fulfil the mission you gave me, and I blundered--because I am--very ignorant. If you can forgive me, do so."

Now this humility was new in him, and because of this, and because she was a woman, she became straightway more exacting, and questioned him again.

"But why--why did you do it?"

"You asked me to save your brother, and I could see no other way--"

"How so? Please explain."

"I meant to free him from the debt which is crushing him down and unmanning him."

"But--oh, don't you see--he would still be in debt--to you?"

"I had forgotten that!" sighed Barnabas.

"Forgotten it?" she repeated.

"Quite!"

Surely no man could lie, whose eyes were so truthful and steadfast.

"And so you went and offered to--buy up his debts?"

"Yes."

"For three times the proper sum?"

"I would have paid whatever was asked."

"Why?"

"Because I promised you to help him," answered Barnabas, staring at the ground again.

"You must be--very rich?" said Cleone, stealing another look at him.

"I am."

"And--supposing you had taken over the debt, who did you think would ever repay you?"

"It never occurred to me."

"And you would have done--all this for a--stranger?"

"No, but because of the promise I gave."

"To me?"

"Yes,--but, as God sees me, I would have looked for no recompense at your hands."

"Never?"

"Never--unless--"

"Unless, sir?"

"Unless I--I had dreamed it possible that you--could ever have--loved me." Barnabas was actually stammering, and he was looking at her--pleadingly, she knew, but this time my lady kept her face averted, of course. Wherefore Barnabas sighed, and his head drooping, stared at the ground again. And after he had stared thus, for perhaps a full minute, my lady spoke, but with her face still averted.

"The moon is at the full to-night, I think?"

Barnabas (lifting his head suddenly). "Yes."

Cleone (quite aware of his quick glance). "And--how do you like--the Duchess?"

Barnabas (staring at the ground again). "I don't know."

Cleone (with unnecessary emphasis). "Why, she is the dearest, best, cleverest old godmother in all the world, sir!"

Barnabas (humbly). "Yes."

Cleone (with a side glance). "Are you riding back to London to-night?"

Barnabas (nodding drearily). "Yes."

Cleone (watching him more keenly). "It should be glorious to gallop under a--full-orbed moon."

Barnabas (shaking his head mournfully). "London is a great way from--here."

Cleone (beginning to twist a ring on her finger nervously). "Do you remember the madman we met--at Oakshott's Barn?"

Barnabas (sighing). "Yes. I met him in London, lately."

Cleone (clasping her hands together tightly). "Did he talk about--the moon again?"

Barnabas (still sighing, and dense), "No, it was about some shadow, I think."

Cleone (frowning at him a little). "Well--do you remember what he prophesied--about--an 'orbed moon'--and 'Barnaby Bright'?"

Barnabas (glancing up with sudden interest). "Yes,--yes, he said we should meet again at Barnaby Bright--under an orbed moon!"

Cleone (head quite averted now, and speaking over her shoulder). "Do you remember the old finger-post--on the Hawkhurst road?"

Barnabas (leaning towards her eagerly). "Yes--do you mean--Oh, Cleone--?"

Cleone (rising, and very demure). "Here comes the Duchess with my Guardian--hush! At nine o'clock, sir."

CHAPTER XLI

IN WHICH BARNABAS MAKES A SURPRISING DISCOVERY, THAT MAY NOT SURPRISE THE READER IN THE LEAST

Evening, with the promise of a glorious night later on; evening, full of dewy scents, of lengthening shadows, of soft, unaccountable noises, of mystery and magic; and, over all, a rising moon, big and yellow. Thus, as he went, Barnabas kept his eyes bent thitherward, and his step was light and his heart sang within him for gladness, it was in the very air, and in the whole fair world was no space for care or sorrow, for his dreams were to be realized at a certain finger-post on the Hawkhurst road, on the stroke of nine. Therefore, as he strode along, being only human after all, Barnabas fell a whistling to himself under his breath. And his thoughts were all of Cleone, of the subtle charm of her voice, of the dimple in her chin, of her small, proud feet, and her thousand sly bewitchments; but, at the memory of her glowing beauty, his flesh thrilled and his breath caught. Then, upon the quietude rose a voice near by, that spoke from where the shadows lay blackest,--a voice low and muffled, speaking as from the ground:

"How long, oh Lord, how long?"

And, looking within the shadow, Barnabas beheld one who lay face down upon the grass, and coming nearer, soft-footed, he saw the gleam of silver hair, and stooping, touched the prostrate figure. Wherefore the heavy head was raised, and the mournful voice spoke again:

"Is it you, young sir? You will grieve, I think, to learn that my atonement is not complete, my pilgrimage unfinished. I must wander the roads again, preaching Forgiveness, for, sir,--Clemency is gone, my Beatrix is vanished. I am--a day too late! Only one day, sir, and there lies the bitterness."

"Gone!" cried Barnabas, "gone?"

"She left the place yesterday, very early in the morning,--fled away none knows whither,--I am too late! Sir, it is very bitter, but God's will be done!"

Then Barnabas sat down in the shadow, and took the Preacher's hand, seeking to comfort him:

"Sir," said he gently, "tell me of it."

"Verily, for it is soon told, sir. I found the place you mentioned, I found there also, one--old like myself, a sailor by his look, who sat bowed down with some grievous sorrow. And, because of my own joy, I strove to comfort him, and trembling with eagerness, hearkening for the step of her I had sought so long, I told him why I was there. So I learned I was too late after all,--she had gone, and his grief was mine also. He was very kind, he showed me her room, a tiny chamber under the eaves, but wondrous fair and sweet with flowers, and all things orderly, as her dear hands had left them. And so we stayed there a while,--two old men, very silent and full of sorrow. And in a while, though he would have me rest there the night, I left, and walked I cared not whither, and, being weary, lay down here wishful to die. But I may not die until my atonement be complete, and mayhap--some day I shall find her yet. For God is a just God, and His will be done. Amen!"

"But why--why did she go?" cried Barnabas.

"Young sir, the answer is simple, the man Chichester had discovered her refuge. She was afraid!" Here the Apostle of Peace fell silent, and sat with bent head and lips moving as one who prayed. When at last he looked up, a smile was on his lips. "Sir," said he, "it is only the weak who repine, for God is just, and I know I shall find her before I die!" So saying he rose, though like one who is very weary, and stood upon his feet.

"Where are you going?" Barnabas inquired.

"Sir, my trust is in God, I take to the road again."

"To search for her?"

"To preach for her. And when I have preached sufficiently, God will bring me to her. So come, young sir, if you will, let us walk together as far as we may." Thus, together, they left the shadow and went on, side by side, in the soft radiance of the rising moon.

"Sir," said Barnabas after a while, seeing his companion was very silent, and that his thin hands often griped and wrung each other, --that gesture which was more eloquent than words,--"Sir, is there anything I can do to lighten your sorrow?"

"Yes, young sir, heed it well, let it preach to you this great truth, that all the woes arid ills we suffer are but the necessary outcome of our own acts. Oh sir,--young sir, in you and me, as in all other men, there lies a power that may help to make or mar the lives of our fellows, a mighty power, yet little dreamed of, and we call it Influence. For there is no man but he must, of necessity, influence, to a more or less degree, the conduct of those he meets, whether he will or no,--and there lies the terror of it! Thus, to some extent, we become responsible for the actions of our neighbors, even after we are dead, for Influence is immortal. Man is a pebble thrown into the pool of Life,--a splash, a bubble, and he is gone! But--the ripples of Influence he leaves behind go on widening and ever widening until they reach the farthest bank. Oh, had I but dreamed of this in my youth, I might have been--a happy man to-night, and--others also. In helping others we ourselves are blessed, for a noble thought, a kindly word, a generous deed, are never lost; such

things cannot go to waste, they are our monuments after we are dead, and live on forever."

So, talking thus, they reached a gate, and, beyond the gate, a road, white beneath the moon, winding away between shadowy hedges.

"You are for London, I fancy, young sir?"

"Yes."

"Then we part here. But before I bid you God speed, I would know your name; mine is Darville--Ralph Darville."

"And mine, sir, is Barnabas--Beverley."

"Beverley!" said the Preacher, glancing up quickly, "of Ashleydown?"

"Sir," said Barnabas, "surely they are all dead?"

"True, true!" nodded the Preacher, "the name is extinct. That is how the man--Chichester came into the inheritance. I knew the family well, years ago. The brothers died abroad, Robert, the elder, with his regiment in the Peninsula, Francis, in battle at sea, and Joan--like my own poor Beatrix, was unhappy, and ran away, but she was never heard of again."

"And her name was Joan?" said Barnabas slowly, "Joan--Beverley?"

"Yes."

"Sir, Joan Beverley was my mother! I took her name--Beverley--for a reason."

"Your mother! Ah, I understand it now; you are greatly like her, at times, it was the resemblance that puzzled me before. But, sir--if Joan Beverley was your mother, why then--"

"Then, Chichester has no right to the property?"

"No!"

"And--I have?"

"If you can prove your descent."

"Yes," said Barnabas, "but--to whom?"

"You must seek out a Mr. Gregory Dyke, of Lincoln's Inn; he is the lawyer who administered the estate--"

"Stay," said Barnabas, "let me write it down."

"And now, young sir," said the Preacher, when he had answered all the eager questions of Barnabas as fully as he might, "now, young sir, you know I have small cause to love the man--Chichester, but, remember, you are rich already, and if you take this heritage also,--he will be destitute."

"Sir," said Barnabas, frowning, "better one destitute and starving,

than that many should be wretched, surely."

The Preacher sighed and shook his head.

"Young sir, good-by," said he, "I have a feeling we may meet again, but life is very uncertain, therefore I would beg of you to remember this: as you are strong, be gentle; as you are rich, generous; and as you are young, wise. But, above all, be merciful, and strive to forgive wrongs." So they clasped hands, then, sighing, the Preacher turned and plodded on his lonely way. But, long after he had vanished down the moonlit road, Barnabas stood, his fists clenched, his mouth set, until he was roused by a sound near by, a very small sound like the jingle of distant spurs. Therefore, Barnabas lifted his head, and glanced about him, but seeing no one, presently went his way, slow of foot and very thoughtful.

CHAPTER XLII

IN WHICH SHALL BE FOUND FURTHER MENTION OF A FINGER-POST

The hands of Natty Bell's great watch were pointing to the hour of nine, what time Barnabas dismounted at the cross-roads, and tethering Four-legs securely, leaned his back against the ancient finger-post to wait the coming of Cleone.

Now being old, and having looked upon many and divers men (and women) in its day, it is to be supposed that the ancient finger-post took more or less interest in such things as chanced in its immediate vicinity. Thus, it is probable that it rightly defined why this particular long-legged human sighed so often, now with his gaze upon the broad disc of the moon, now upon a certain point of the road ahead, and was not in the least surprised to see Barnabas start forward, bareheaded, to meet her who came swift and light of foot; to see her pause before him, quick-breathing, blushing, sighing, trembling; to see how glance met glance; to see him stoop to kiss the hand she gave him, and all--without a word. Surprised? not a bit of it, for to a really observant finger-post all humans (both he and she) are much alike at such times.

"I began to fear you wouldn't come," said Barnabas, finding voice at last.

"But to-night is--Barnaby Bright, and the prophecy must be fulfilled, sir. And--oh, how wonderful the moon is!" Now, lifting her head to look at it, her hood must needs take occasion to slip back upon her shoulders, as if eager to reveal her loveliness,--the high beauty of her face, the smooth round column of her throat, and the shining wonder of her hair.

"Cleone--how beautiful you are!"

And here ensued another silence while Cleone gazed up at the moon, and Barnabas at Cleone.

But the ancient finger-post (being indeed wonderfully knowing--for a

finger-post) well understood the meaning of such silences, and was quite aware of the tremble of the strong fingers that still held hers, and why, in the shadow of her cloak, her bosom hurried so. Oh! be sure the finger-post knew the meaning of it all, since humans, of every degree, are only men and women after all.

"Cleone, when will you--marry me?"

Now here my lady stole a quick glance at him, and immediately looked up at the moon again, because the eyes that could burn so fiercely could hold such ineffable tenderness also.

"You are very--impetuous, I think," she sighed.

"But I--love you," said Barnabas, "not only for your beauty, but because you are Cleone, and there is no one else in the world like you. But, because I love you so much, it--it is very hard to tell you of it. If I could only put it into fine-sounding phrases--"

"Don't!" said my lady quickly, and laid a slender (though very imperious) finger upon his lips.

"Why?" Barnabas inquired, very properly kissing the finger and holding it there.

"Because I grow tired of fine phrases and empty compliments, and because, sir--"

"Have you forgotten that my name is Barnabas?" he demanded, kissing the captive finger again, whereupon it struggled--though very feebly, to be sure.

"And because, Barnabas, you would be breaking your word."

"How?"

"You must only tell me--that, when 'the sun is shining, and friends are within call,'--have you forgotten your own words so soon?"

Now, as she spoke Barnabas beheld the dimple--that most elusive dimple, that came and went and came again, beside the scarlet lure of her mouth; therefore he drew her nearer until he could look, for a moment, into the depths of her eyes. But here, seeing the glowing intensity of his gaze, becoming aware of the strong, compelling arm about her, feeling the quiver of the hand that held her own, lo! in that instant my lady, with her sly bewitchments, her coquettish airs and graces, was gone, and in her place was the maid--quick-breathing, blushing, trembling, all in a moment.

"Ah, no!" she pleaded, "Barnabas, no!" Then Barnabas sighed, and loosed his clasp--but behold! the dimple was peeping at him again. And in that moment he caught her close, and thus, for the first time, their lips met.

Oh, privileged finger-post to have witnessed that first kiss! To have seen her start away and turn; to have felt her glowing cheek pressed to thy hoary timbers; to have felt the sweet, quick tumult of her bosom! Oh, thrice happy finger-post! To have seen young Barnabas, radiant-faced, and with all heaven in his eyes! Oh, most

fortunate of finger-posts to have seen and felt all this, and to have heard the rapture thrilling in his voice:

"Cleone!"

"Oh!" she whispered, "why--why did you?"

"Because I love you!"

"No other man ever dared to--"

"Heaven be praised!"

"Upon--the mouth!" she added, her face still hidden.

"Then I have set my seal upon it."

"And now,--am I--immaculate?"

"Oh--forgive me!"

"No!"

"Look at me."

"No!"

"Are you angry?"

"Yes, I--think I am, Barnabas,--oh, very!"

"Forgive me!" said Barnabas again.

"First," said my lady, throwing up her head, "am I--heartless and a--coquette?"

"No, indeed, no! Oh, Cleone, is it possible you could learn to--love me, in time?"

"I--I don't know."

"Some day, Cleone?"

"I--I didn't come to answer--idle questions, sir," says my lady, suddenly demure. "It must be nearly half-past nine--I must go. I forgot to tell you--Mr. Chichester is coming to meet me to-night--"

"To meet you? Where?" demanded Barnabas, fierce-eyed all at once.

"Here, Barnabas. But don't look so--so murderous!"

"Chichester--here!"

"At a quarter to ten, Barnabas. That is why I must go at--half-past nine--Barnabas, stop! Oh, Barnabas, you're crushing me! Not again, sir,--I forbid you--please, Barnabas!"

So Barnabas loosed her, albeit regretfully, and stood watching while she dexterously twisted, and smoothed, and patted her shining hair

into some semblance of order; and while so doing, she berated him, on this wise:

"Indeed, sir, but you're horribly strong. And very hasty. And your hands are very large. And I fear you have a dreadful temper. And I know my hair is all anyhow,--isn't it?"

"It is beautiful!" sighed Barnabas.

"Mm! You told me that in Annersley Wood, sir."

"You haven't forgotten, then?"

"Oh, no," answered Cleone, shaking her head, "but I would have you more original, you see,--so many men have told me that. Ah! now you're frowning again, and it's nearly time for me to go, and I haven't had a chance to mention what I came for, which, of course, is all your fault, Barnabas. To-day, I received a letter from Ronald. He writes that he has been ill, but is better. And yet, I fear, he must be very weak still, for oh! it's such poor, shaky writing. Was he very ill when you saw him?"

"No," answered Barnabas.

"Here is the letter,--will you read it? You see, I have no one who will talk to me about poor Ronald, no one seems to have any pity for him,--not even my dear Tyrant."

"But you will always have me, Cleone!"

"Always, Barnabas?"

"Always."

So Barnabas took Ronald Barrymaine's letter, and opening it, saw that it was indeed scrawled in characters so shaky as to be sometimes almost illegible; but, holding it in the full light of the moon, he read as follows:

> DEAREST OF SISTERS,--I was unable to keep the appointment I begged for in my last, owing to a sudden indisposition, and, though better now, I am still ailing. I fear my many misfortunes are rapidly undermining my health, and sometimes I sigh for Death and Oblivion. But, dearest Cleone, I forbid you to grieve for me, I am man enough, I hope, to endure my miseries uncomplainingly, as a man and a gentleman should. Chichester, with his unfailing kindness, has offered me an asylum at his country place near Headcorn, where I hope to regain something of my wonted health. But for Chichester I tremble to think what would have been my fate long before this. At Headcorn I shall at least be nearer you, my best of sisters, and it is my hope that you may be persuaded to steal away now and then, to spend an hour with two lonely bachelors, and cheer a brother's solitude. Ah, Cleone! Chichester's devotion to you is touching, such patient adoration must in time meet with its reward. By your own confession you have nothing against him but the fact that he worships you too ardently, and this, most women would think a virtue. And remember, he is your

luckless brother's only friend. This is the only man who has stood by me in adversity, the only man who can help me to retrieve the past, the only man a truly loving sister should honor with her regard. All women are more or less selfish. Oh, Cleone, be the exception and give my friend the answer he seeks, the answer he has sought of you already, the answer which to your despairing brother means more than you can ever guess, the answer whereby you can fulfil the promise you gave our dying mother to help

Your unfortunate brother,

RONALD BARRYMAINE.

Now, as he finished reading, Barnabas frowned, tore the letter across in sudden fury, and looked up to find Cleone frowning also:

"You have torn my letter!"

"Abominable!" said Barnabas fiercely.

"How dared you?"

"It is the letter of a coward and weakling!"

"My brother, sir!"

"Half-brother."

"And you insult him!"

"He would sell you to a--" Barnabas choked.

"Mr. Chichester is my brother's friend."

"His enemy!"

"And poor Ronald is sick--"

"With brandy!"

"Oh--not that!" she cried sharply, "not that!"

"Didn't you know?"

"I only--dreaded it. His father--died of it. Oh, sir--oh, Barnabas! there is no one else who will help him--save him from--that! You will try, won't you?"

"Yes," said Barnabas, setting his jaw, "no one can help a man against his will, but I'll try. And I ask you to remember that if I succeed or not, I shall never expect any recompense from you, never!"

"Unless, Barnabas--" said Cleone, softly.

"Unless--oh, Cleone, unless you should--some day learn to--love me--just a little, Cleone?"

"Would--just a little, satisfy you?"

"No," said Barnabas, "no, I want you all--all--all. Oh, Cleone, will you marry me?"

"You are very persistent, sir, and I must go."

"Not yet,--pray not yet."

"Please, Barnabas. I would not care to see Mr. Chichester--to-night."

"No," sighed Barnabas, "you must go. But first,--will you--?"

"Not again, Barnabas!" And she gave him her two hands. So he stopped and kissed them instead. Then she turned and left him standing bareheaded under the finger-post. But when she had gone but a little way she paused and spoke to him over her shoulder:

"Will you--write to me--sometimes?"

"Oh--may I?"

"Please, Barnabas,--to tell me of--my brother."

"And when can I see you again?"

"Ah! who can tell?" she answered. And so, smiling a little, blushing a little, she hastened away.

Now, when she was gone, Barnabas stooped, very reverently, and pressed his lips to the ancient finger-post, on that spot where her head had rested, and sighed, and turned towards his great, black horse.

But, even as he did so, he heard again that soft sound that was like the faint jingle of spurs, the leaves of the hedge rustled, and out into the moonlight stepped a tall figure, wild of aspect, bareheaded and bare of foot; one who wore his coat wrong side out, and who, laying his hand upon his bosom, bowed in stately fashion, once to the moon and once to him.

"Oh, Barnaby Bright, Barnaby Bright,
The moon's awake, and shines all night!"

"Do you remember, Barnaby Bright, how I foretold we should meet again--under an orbed moon? Was I not right? She's fair, Barnaby, and passing fair, and very proud,--but all good, beautiful women are proud, and hard in the winning,--oh, I know! Billy Button knows! My buttons jingled, so I turned my coat, though I'm no turn-coat; once a friend, always a friend. So I followed you, Barnaby Bright, I came to warn you of the shadow,--it grows blacker every day,--back there in the great city, waiting for you, Barnaby Bright, to smother you--to quench hope, and light, and life itself. But I shall be there, --and She. Aha! She shall forget all things then--even her pride. Shadows have their uses, Barnaby, even the blackest. I came a long way--oh, I followed you. But poor Billy is never weary, the Wise Ones bear him up in their arms sometimes. So I followed you--and another, also, though he didn't know it. Oho! would you see me conjure you a spirit from the leaves yonder,--ah! but an evil spirit,

this! Shall I? Watch now! See, thus I set my feet! Thus I lift my arms to the moon!"

So saying, the speaker flung up his long arms, and with his gaze fixed upon a certain part of the hedge, lifted his voice and spoke:

"Oho, lurking spirit among the shadows! Ho! come forth, I summon ye. The dew is thick amid the leaves, and dew is an evil thing for purple and fine linen. Oho, stand forth, I bid ye."

There followed a moment's utter silence, then--another rustle amid the leaves, and Mr. Chichester stepped out from the shadows.

"Ah, sir," said Barnabas, consulting his watch, "you are just twenty-three minutes before your time. Nevertheless you are, I think, too late."

Mr. Chichester glanced at Barnabas from head to foot, and, observing his smile, Barnabas clenched his fists.

"Too late, sir?" repeated Mr. Chichester softly, shaking his head, "no,--indeed I think not. Howbeit there are times and occasions when solitude appeals to me; this is one. Pray, therefore, be good enough to--go, and--ah--take your barefooted friend with you."

"First, sir," said Barnabas, bowing with aggressive politeness, "first, I humbly beg leave to speak with you, to--"

"Sir," said Mr. Chichester, gently tapping a nettle out of existence with his cane, "sir, I have no desire for your speeches, they, like yourself, I find a little trying, and vastly uninteresting. I prefer to stay here and meditate a while. I bid you good night, sir, a pleasant ride."

"None the less, sir," said Barnabas, beginning to smile, "I fear I must inflict myself upon you a moment longer, to warn you that I--"

"To warn me? Again? Oh, sir, I grow weary of your warnings, I do indeed! Pray go away and warn somebody else. Pray go, and let me stare upon the moon and twiddle my thumbs until--"

"If it is the Lady Cleone you wait for, she is gone!" said Youth, quick and impetuous.

"Ah!" sighed Mr. Chichester, viewing Barnabas through narrowed eyes, "gone, you say? But then, young sir," here he gently poked a dock-leaf into ruin, "but then, Cleone is one of your tempting, warm, delicious creatures! Cleone is a skilled coquette to whom all men are--men. To-night it is--you, to-morrow--" Mr. Chichester's right hand vanished into his bosom as Barnabas strode forward, but, on the instant, Billy Button was between them.

"Stay, my Lord!" he cried, "look upon this face,--'t is the face of my friend Barnaby Bright, but, my Lord, it is also the face of Joan's son. You've heard tell of Joan, poor Joan who was unhappy, and ran away, and got lost,--you'll mind Joan Beverley?" Now, in the pause that followed, as Mr. Chichester gazed at Barnabas, his narrowed eyes opened, little by little, his compressed lips grew slowly loose, and the tasselled cane slipped from his fingers, and

lay all neglected.

"Sir," said Barnabas at last, "this is what I would have told you. I am the lawful son of Joan Beverley, whose maiden name I took for--a purpose. I have but to prove my claim and I can dispossess you of the inheritance you hold, which is mine by right. But, sir, I have enough for my needs, and I am, therefore, prepared to forego my just claim--on a condition."

Mr. Chichester neither moved nor spoke.

"My condition," Barnabas continued, "is this. That, from this hour, you loose whatever hold you have upon Ronald Barrymaine,--that you have no further communication with him, either by word or letter. Failing this, I institute proceedings at once, and will dispossess you as soon as may be. Sir, you have heard my condition, it is for you to answer."

But, as he ended, Billy Button pointed a shaking finger downwards at the grass midway between them, and spoke:

"Look!" he whispered, "look! Do you not see it--bubbling so dark, --down there among the grass? Ah! it reaches your feet, Barnaby Bright. But--look yonder! it rises to his heart,--look!" and with a sudden, wild gesture, he pointed to Chichester's rigid figure. "Blood!" he cried, "blood!--cover it up! Oh, hide it--hide it!" Then, turning about, he sped away, his muffled buttons jingling faintly as he went, and so was presently gone.

Then Barnabas loosed his horse and mounted, and, with never a glance nor word to the silent figure beneath the finger-post, galloped away London-wards.

Now, had it been possible for a worn and decrepit finger-post to be endued with the faculty of motion (which, in itself, is a ridiculous thought, of course), it is probable that this particular one would have torn itself up bodily, and hastened desperately after Barnabas to point him away--away, east or west, or north or south,--anywhere, so long as it was far enough from him who stood so very still, and who stared with such eyes so long upon the moon, with his right hand still hidden in his breast, while the vivid mark glowed, and glowed upon the pallor of his cheek.

CHAPTER XLIII

IN WHICH BARNABAS MAKES A BET, AND RECEIVES A WARNING

The fifteenth of July was approaching, and the Polite World, the World of Fashion, was stirred to its politest depths. In the clubs speculation was rife, the hourly condition of horses and riders was discussed gravely and at length, while betting-books fluttered everywhere. In crowded drawing-rooms and dainty boudoirs, love and horse-flesh went together, and everywhere was a pleasurable uncertainty, since there were known to be at least four competitors whose chances were practically equal. Therefore the Polite World,

gravely busied with its cards or embroidery, and at the same time striving mentally to compute the exact percentage of these chances, was occasionally known to revoke, or prick its dainty finger.

Even that other and greater world, which is neither fashionable nor polite,--being too busy gaining the wherewithal to exist,--even in fetid lanes and teeming streets, in dingy offices and dingier places still, the same excitement prevailed; busy men forgot their business awhile; crouching clerks straightened their stooping backs, became for the nonce fabulously rich, and airily bet each other vast sums that Carnaby's "Clasher" would do it in a canter, that Viscount Devenham's "Moonraker" would have it in a walk-over, that the Marquis of Jerningham's "Clinker" would leave the field nowhere, and that Captain Slingsby's "Rascal" would run away with it.

Yes, indeed, all the world was agog, rich and poor, high and low. Any barefooted young rascal scampering along the kennel could have named you the four likely winners in a breath, and would willingly have bet his ragged shirt upon his choice, had there been any takers.

Thus, then, the perspicacious waiter at the "George" who, it will be remembered, on his own avowal usually kept his eyes and ears open, and could, therefore, see as far through a brick wall as most, knew at once that the tall young gentleman in the violet coat with silver buttons, the buckled hat and glossy Hessians, whose sprigged waistcoat and tortuous cravat were wonders among their kind, was none other than a certain Mr. Beverley, who had succeeded in entering his horse at the last possible moment, and who, though an outsider with not the remotest chance of winning, was, nevertheless, something of a buck and dandy, the friend of a Marquis and Viscount, and hence worthy of all respect. Therefore the perspicacious waiter at the "George" viewed Barnabas with the eye of reverence, his back was subservient, and his napkin eloquent of eager service, also he bowed as frequently and humbly as such expensive and elegant attire merited; for the waiter at the "George" had as just and reverent a regard for fine clothes as any fine gentleman in the Fashionable World.

"A chair, sir!" Here a flick of the officious napkin. "Now shall we say a chop, sir?" Here a smiling obeisance. "Or shall we make it a steak, sir--cut thick, sir--medium done, and with--"

"No, thank you," said Barnabas, laying aside hat and cane.

"No, sir? Very good, sir! Certainly not, sir! A cut o' b'iled beef might suit, p'raps,--with carrots? or shall we say--"

"Neither, thank you, but you can bring me a bottle of Burgundy and the Gazette."

"Burgundy, sir--Gazette? Certainly, sir--"

"And--I'm expecting a gentleman here of the name of Smivvle--"

"Certainly, sir! Burgundy, Gazette, Gent name of Sniffle, yessir! Hanythink else, sir?"

"Yes, I should like pens and ink and paper."

"Yessir--himmediately, sir." Hereupon, and with many and divers bows and flicks of the napkin, the waiter proceeded to set out the articles in question, which done, he flicked himself out of the room. But he was back again almost immediately, and had uncorked the bottle and filled the glass with a flourish, a dexterity, a promptness, accorded only to garments of the very best and most ultra-fashionable cut. Then, with a bow that took in bestarched cravat, betasselled Hessians, and all garments between, the waiter fluttered away. So, in a while, Barnabas took pen and paper, and began the following letter:

* * * * *

MY DEAR FATHER AND NATTY BELL,--Since writing my last letter to you, I have bought a house near St. James's, and set up an establishment second to none. I will confess that I find myself like to be overawed by my retinue of servants, and their grave and decorous politeness; I also admit that dinner is an ordeal of courses,-- each of which, I find, requires a different method of attack; for indeed, in the Polite World, it seems that eating is cherished as one of its most important functions, hence, dining is an art whereof the proper manipulation of the necessary tools is an exact science. However, by treating my servants with a dignified disregard, and by dint of using my eyes while at table, I have committed no great solecism so far, I trust, and am rapidly gaining in knowledge and confidence.

I am happy to tell you that I have the good fortune to be entered for the Gentlemen's Steeplechase, a most exclusive affair, which is to be brought off at Eltham on the fifteenth of next month. From all accounts it will be a punishing Race, with plenty of rough going,-- plough, fallow, hedge and ditch, walls, stake-fences and water. The walls and water-jump are, I hear, the worst.

Now, although I shall be riding against some of the best horsemen in England, still I venture to think I can win, and this for three reasons. First, because I intend to try to the uttermost--with hand and heel and head. Secondly, because I have bought a horse--such a horse as I have only dreamed of ever possessing,--all fire and courage, with a long powerful action--Oh, Natty Bell, if you could but see him! Rising six, he is, with tushes well through,--even your keen eye could find no flaw in him, though he is, perhaps, a shade long in the cannon. And, thirdly, I am hopeful to win because I was taught horse-craft by that best, wisest of riders, Natty Bell. Very often, I remember, you have told me, Natty Bell, that races are won more by judgment of the rider than by the speed of the horse, nor shall I forget this. Thus then, sure of my horse, sure of myself, and that kind Destiny which has brought me successfully thus far, I shall ride light-hearted and confident.

Yet, my dears, should I win or lose, I would have you remember me always as

Your dutiful, loving

BARNABAS.

* * * * *

Now, as Barnabas laid down his pen, he became aware of voices and loud laughter from the adjacent coffee-room, and was proceeding to fold and seal his letter when he started and raised his head, roused by the mention of his own name spoken in soft, deliberate tones that he instantly recognized:

"Ah, so you have met this Mr. Beverley?"

"Yes," drawled another, deeper voice, "the Duchess introduced him to me. Who the deuce is he, Chichester?"

"My dear Carnaby, pray ask Devenham, or Jerningham, he's their protege--not mine."

"Sir," broke in the Viscount's voice, speaking at its very iciest,-- "Mr. Beverley is--my friend!"

"And mine also, I trust!" thus the Marquis.

"Exactly!" rejoined Mr. Chichester's smooth tones, "and, consequently, despite his mysterious origin, he is permitted to ride in the Steeplechase among the very elite of the sporting world--"

"And why not, b'gad?" Captain Slingsby's voice sounded louder and gruffer than usual, "I'll warrant him a true-blue,--sportsman every inch, and damme! one of the right sort too,--sit a horse with any man,--bird at a fence, and ready to give or take odds on his chances, I'll swear--"

"Now really," Mr. Chichester's tone was softer than ever, "he would seem to be a general favorite here. Still, it would, at least, be--interesting to know exactly who and what he is."

"Yes," Sir Mortimer's voice chimed in, "and only right in justice to ourselves. Seems to me, now I come to think of it, I've seen him somewhere or other, before we were introduced,--be shot if I know where, though."

"In the--country, perhaps?" the Viscount suggested.

"Like as not," returned Sir Mortimer carelessly. "But, as Chichester says, it _is_ devilish irregular to allow any Tom, Dick, or Harry to enter for such a race as this. If, as Sling suggests, the fellow is willing to back himself, it would, at least, be well to know that he could cover his bets."

"Sir Mortimer!" the Viscount's tone was colder and sharper than before, "you will permit me, in the first place, to tell you that his name is neither Tom, nor Dick, nor Harry. And in the second place, I would remind you that the gentleman honors me with his friendship. And in the third place, that I suffer no one to cast discredit upon my friends. D'you take me, Sir Mortimer?"

There followed a moment of utter stillness, then the sudden scrape and shuffle of feet, and thereafter Carnaby's voice, a little raised and wholly incredulous:

"What, Viscount,--d'you mean to take this fellow's part--against me?"

"Most certainly, if need be."

But here, before Sir Mortimer could reply, all five started and turned as the door opened and Barnabas appeared on the threshold.

"Viscount," said he, "for that I thank you most sincerely, most deeply. But, indeed, it will not be necessary, seeing I am here to do it for myself, and to answer such questions as I think--proper."

"Ah, Mr.--Beverley!" drawled Sir Mortimer, seating himself on the tale and crossing his legs, "you come pat, and since you are here, I desire a word with you."

"As many as you wish, sir," answered Barnabas, and he looked very youthful as he bowed his curly head.

"It would seem, Mr. Beverley, that you are something of a mystery, and I, for one, don't like mysteries. Then it has been suggested that you and I have met before our introduction, and, egad! now I come to look at you more attentively, your face does seem familiar, and I am curious to know who you may happen to be?"

"Sir," said Barnabas, looking more youthful than ever, "such rare condescension, such lively interest in my concerns, touches me--touches me deeply," and he bowed, lower than before.

"Suppose, sir," retorted Sir Mortimer, his cheek flushing a little, "suppose you answer my question, and tell me plainly who and what you are?" and he stared at Barnabas, swinging his leg to and fro as he awaited his reply.

"Sir," said Barnabas, "I humbly beg leave to remark, that as to who I am can concern only my--friends. As to what I am concerns only my Maker and myself--"

"Oh, vastly fine," nodded Sir Mortimer, "but that's no answer."

"And yet I greatly fear it must suffice--for you, sir," sighed Barnabas. Sir Mortimer's swinging foot grew still, and he frowned suddenly.

"Now look you, sir," said he slowly, and with a menace in his eyes, "when I trouble to ask a question, I expect an answer--"

"Alas, sir,--even your expectations may occasionally be disappointed," said Barnabas, beginning to smile aggressively. "But, as to my resources, I do not lack for money, and am ready, here and now, to lay you, or any one else, a thousand guineas that I shall be one of the first three to pass the winning-post on the fifteenth."

Sir Mortimer's frown grew more ominous, the flush deepened in his cheeks, and his powerful right hand clenched itself, then he laughed.

"Egad! you have plenty of assurance, sir. It is just possible that you may have ridden--now and then?"

"Sufficiently to know one end of a horse from the other, sir," retorted Barnabas, his smile rather grim.

"And you are willing to bet a thousand guineas that you ride third among all the best riders in the three kingdoms, are you?"

"No, sir," said Barnabas, shaking his head, "the bet was a rash one, --I humbly beg leave to withdraw it. Instead, I will bet five thousand guineas that I pass the winning-post before you do, Sir Mortimer."

Carnaby's smile vanished, and he stared up at calm-eyed Barnabas in open-mouthed astonishment.

"You're not mad, are you?" he demanded at last, his red under-lip curling.

"Sir," said Barnabas, taking out his memorandum, "it is now your turn to answer. Do you take my bet?"

"Take it!" cried Sir Mortimer fiercely, "yes! I'll double it--make it ten thousand guineas, sir!"

"Fifteen if you wish," said Barnabas, his pencil poised.

"No, by God! but I'll add another five and make it an even twenty thousand!"

"May I suggest you double instead, and make it thirty?" inquired Barnabas.

"Ha!--may I venture to ask how much higher you are prepared to go?"

"Why, sir," said Barnabas thoughtfully, "I have some odd six hundred thousand pounds, and I am prepared to risk--a half."

"Vastly fine, sir!" laughed Sir Mortimer, "why not put it at a round million and have done with it. No, egad! I want something more than your word--"

"You might inquire of my bankers," Barnabas suggested.

"Twenty thousand will suit me very well, sir!" nodded Sir Mortimer.

"Then you take me at that figure, Sir Mortimer?"

"Yes, I bet you twenty thousand guineas that you do not pass the winning-post ahead of me! And what's more,--non-starters to forfeit their money! Oh, egad,--I'll take you!"

"And I also," said Mr. Chichester, opening his betting-book. "Gentlemen, you are all witnesses of the bet. Come, Viscount,--Slingsby,--here's good money going a-begging--why not gather it in--eh, Marquis?" But the trio sat very silent, so that the scratch of Sir Mortimer's pencil could be plainly heard as he duly registered his bet, which done, he turned his attention to Barnabas again, looking him up and down

with his bold, black eyes.

"Hum!" said he musingly, "it sticks in my mind that I have seen you--somewhere or other, before we met at Sir George Annersley's. Perhaps you will tell me where?"

"With pleasure, sir," answered Barnabas, putting away his memorandum book, "it was in Annersley Wood, rather early in the morning. And you wore--"

"Annersley--Wood!" Sir Mortimer's careless, lounging air vanished, and he stared at Barnabas with dilating eyes.

"And you wore, I remember, a bottle-green coat, which I had the misfortune to tear, sir."

And here there fell a silence, once more, but ominous now, and full of menace; a pregnant stillness, wherein the Viscount sat leaned forward, his hands clutching his chair-arms, his gaze fixed upon Barnabas; as for the Marquis, he had taken out his snuff-box and, in his preoccupation, came very near inhaling a pinch; while Captain Slingsby sat open-mouthed. Then, all at once, Sir Mortimer was on his feet and had caught up a heavy riding-whip, and thus he and Barnabas fronted each other, eye to eye,--each utterly still, yet very much on the alert.

But now upon this tense silence came the soft, smooth tones of Mr. Chichester:

"Pray, Mr. Beverley, may I speak a word with you--in private?"

"If the company will excuse us," Barnabas replied; whereupon Mr. Chichester rose and led the way into the adjoining room, and, closing the door, took a folded letter from his pocket.

"Sir," said he, "I would remind you that the last time we met, you warned me,--indeed you have a weakness for warning people, it seems,--you also threatened me that unless I agreed to--certain conditions, you would dispossess me of my inheritance--"

"And I repeat it," said Barnabas.

"Oh, sir, save your breath and listen," smiled Mr. Chichester, "for let me tell you, threats beget threats, and warnings, warnings! Here is one, which I think--yes, which I venture to think you will heed!" So saying, he unfolded the letter and laid it upon the table. Barnabas glanced at it, hesitated, then stooping, read as follows:

> DEAR LADY CLEONE,--I write this to warn you that the person calling himself Mr. Beverley, and posing as a gentleman of wealth and breeding, is, in reality, nothing better than a rich vulgarian, one Barnabas Barty, son of a country inn-keeper. The truth of which shall be proved to your complete satisfaction whenever you will, by:
>
> Yours always humbly to command,
>
> WILFRED CHICHESTER.

Now when he had finished reading, Barnabas sank down into a chair,

and, leaning his elbows upon the table, hid his face between his hands; seeing which, Mr. Chichester laughed softly, and taking up the letter, turned to the door. "Sir," said he, "as I mentioned before, threats beget threats. Now,--you move, and I move. I tell you, if you presume to interfere with me again in any way,--or with my future plans in any way, then, in that same hour, Cleone shall know you for the impudent impostor you are!" So Mr. Chichcster laughed again, and laid his hand upon the latch of the door. But Barnabas sat rigid, and did not move or lift his heavy head even when the door opened and closed, and he knew he was alone.

Very still lie sat there, crouched above the table, his face hidden in his hands, until he was roused by a cough, the most perfectly discreet and gentleman-like cough in the world, such a cough, indeed, as only a born waiter could emit.

"Sir," inquired the waiter, his napkin in a greater flutter than ever, as Barnabas looked up, "sir,--is there hanythink you're wanting, sir?"

"Yes," said Barnabas, heavily, "you can--give me--my hat!"

CHAPTER XLIV

OF THE TRIBULATIONS OF THE LEGS OF THE GENTLEMAN-IN-POWDER

The Gentleman-in-Powder, aware of a knocking, yawned, laid aside the "Gazette," and getting upon his legs (which, like all things truly dignified, were never given to hurry), they, in due season, brought him to the door, albeit they shook with indignant quiverings at the increasing thunder of each repeated summons. Therefore the Gentleman-in-Powder, with his hand upon the latch, having paused long enough to vindicate and compose his legs, proceeded to open the portal of Number Five, St. James's Square; but, observing the person of the importunate knocker, with that classifying and discriminating eye peculiar to footmen, immediately frowned and shook his head:

"The hother door, me man,--marked 'tradesmen,'" said he, the angle of his nose a little more supercilious than usual, "and ring only, _if_ you please." Having said which, he shut the door again; that is to say,--very nearly, for strive as he might, his efforts were unavailing, by reason of a round and somewhat battered object which, from its general conformation, he took to be the end of a formidable bludgeon or staff. But, applying his eye to the aperture, he saw that this very obtrusive object was nothing more or less than a leg (that is to say, a wooden one), which was attached to the person of a burly, broad-shouldered, fiercely bewhiskered man in clothes of navy-blue, a man whose hairy, good-natured visage was appropriately shaded by a very shiny glazed hat.

"Avast there!" said this personage in deep, albeit jovial tones, "ease away there, my lad,--stand by and let old Timbertoes come aboard!"

But the Gentleman-in-Powder was not to be cajoled. He sniffed.

"The hother door, me good feller!" he repeated, relentless but dignified, "and ring only, _if_ you pl--"

The word was frozen upon his horrified lip, for Timbertoes had actually set his blue-clad shoulder to the door, and now, bending his brawny back, positively began to heave at it with might and main, cheering and encouraging himself meanwhile with sundry nautical "yo ho's." And all this in broad daylight! In St. James's Square!

Whereupon ensued the following colloquy:

The Gentleman-in-Powder (pushing from within. Shocked and amazed). "Wot's this? Stop it! Get out now, d'ye hear!"

Timbertoes (pushing from without. In high good humor). "With a ho, my hearties, and a merrily heave O!"

The Gentleman-in-Powder (struggling almost manfully, though legs highly agitated). "I--I'll give you in c-charge! I'll--"

Timbertoes (encouraging an imaginary crew). "Cheerily! Cheerily! heave yo ho!"

The Gentleman-in-Powder (losing ground rapidly. Condition of legs indescribable). "I never--see nothing--like this here! I'll--"

Timbertoes (all shoulders, whiskers and pig-tail). "With a heave and a ho, and up she rises O!"

The Gentleman-in-Powder (extricating his ruffled dignity from between wall and door). "Oh, very good,--I'll give you in charge for this, you--you feller! Look at me coat! I'll send for a constable. I'll--"

Timbertoes. "Belay, my lad! This here's Number Five, ain't it?"

The Gentleman-in-Powder (glancing down apprehensively at his quivering legs). "Yes,--and I'll--"

Timbertoes. "Cap'n Beverley's craft, ain't it?"

The Gentleman-in-Powder (re-adjusting his ruffled finery). "_Mister_ Beverley occipies this here res-eye-dence!"

Timbertoes (_nodding_). "Mister Beverley,--oh, ah, for sure. Well, is 'e aboard?"

The Gentleman-in-Powder (with lofty sarcasm). "No, 'e ain't! Nor a stick, nor a stock, nor yet a chair, nor a table. And, wot's more, 'e ain't one to trouble about the likes o' you, neether."

Timbertoes. "Belay, my lad, and listen. I'm Jerry Tucker, late Bo'sun in 'is Britannic Majesty's navy,--'Bully-Sawyer,' Seventy-four. D'ye get that? Well, now listen again. According to orders I hove anchor and bore up for London very early this morning, but being strange to these 'ere waters, was obleeged to haul my wind and stand off and on till I fell in with a pilot, d'ye see. But, though late, here I am all ship-shape and a-taunto, and with despatches safe and sound. Watch, now!" Hereupon the Bo'sun removed the glazed hat, held

it to his hairy ear, shook it, nodded, and from somewhere in its interior took out and held up three letters.

"D'ye see those, my lad?" he inquired.

The Gentleman-in-Powder (haughtily). "I ain't blind!"

Timbertoes. "Why then--you'll know what they are, p'raps?"

The Gentleman-in-Powder (witheringly). "Nor I ain't a fool, neether."

Timbertoes (dubiously). "Ain't you, though?"

The Gentleman-in-Powder (legs again noticeably agitated). "No, I ain't. I've got all _my_ faculties about _me_."

Timbertoes (shaking head incredulously). "Ah! but where do you stow 'em away?"

The Gentleman-in-Powder (legs convulsed). "And--wot's more, I've got my proper amount o' limbs too!"

Timbertoes. "Limbs? If it's legs you're meaning, I should say as you'd got more nor your fair share,--you're all legs, you are! Why, Lord! you're grow'd to legs so surprising, as I wonder they don't walk off with you, one o'these here dark nights, and--lose you!"

But at this juncture came Peterby, sedate, grave, soft of voice as became a major-domo and the pink of a gentleman's gentleman, before whose quick bright eye the legs of the Gentleman-in-Powder grew, as it were, suddenly abashed, and to whom the Bo'sun, having made a leg, forthwith addressed himself.

"Sarvent, sir--name o' Jerry Tucker, late Bo'sun, 'Bully-Sawyer,' Seventy-four; come aboard with despatches from his Honor Cap'n Chumly and my Lady Cleone Meredith. To see Mr. Barnabas Beverley, Esquire. To give these here despatches into Mr. Beverley Esquire's own 'and. Them's my orders, sir."

"Certainly, Bo'sun," said Peterby; and, to the Gentleman-in-Powder, his bow was impressive; "pray step this way."

So the Bo'sun, treading as softly as his wooden leg would allow, stumped after him upstairs and along a thickly carpeted corridor, to a certain curtained door upon which Peterby gently knocked, and thereafter opening, motioned the Bo'sun to enter.

It was a small and exquisitely furnished, yet comfortable room, whose luxurious appointments,--the rich hangings, the rugs upon the floor, the pictures adorning the walls,--one and all bore evidence to the rare taste, the fine judgment of this one-time poacher of rabbits, this quiet-voiced man with the quick, bright eyes, and the subtly humorous mouth. But, just now, John Peterby was utterly serious as he glanced across to where, bowed down across the writing-table, his head pillowed upon his arms, his whole attitude one of weary, hopeless dejection, sat Barnabas Beverley, Esquire. A pen was in his lax fingers, while upon the table and littering the floor were many sheets of paper, some half covered with close writing, some crumpled and torn, some again bearing little more than a name;

but in each and every case the name was always the same. Thus, John Peterby, seeing this drooping, youthful figure, sighed and shook his head, and went out, closing the door behind him.

"Is that you, John?" inquired Barnabas, with bowed head.

"No, sir, axing your pardon, it be only me, Jerry Tucker, Bo'sun, --'Bully-Sawyer,' Seventy--"

"Bo'sun!" With the word Barnabas was upon his feet. "Why, Bo'sun," he cried, wringing the sailor's hand, "how glad I am to see you!"

"Mr. Beverley, sir," began the Bo'sun, red-faced and diffident by reason of the warmth of his reception, "I've come aboard with despatches, sir. I bring you a letter from his Honor the Cap'n, from 'er Grace the Duchess, and from Lady Cleone, God bless her!"

"A letter from--her!" Then taking the letters in hands that were strangely unsteady, Barnabas crossed to the window, and breaking the seal of a certain one, read this:

> DEAR MR. BARNABAS (the 'Beverley' crossed out),--Her Grace, my dear god-mother, having bullied my poor Tyrant out of the house, and quarrelled with me until she is tired, has now fixed her mind upon you. She therefore orders her dutiful god-daughter to write you these, hoping that thereby you may be induced to yield yourself a willing slave to her caprices and come down here for a few days. Though the very dearest and best of women, my god-mother, as you may remember, possesses a tongue, therefore--be warned, sir! My Tyrant at this precise moment sits in the 'round house,' whither he has retreated to solace his ruffled feelings with tobacco. So, I repeat, sir, be warned! And yet, though indeed, 't is strange, and passing strange, she speaks of you often, and seems to hold you in her kind regard. But, for all that, do not be misled, sir; for the Duchess is always the Duchess,--even to poor me. A while ago, she insisted on playing a game of chess; as I write the pieces lie scattered on the floor. _I_ shan't pick them up,--why should I? So you see her Grace is quite herself to-day. Nevertheless, should you determine to run the risk, you will, I think, find a welcome awaiting you from,
>
> Yours, dear sir,
>
> CLEONE MEREDITH.
>
> P.S.--The Bo'sun assures me the moon will last another week.

This Postscript Master Barnabas must needs read three times over, and then, quick and furtive, press the letter to his lips ere he thrust it into his bosom, and opened and read the Captain's:

> The Gables,
> Hawkhurst.
>
> Written in the Round-house,
>
> June 29, 18--.
>
> MY DEAR BEVERLEIGH,--How is Fashion and the Modish World? as trivial as usual, I'll warrant me. The

latest sensation, I believe, is Cossack Trousers,--have you tried 'em yet? But to come to my mutton, as the Mounseers say.

The Duchess of Camberhurst, having honored my house with her presence--and consequently set it in an uproar, I am constantly running foul of her, though more often she is falling aboard of me. To put it plainly, what with cross-currents, head-seas, and shifting winds that come down suddenly and blow great guns from every point of the compass, I am continually finding myself taken all a-back, as it were, and since it is quite impossible to bring to and ride it out, am consequently forced to go about and run for it, and continually pooped, even then,--for a woman's tongue is, I'm sure, worse than any following sea.

Hence, my sweet Clo, with her unfailing solicitude for me, having observed me flying signals of distress, has contrived to put it into my head that your presence might have a calming effect. Therefore, my dear boy, if you can manage to cast off the grapples of the Polite World for a few days, to run down here and shelter a battered old hulk under your lee, I shall be proud to have you as my guest.

Yours faithfully to serve,

JOHN CHUMLY.

P.S.--Pray bring your valet; you will need him, her Grace insists on dressing for dinner. Likewise my Trafalgar coat begins to need skilled patching, here and there; it is getting beyond the Bo'sun.

Here again Barnabas must needs pause to read over certain of the Captain's scrawling characters, and a new light was in his eyes as he broke the seal of her Grace's epistle.

MY DEAR MR. BEVERLEY,--The country down here, though delightfully Arcadian and quite idyllic (hayricks are so romantic, and I always adored cows--in pictures), is dreadfully quiet, and I freely confess that I generally prefer a man to a hop-pole (though I do wear a wig), and the voice of a man to the babble of brooks, or the trill of a skylark,--though I protest, I wouldn't be without them (I mean the larks) for the world,--they make me long for London so.

Then again, the Captain (though a truly dear soul, and the most gallant of hosts) treats me very much as though I were a ship, and, beside, he is so dreadfully gentle.

As for Cleone, dear bird, she yawns until my own eyes water (though, indeed, she has very pretty teeth), and, on the whole, is very dutiful and quarrels with me whenever I wish. 'T is quite true she cannot play chess;

she also, constantly, revokes at Whist, and is quite as bad-tempered over it as I am. Cards, I fear, are altogether beyond her at present,--she is young. Of course time may change this, but I have grave doubts. In this deplorable situation I turn to you, dear Mr. Beverley (Cleone knew your address, it seems), and write these hasty lines to ntreat,--nay, to command you to come and cheer our solitude. Cleone has a new gown she is dying to wear, and I have much that you must patiently listen to, so that I may truly subscribe myself'

Your grateful friend,

FANNY CAMBERURST.

P.S.--I have seen the finger-post on the London Road.

And now, having made an end of reading, Barnabas sighed and smiled, and squared his stooping shoulders, and threw up his curly head, and turning, found the Bo'sun still standing, hat in fist, lost in contemplation of the gilded ceiling. Hereupon Barnabas caught his hand, and shook it again, and laughed for very happiness.

"Bo'sun, how can I thank you!" said he, "these letters have given me new hope--new life! and--and here I leave you to stand, dolt that I am! And with nothing to drink, careless fool that I am. Sit down, man, sit down--what will you take, wine? brandy?"

"Mr. Beverley, sir," replied the Bo'sun diffidently, accepting the chair that Barnabas dragged forward, "you're very kind, sir, but if I might make so bold,--a glass of ale, sir--?"

"Ale!" cried Barnabas. "A barrel if you wish!" and he tugged at the bell, at whose imperious summons the Gentleman-in-Powder appearing with leg-quivering promptitude, Barnabas forthwith demanded "Ale,--the best, and plenty of it! And pray ask Mr. Peterby to come here at once!" he added.

"Sir," said the Bo'sun as the door closed, "you'll be for steering a course for Hawkhurst, p'r'aps?"

"We shall start almost immediately," said Barnabas, busily collecting those scattered sheets of paper that littered floor and table; thus he was wholly unaware of the look that clouded the sailor's honest visage.

"Sir," said the Bo'sun, pegging thoughtfully at a rose in the carpet with his wooden leg, "by your good leave, I'd like to ax 'ee a question."

"Certainly, Bo'sun, what is it?" inquired Barnabas, looking up from the destruction of the many attempts of his first letter to Cleone.

"Mr. Beverley, sir," said the Bo'sun, pegging away at the carpet as he spoke, "is it--meaning no offence, and axing your pardon,--but are you hauling your wind and standing away for Hawkhurst so prompt on 'account o' my Lady Cleone?"

"Yes, Bo'sun, on account of our Lady Cleone."

"Why, then, sir," said the Bo'sun, fixing his eyes on the ceiling again, "by your leave--but,--why, sir?"

"Because, Bo'sun, you and I have this in common, that we both--love her."

Here the Bo'sun dropped his glazed hat, and picking it up, sat turning it this way and that, in his big, brown fingers.

"Why, then, sir," said he, looking up at Barnabas suddenly, "what of Master Horatio, his Lordship?"

"Why, Bo'sun, I told him about it weeks ago. I had to. You see, he honors me with his friendship."

The Bo'sun nodded, and broke into his slow smile:

"Ah, that alters things, sir," said he. "As for loving my lady--why? who could help it?"

"Who, indeed, Bo'sun!"

"Though I'd beg to remind you, sir, as orders _is_ orders, and consequently she's bound to marry 'is Lordship--some day--"

"Or--become a mutineer!" said Barnabas, as the door opened to admit Peterby, who (to the horror of the Gentleman-in-Powder, and despite his mutely protesting legs), actually brought in the ale himself; yet, as he set it before the Bo'sun, his sharp eyes were quick to notice his young master's changed air, and brightened as if in sympathy.

"I want you, John, to know my good friend Bo'sun Jerry," said Barnabas, "a Trafalgar man--"

"'Bully-Sawyer,' Seventy-four!" added the Bo'sun, rising and extending his huge hand.

"We are all going to Hawkhurst, at once, John," continued Barnabas, "so pack up whatever you think necessary--a couple of valises will do, and tell Martin I'll have the phaeton,--it's roomier; and I'll drive the bays. And hurry things, will you, John?"

So John Peterby bowed, solemn and sedate as ever, and went upon his errand. But it is to be remarked that as he hastened downstairs, his lips had taken on their humorous curve, and the twinkle was back in his eyes; also he nodded his head, as who would say:

"I thought so! The Lady Cleone Meredith, eh? Well,--the sooner the better!"

Thus the Bo'sun had barely finished his ale, when the Gentleman-in-Powder appeared to say the phaeton was at the door.

And a fine, dashing turn-out it was, too, with its yellow wheels, its gleaming harness, and the handsome thorough-breds pawing impatient hoofs.

Then, the Bo'sun having duly ensconced himself, with Peterby in the rumble as calm and expressionless as the three leather valises under the seat, Barnabas sprang in, caught up the reins, nodded to Martin the gray-haired head groom, and giving the bays their heads, they were off and away for Hawkhurst and the Lady Cleone Meredith, whirling round corners and threading their way through traffic at a speed that caused the Bo'sun to clutch the seat with one hand, and the glazed hat with the other, and to remark in his diffident way that:

"These here wheeled craft might suit some, but for comfort and safety give me an eight-oared galley!"

CHAPTER XLV

HOW BARNABAS SOUGHT COUNSEL OF THE DUCHESS "BO'SUN?"

"Sir?"

"Do you know the Duchess of Camberhurst well?"

"Know her, sir?" repeated the Bo'sun, giving a dubious pull at his starboard whisker; "why, Mr. Beverley, sir, there's two things as I knows on, as no man never did know on, nor never will know on,--and one on 'em's a ship and t' other's a woman."

"But do you know her well enough to like and--trust?"

"Why, Mr. Beverley, sir, since you ax me, I'll tell you--plain and to the p'int. We'll take 'er Grace the Duchess and say, clap her helm a-lee to tack up ag'in a beam wind, a wind, mind you, as ain't strong enough to lift her pennant,--and yet she'll fall off and miss her stays, d'ye see, or get took a-back and yaw to port or starboard, though, if you ax me why or wherefore, I'll tell you as how,--her being a woman and me only a man,--I don't know. Then, again, on the contrary, let it blow up foul--a roaring hurricane say, wi' the seas running high, ah! wi' the scud flying over her top-s'l yard, and she'll rise to it like a bird, answer to a spoke, and come up into the wind as sweet as ever you see. The Duchess ain't no fair-weather craft, I'll allow, but in 'owling, raging tempest she's staunch, sir, --ah, that she is,--from truck to keelson! And there y'are, Mr. Beverley, sir!"

"Do you mean," inquired Barnabas, puzzled of look, "that she is to be depended on--in an emergency?"

"Ay, sir--that she is!"

"Ah!" said Barnabas, nodding, "I'm glad to know that, Bo'sun,--very glad." And here he became thoughtful all at once. Yet after a while he spoke again, this time to Peterby.

"You are very silent, John."

"I am--your valet, sir!"

"Then, oh! man," exclaimed Barnabas, touching up the galloping bays quite unnecessarily, "oh, man--forget it a while! Here we sit--three men together, with London miles behind us, and the Fashionable World further still. Here we sit, three men, with no difference between us, except that the Bo'sun has fought and bled for this England of ours, you have travelled and seen much of the world, and I, being the youngest, have done neither the one nor the other, and very little else--as yet. So, John,--be yourself; talk, John, talk!"

Now hereupon John Peterby's grave dignity relaxed, a twinkle dawned in his eyes, and his lips took on their old-time, humorous curve. And lo! the valet became merged and lost in the cosmopolitan, the dweller in many cities, who had done and seen much, and could tell of such things so wittily and well that the miles passed unheeded, while the gallant bays whirled the light phaeton up hill and down dale, contemptuous of fatigue.

It needs not here to describe more fully this journey whose tedium was unnoticed by reason of good-fellowship. Nor of the meal they ate at the "Chequers" Inn at Tonbridge, and how they drank (at the Bo'sun's somewhat diffident suggestion) a health "to his Honor the Cap'n, and the poor old 'Bully-Sawyer,' Seventy-four."

And thus Barnabas, clad in purple and fine linen and driving his own blood horses, talked and laughed with a one-legged mariner, and sought the companionship of his own valet; which irregularity must be excused by his youth and inexperience, and the lamentable fact that, despite his purple and fine linen, he was, as yet, only a man, alas!

Thus, then, as evening fell, behold them spinning along that winding road where stood a certain ancient finger-post pointing the wayfarer:

TO LONDON. TO HAWKHURST

At sight of which weather-worn piece of timber. Barnabas must needs smile, though very tenderly, and thereafter fall a-sighing. But all at once he checked his sighs to stare in amazement, for there, demurely seated beneath the finger-post, and completely engrossed in her needlework, was a small, lonely figure, at sight of which Barnabas pulled up the bays in mid-career.

"Why--Duchess!" he exclaimed, and, giving Peterby the reins, stepped out of the phaeton.

"Ah! is that you, Mr. Beverley?" sighed the Duchess, looking up from her embroidery, which, like herself, was very elaborate, very dainty, and very small. "You find me here, sitting by the wayside,--and a very desolate figure I must look, I'm sure,--you find me here because I have been driven away by the tantrums of an undutiful god-daughter, and the barbarity of a bloodthirsty buccaneer. I mean the Captain, of course. And all because I had the forethought to tell Cleone her nose was red,--which it was,--sunburn you know, and because I remarked that the Captain was growing as rotund as a Frenchman, which he is,--I mean fat, of course. All Frenchmen are fat--at least some are. And then he will wear such a shabby old coat! So here I am, Mr. Beverley, very lonely and very sad, but industrious you see, quite as busy as Penelope, who used to spin webs all day long,--which

sounds as though she were a spider instead of a classical lady who used to undo them again at night,--I mean the webs, not the spiders. But, indeed, you're very silent, Mr. Beverley, though I'm glad to see you are here so well to time."

"To time, madam?"

"Because, you see, I 've won my bet. Oh yes, indeed, I bet about everything nowadays,--oh, feverishly, sir, and shall do, until the race is over, I suppose."

"Indeed, Duchess?"

"Yes. I bet Cleone an Indian shawl against a pair of beaded mittens that you would be here, to-day, before ten o'clock. So you see, you are hours before your time, and the mittens are mine. Talking of Cleone, sir, she's in the orchard. She's also in a shocking temper--indeed quite cattish, so you'd better stay here and talk to me. But then--she's alone, and looking vastly handsome, I'll admit, so, of course, you're dying to be gone--now aren't you?"

"No," Barnabas replied, and turning, bade Peterby drive on to the house.

"Then you ought to be!" retorted the Duchess, shaking an admonitory finger at him, yet smiling also as the carriage rolled away. "Youth can never prefer to listen to a chattering old woman--in a wig!"

"But you see, madam, I need your help, your advice," said Barnabas gravely.

"Ah, now I love giving people advice! It's so pleasant and--easy!"

"I wish to confide in you,--if I may."

"Confidences are always interesting--especially in the country!"

"Duchess, I--I--have a confession to make."

"A confession, sir? Then I needn't pretend to work any longer--besides, I always prick myself. There!" And rolling the very small piece of embroidery into a ball, she gave it to Barnabas. "Pray sir, hide the odious thing in your pocket. Will you sit beside me? No? Very well--now, begin, sir!"

"Why, then, madam, in the first place, I--"

"Yes?"

"I--that is to say,--you--must understand that--in the first place--"

"You've said 'first place' twice!" nodded the Duchess as he paused.

"Yes--Oh!--Did I? Indeed I--I fear it is going to be even harder to speak of than I thought, and I have been nerving myself to tell you ever since I started from London."

"To tell me what?"

"That which may provoke your scorn of me, which may earn me Cleone's bitterest contempt."

"Why then, sir--don't say another word about it--"

"Ah, but I must--indeed I must! For I know now that to balk at it, to--to keep silent any longer would be dishonorable--and the act of a coward!"

"Oh dear me!" sighed the Duchess, "I fear you are going to be dreadfully heroic about something!"

"Let us say--truthful, madam!"

"But, sir,--surely Truthfulness, after all, is merely the last resource of the hopelessly incompetent! Anyhow it must be very uncomfortable, I'm sure," said the Duchess, nodding her head. Yet she was quick to notice the distress in his voice, and the gleam of moisture among the curls at his temple, hence her tone was more encouraging as she continued. "Still, sir, speak on if you wish, for even a Duchess may appreciate honor and truth--in another, of course,--though she does wear a wig!"

"Believe me," sighed Barnabas, beginning to stride restlessly to and fro, "the full significance of my conduct never occurred to me until it was forced on my notice by--by another, and then--" he paused and brushed the damp curls from his brow. "To-day I tried to write to Cleone--to tell her everything, but I--couldn't."

"So you decided to come and tell me first, which was very nice of you," nodded the Duchess, "oh, very right and proper! Well, sir, I'm listening."

"First, then," said Barnabas, coming to a halt, and looking down at her steadfast-eyed, "you must know that my real name is--Barty."

"Barty?" repeated the Duchess, raising her brows. "Mm! I like Beverley much better."

"Beverley was my mother's name. She was Joan Beverley."

"Joan? Joan Beverley? Why y-e-s, I think I remember her, and the talk there was. Joan? Ah yes, to be sure,--very handsome, and--disappeared. No one knew why, but now,--I begin to understand. You would suggest--"

"That she became the honorable wife of my father, John Barty, the celebrated pugilist and ex-champion of England, now keeper of a village inn," said Barnabas, speaking all in a breath, but maintaining his steadfast gaze.

"Eh?" cried the Duchess, and rose to her feet with astonishing ease for one of her years, "eh, sir, an innkeeper! And your mother--actually married him?" and the Duchess shivered.

"Yes, madam. I am their lawful son."

"Dreadful!" cried the Duchess, "handsome Joan Beverley--married to an--inn-keeper! Horrible! She'd much better have died--say, in a

ditch--so much more respectable!"

"My father is an honorable man!" said Barnabas, with upflung head.

"Your father is--an inn-keeper!"

"And--my father, madam!"

"The wretch!" exclaimed the Duchess. "Oh, frightful!" and she shivered again.

"And his son--loves Cleone!"

"Dreadful! Frightful" cried the Duchess. "An inn-keeper's son! Beer and skittles and clay pipes! Oh, shocking!" And here, shuddering for the third time as only a great lady might, she turned her back on him.

"Ah," cried Barnabas, "so you scorn me--already?"

"Of course."

"For being--an inn-keeper's son?"

"For--telling of it!"

"And yet," said Barnabas, "I think Barnabas Barty is a better man than Barnabas Beverley, and a more worthy lover; indeed I know he is. And, as Barnabas Barty, I bid your Grace good-by!"

"Where are you going?"

"To the village inn, madam, my proper place, it seems. But--to-morrow morning, unless you have told Cleone, I shall. And now, if your Grace will have the kindness to send my servant to me--"

"But--why tell Cleone?" inquired the Duchess over her shoulder; "there is one alternative left to you."

"Then, madam, in heaven's name,--tell it me!" cried Barnabas eagerly.

"A ridiculously simple one, sir."

"Oh, madam--what can I do--pray tell me."

"You must--disown this inn-keeping wretch, of course. You must cast him off--now, at once, and forever!"

"Disown him--my father!"

"Certainly,"

Barnabas stared wide-eyed. Then he laughed, and uncovering his head, bowed deeply.

"Madam," said he, "I have the honor to bid your Grace good-by!"

"You--will tell Cleone then?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Why?"

"Because I love her. Because I, therefore, hate deceit, and because I--"

"Well?"

"And because Mr. Chichester knows already."

"Ah! You mean that he has forced your hand, sir, and now you would make the best of it--"

"I mean that he has opened my eyes, madam."

"And to-morrow you will tell Cleone?"

"Yes."

"And, of course, she will scorn you for an impudent impostor?"

Now at this Barnabas flinched, for these were Chichester's own words, and they bore a double sting.

"And yet--I must tell her!" he groaned.

"And afterwards, where shall you go?"

"Anywhere," he sighed, with a hopeless gesture.

"And--the race?"

"Will be run without me."

"And your friends--the Marquis, Viscount Devenham, and the rest?"

"Will, I expect, turn their gentlemanly backs upon me--as you yourself have done. So, madam, I thank you for your past kindness, and bid you--good-by"

"Stop, sir!"

"Of what avail, madam?" sighed Barnabas, turning away.

"Come back--I command you!"

"I am beneath your Grace's commands, henceforth," said Barnabas, and plodded on down the road.

"Then I--beg of you!"

"Why?" he inquired, pausing.

"Because--oh, because you are running off with my precious needlework, of course. In your pocket, sir,--the left one!" So, perforce, Barnabas came back, and standing again beneath the finger-post, gave the Duchess her very small piece of embroidery. But, behold! his hand was caught and held between two others, which, though very fragile, were very imperious.

"Barnabas," said the Duchess very softly, "oh, dear me, I'm glad you told me, oh very! I hoped you would!"

"Hoped? Why--why, madam, you--then you knew?"

"All about it, of course! Oh, you needn't stare--it wasn't witchcraft, it was this letter--read it." And taking a letter from her reticule, she gave it to Barnabas, and watched him while he read:

TO HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF CAMBERHURST.

MADAM,--In justice to yourself I take occasion to warn your Grace against the person calling himself Barnabas Beverley. He is, in reality, an impudent impostor of humble birth and mean extraction. His real name and condition I will prove absolutely to your Grace at another time.

Your Grace's most humble obedt.

WILFRED CHICHESTER.

"So you see I'm not a witch, sir,--oh no, I'm only an old woman, with, among many other useful gifts, a very sharp eye for faces, a remarkable genius for asking questions, and the feminine capacity for adding two and two together and making them--eight. So, upon reading this letter, I made inquiries on my own account with the result that yesterday I drove over to a certain inn called the 'Coursing Hound,' and talked with your father. Very handsome he is too--as he always was, and I saw him in the hey-day of his fame, remember. Well, I sipped his ale,--very good ale I found it, and while I sipped, we talked. He is very proud of his son, it seems, and he even showed me a letter this son had written him from the 'George' inn at Southwark. Ha! Joan Beverley was to have married an ugly old wretch of a marquis, and John Barty is handsome still. But an inn-keeper, hum!"

"So--that was why my mother ran away, madam?"

"And Wilfred Chichester knows of this, and will tell Cleone, of course!"

"I think not--at least not yet," answered Barnabas thoughtfully,-- "you see, he is using this knowledge as a weapon against me."

"Why?"

"I promised to help Ronald Barrymaine--"

"That wretched boy! Well?"

"And the only way to do so was to remove him from Chichester's influence altogether. So I warned Mr. Chichester that unless he forswore Barrymaine's society, I would, as Joan Beverley's son and heir to the Beverley heritage, prove my claim and dispossess him."

"You actually threatened Wilfred Chichester with this, and forgot that in finding you your mother's son, he would prove you to be your father's also?"

"Yes, I--I only remembered my promise."

"The one you gave Cleone, which she had no right to exact--as I told her--"

"But, madam--"

"Oh, she confessed to me all about it, and how you had tried to pay Ronald's debts for him out of your own pocket,--which was very magnificent but quite absurd."

"Yes," sighed Barnabas, "so now I am determined to free him from Chichester first--"

"By dispossessing Chichester?"

"Yes, madam."

"But--can't you see, if you force him to expose you it will mean your social ruin?"

"But then I gave--Her--my promise."

"Oh, Barnabas," said the Duchess, looking up at him with her young, beautiful eyes that were so like Cleone's, "what a superb fool you are! And your father _is_ only a village inn-keeper!"

"No, madam,--he was champion of all England as well."

"Oh!" sighed the Duchess, shaking her head, "that poor Sir Mortimer Carnaby! But, as for you, sir, you 're a fool, either a very clumsy, or a very--unselfish one,--anyhow, you're a fool, you know!"

"Yes," sighed Barnabas, his head hanging, "I fear I am."

"Oh yes,--you're quite a fool--not a doubt of it!" said the Duchess with a nod of finality. "And yet, oh, dear me! I think it may be because I'm seventy-one and growing younger every day, or perhaps because I'm so old that I have to wear a wig, but my tastes are so peculiar that there are some fools I could almost--love. So you may give me your arm,--Barnabas."

He obeyed mechanically, and they went on down the road together in silence until they came to a pair of tall, hospitable gates, and here Barnabas paused, and spoke wonderingly:

"Madam, you--you surely forget I am the son of--"

"A champion of all England, Barnabas. But, though you can thrash Sir Mortimer Carnaby, Wilfred Chichester is the kind of creature that only a truly clever woman can hope to deal with, so you may leave him to me!"

"But, madam, I--"

"Barnabas, quite so. But Wilfred Chichester always makes me shudder, and I love to shudder--now and then, especially in the hot weather. And then everything bores me lately--Cleone, myself,--even Whist, so I'll try my hand at another game--with Wilfred Chichester as an opponent."

"But, Duchess, indeed I--"

"Very true, Barnabas! but the matter is quite settled. And now, you are still determined to--confess your father to Cleone, I suppose?"

"Yes, I dare not speak to her otherwise, how could I, knowing myself an--"

"Impudent impostor, sir? Quite so and fiddlesticks! Heigho! you are so abominably high-minded and heroic, Barnabas,--it's quite depressing. Cleone is only a human woman, who powders her nose when it's red, and quite right too--I mean the powder of course, not the redness. Oh! indeed she's very human, and after all, your mother was a Beverley, and I know you are rich and--ah! there she is--on the terrace with the Captain, and I'm sure she has seen you, Barnabas, because she's so vastly unconscious. Observe the pose of her head,--she has a perfect neck and shoulders, and she knows it. There! see her kissing the Captain,--that's all for my benefit, the yellow minx! just because I happened to call him a 'hunks,' and so he is--though I don't know what I meant,--because he refused to change that dreadful old service coat. There! now she's patting his cheek--the golden jade! Now--watch her surprise when she pretends to catch sight of us!"

Hereupon, as they advanced over the smooth turf, the Duchess raised her voice.

"My bird!" she called in dulcet tones, "Clo dear, Cleone my lamb, here is Barnabas, I found him--under the finger-post, my dove!"

My lady turned, gave the least little start in the world, was surprised, glad, demure, all in the self-same minute, and taking the arm of her Tyrant, who had already begun a truly nautical greeting, led him, forthwith, down the terrace steps, the shining curls at her temple brushing his shabby coat-sleeve as they came.

"Ha!" cried the Captain, "my dear fellow, we're glad--I say we're all of us glad to see you. Welcome to 'The Gables,'--eh, Clo?"

And Cleone? With what gracious ease she greeted him! With what clear eyes she looked at him! With what demure dignity she gave him her white hand to kiss! As though--for all the world as though she could ever hope to deceive anything so old and so very knowing as the ancient finger-post upon the London road!

"Clo dear," said the Duchess, "they're going to talk horses and racing, and bets and things,--I know they are,--your arm, my love. Now,--lead on, gentlemen. And now, my dear," she continued, speaking in Cleone's ear as Barnabas and the Captain moved on, "he simply--adores you!"

"Really, God-mother--how clever of you!" said Cleone, her eyes brim full of merriment, "how wonderful you are!"

"Yes, my lady Pert,--he worships you and, consequently, is deceiving you with every breath he draws!"

"Deceiving me--!"

"With every moment he lives!"

"But--oh, God-mother--!"

"Cleone,--he is not what he seems!"

"Deceiving me?"

"His very name is false!"

"What do you mean? Ah no, no--I'm sure he would not, and yet--oh, God-mother,--why?"

"Because--hush, Cleone--he's immensely rich, one of the wealthiest young men in London, and--hush! He would be--loved for himself alone. So, Cleone,--listen,--he may perhaps come to you with some wonderful story of poverty and humble birth. He may tell you his father was only a--a farmer, or a tinker, or a--an inn-keeper. Oh dear me,--so delightfully romantic! Therefore, loving him as you do--"

"I don't!"

"With every one of your yellow hairs--"

"I do--_not_!"

"From the sole of your foot--"

"God-mother!"

"To the crown of your wilful head,--oh, Youth, Youth!--you may let your heart answer as it would. Oh Fire! Passion! Romance! (yes, yes, Jack,--we're coming!) Your heart, I say, Cleone, may have its way, because with all his wealth he has a father who--hush!--at one time was the greatest man in all England,--a powerful man, Clo,--a famous man, indeed a man of the most--striking capabilities. So, when your heart--(dear me, how impatient Jack is!) Oh, supper? Excellent, for, child, now I come to think of it, I'm positively swooning with hunger!"

CHAPTER XLVI

WHICH CONCERNS ITSELF WITH SMALL THINGS IN GENERAL, AND A PEBBLE IN PARTICULAR

To those who, standing apart from the rush and flurry of life, look upon the world with a seeing eye, it is, surely, interesting to observe on what small and apparently insignificant things great matters depend. To the student History abounds with examples, and to the philosopher they are to be met with everywhere.

But how should Barnabas (being neither a student nor a philosopher) know, or even guess, that all his fine ideas and intentions were to be frustrated, and his whole future entirely changed by nothing more nor less than--a pebble, an ordinary, smooth, round pebble, as innocent-seeming as any of its kind, yet (like young David's) singled out by destiny to be one of these "smaller things"?

They were sitting on the terrace, the Duchess, Cleone, Barnabas, and the Captain, and they were very silent,--the Duchess, perhaps, because she had supped adequately, the Captain because of his long, clay pipe, Cleone because she happened to be lost in contemplation of the moon, and Barnabas, because he was utterly absorbed in contemplation of Cleone.

The night was very warm and very still, and upon the quietude stole a sound--softer, yet more insistent than the whisper of wind among leaves,--a soothing, murmurous sound that seemed to make the pervading quiet but the more complete.

"How cool the brook sounds!" sighed the Duchess at last, "and the perfume of the roses,--oh dear me, how delicious! Indeed I think the scent of roses always seems more intoxicating after one has supped well, for, after all, one must be well-fed to be really romantic,--eh, Jack?"

"Romantic, mam!" snorted the Captain, "romantic,--I say bosh, mam! I say--"

"And then--the moon, Jack!"

"Moon? And what of it, mam,--I say--"

"Roses always smell sweeter by moonlight, Jack, and are far more inclined to--go to the head--"

"Roses!" snorted the Captain, louder than before, "you must be thinking of rum, mam, rum--"

"Then, Jack, to the perfume of roses, add the trill of a nightingale--"

"And of all rums, mam, give me real old Jamaica--"

"And to the trill of a nightingale, add again the murmur of an unseen brook, Jack--"

"Eh, mam, eh? Nightingales, brooks? I say--oh, Gad, mam!" and the Captain relapsed into tobacco-puffing indignation.

"What more could youth and beauty ask? Ah, Jack, Jack!" sighed the Duchess, "had you paid more attention to brooks and nightingales, and stared at the moon in your youth, you might have been a green young grandfather to-night, instead of a hoary old bachelor in a shabby coat--sucking consolation from a clay pipe!"

"Consolation, mam! For what--I say, I demand to know for what?"

"Loneliness, Jack!"

"Eh, Duchess,--what, mam? Haven't I got my dear Clo, and the Bo'sun, eh, mam--eh?"

"The Bo'sun, yes,--he smokes a pipe, but Cleone can't, so she looks at the moon instead,--don't you dear?"

"The moon, God-mother?" exclaimed Cleone, bringing her gaze earthwards on the instant. "Why I,--I--the moon, indeed!"

"And she listens to the brook, Jack,--don't you, my dove?"

"Why, God-mother, I--the brook? Of course not!" said Cleone.

"And, consequently, Jack, you mustn't expect to keep her much longer--"

"Eh!" cried the bewildered Captain, "what's all this, Duchess,--I say, what d'ye mean, mam?"

"Some women," sighed the Duchess, "some women never know they're in love until they've married the wrong man, and then it's too late, poor things. But our sweet Clo, on the contrary--"

"Love!" snorted the Captain louder than ever, "now sink me, mam,--I say, sink and scuttle me; but what's love got to do with Clo, eh, mam?"

"More than you think, Jack--ask her!"

But lo! my lady had risen, and was already descending the terrace steps, a little hurriedly perhaps, yet in most stately fashion. Whereupon Barnabas, feeling her Grace's impelling hand upon his arm, obeyed the imperious command and rising, also descended the steps,--though in fashion not at all stately,--and strode after my lady, and being come beside her, walked on--yet found nothing to say, abashed by her very dignity. But, after they had gone thus some distance, venturing to glance at her averted face, Barnabas espied the dimple beside her mouth.

"Cleone," said he suddenly, "what _has_ love to do with you?"

Now, for a moment, she looked up at him, then her lashes drooped, and she turned away.

"Oh, sir," she answered, "lift up your eyes and look upon the moon!"

"Cleone, has love--come to you--at last? Tell me!" But my lady walked on for a distance with head again averted, and--with never a word. "Speak!" said Barnabas, and caught her hand (unresisting now), and held it to his lips. "Oh, Cleone,--answer me!"

Then Cleone obeyed and spoke, though her voice was tremulous and low.

"Ah, sir," said she, "listen to the brook!"

Now it so chanced they had drawn very near this talkative stream, whose voice reached them--now in hoarse whisperings, now in throaty chucklings, and whose ripples were bright with the reflected glory of the moon. Just where they stood, a path led down to these shimmering waters,--a narrow and very steep path screened by bending

willows; and, moved by Fate, or Chance, or Destiny, Barnabas descended this path, and turning, reached up his hands to Cleone.

"Come!" he said. And thus, for a moment, while he looked up into her eyes, she looked down into his, and sighed, and moved towards him, and--set her foot upon the pebble.

And thus, behold the pebble had achieved its purpose, for, next moment Cleone was lying in his arms, and for neither of them was life or the world to be ever the same thereafter.

Yes, indeed, the perfume of the roses was full of intoxication to-night; the murmurous brook whispered of things scarce dreamed of; and the waning moon was bright enough to show the look in her eyes and the quiver of her mouth as Barnabas stooped above her.

"Cleone!" he whispered, "Cleone--can you--do you--love me? Oh, my white lady,--my woman that I love,--do you love me?"

She did not speak, but her eyes answered him; and, in that moment Barnabas stooped and kissed her, and held her close, and closer, until she sighed and stirred in his embrace.

Then, all at once, he groaned and set her down, and stood before her with bent head.

"My dear," said he, "oh, my dear!"

"Barnabas?"

"Forgive me,--I should have spoken,--indeed, I meant to,--but I couldn't think,--it was so sudden,--forgive me! I didn't mean to even touch your hand until I had confessed my deceit. Oh, my dear, --I am not--not the fine gentleman you think me. I am only a very --humble fellow. The son of a village--inn-keeper. Your eyes were--kind to me just now, but, oh Cleone, if so humble a fellow is--unworthy, as I fear,--I--I will try to--forget."

Very still she stood, looking upon his bent head, saw the quiver of his lips, and the griping of his strong hands. Now, when she spoke, her voice was very tender.

"Can you--ever forget?"

"I will--try!"

"Then--oh, Barnabas, don't! Because I--think I could--love this--humble fellow, Barnabas."

The moon, of course, has looked on many a happy lover, yet where find one, before or since, more radiant than young Barnabas; and the brook, even in its softest, most tender murmurs, could never hope to catch the faintest echo of Cleone's voice or the indescribable thrill of it.

And as for the pebble that was so round, so smooth and innocent-seeming, whether its part had been that of beneficent sprite, or malevolent demon, he who troubles to read on may learn.

CHAPTER XLVII

HOW BARNABAS FOUND HIS MANHOOD

"Oh--hif you please, sir!"

Barnabas started, and looking about, presently espied a figure in the shadow of the osiers; a very small figure, upon whose diminutive jacket were numerous buttons that glittered under the moon.

"Why--it's Milo of Crotona!" said Cleone.

"Yes, my lady--hif you please, it are," answered Milo of Crotona, touching the peak of his leather cap.

"But--what are you doing here? How did you know where to find us?"

"'Cause as I came up the drive, m'lady, I jest 'appened to see you a-walking together,--so I followed you, I did, m'lady."

"Followed us?" repeated Cleone rather faintly. "Oh!"

"And then--when I seen you slip, m'lady, I thought as 'ow I'd better--wait a bit. So I waited, I did." And here, again, Milo of Crotona touched the peak of his cap, and looked from Barnabas to Cleone's flushing loveliness with eyes wide and profoundly innocent,--a very cherub in top-boots, only his buttons (Ah, his buttons!) seemed to leer and wink one to another, as much as to say: "Oh yes! Of course! to--be--sure?"

"And what brings you so far from London?" inquired Barnabas, rather hurriedly.

"Coach, sir,--box seat, sir!"

"And you brought your master with you, of course,--is the Viscount here?"

"No, m'lady. I 'ad to leave 'im be'ind 'count of 'im being unfit to travel--"

"Is he ill?"

"Oh, no, not hill, m'lady,--only shot, 'e is."

"Shot!" exclaimed Barnabas, "how--where?"

"In the harm, sir,--all on 'count of 'is 'oss,--'Moonraker' sir."

"His horse?"

"Yessir. 'S arternoon it were. Ye see, for a long time I ain't been easy in me mind about them stables where 'im and you keeps your 'osses, sir, 'count of it not being safe enough,--worritted I 'ave, sir. So 's arternoon, as we was passing the end o' the street, I

sez to m'lud, I sez, 'Won't your Ludship jest pop your nob round the corner and squint your peepers at the 'osses?' I sez. So 'e laughs, easy like, and in we pops. And the first thing we see was your 'ead groom, Mr. Martin, wiv blood on 'is mug and one peeper in mourning a-wrastling wiv two coves, and our 'ead groom, Standish, wiv another of 'em. Jest as we run up, down goes Mr. Martin, but--afore they could maul 'im wiv their trotters, there's m'lud wiv 'is fists an' me wiv a pitchfork as 'appened to lie 'andy. And very lively it were, sir, for a minute or two. Then off goes a barker and off go the coves, and there's m'lud 'olding onto 'is harm and swearing 'eavens 'ard. And that's all, sir."

"And these men were--trying to get at the horses?"

"Ah! Meant to nobble 'Moonraker,' they did,--'im bein' one o' the favorites, d' ye see, sir, and it looked to me as if they meant to do for your 'oss, 'The Terror', as well."

"And is the Viscount much hurt?"

"Why no, sir. And it were only 'is whip-arm. 'Urts a bit o' course, but 'e managed to write you a letter, 'e did; an' 'ere it is."

So Barnabas took the letter, and holding it in the moonlight where Cleone could see it, they, together, made out these words:

> MY DEAR BEV,--There is durty work afoot. Some Raskells have tried to lame 'Moonraker,' but thanks to my Imp and your man Martin, quite unsuccessfully. How-beit your man Martin--regular game for all his years--has a broken nob and one ogle closed up, and I a ball through my arm, but nothing to matter. But I am greatly pirtirbed for the safety of 'Moonraker' and mean to get him into safer quarters and advise you to do likewise. Also, though your horse 'The Terror,' as the stable-boys call him, is not even in the betting, it almost seems, from what I can gather, that they meant to nobble him also. Therefore I think you were wiser to return at once, and I am anxious to see you on another matter as well. Your bets with Carnaby and Chichester have somehow got about and are the talk of the town, and from what I hear, much to your disparagement, I fear.
>
> A pity to shorten your stay in the country, but under the circumstances, most advisable.
>
> Yours ever, etc.,
>
> DICK.
>
> P.S. My love and service to the Duchess, Cleone and the Capt.

Now here Barnabas looked at Cleone, and sighed, and Cleone sighing also, nodded her head:

"You must go," said she, very softly, and sighed again.

"Yes, I must go, and yet--it is so very soon, Cleone!"

"Yes, it is dreadfully soon, Barnabas. But what does he mean by saying that people are talking of you to your disparagement? How dare they? Why should they?"

"I think because I, a rank outsider, ventured to lay a wager against Sir Mortimer Carnaby."

"Do you mean you bet him that you would win the race, Barnabas?"

"No,--only that I would beat Sir Mortimer Carnaby."

"But, oh Barnabas,--he _is_ the race! Surely you know he and the Viscount are favorites?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then you do think you can win?"

"I mean to try--very hard!" said Barnabas, beginning to frown a little.

"And I begin to think," said Cleone, struck by his resolute eyes and indomitable mouth, "oh, Barnabas--I begin to think you--almost may."

"And if I did?"

"Then I should be very--proud of you."

"And if I lost?"

"Then you would be--"

"Yes?"

"Just--"

"Yes, Cleone?"

"My, Barnabas! Ah, no, no!" she whispered suddenly, "you are crushing me--dreadfully, and besides, that boy has terribly sharp eyes!" and Cleone nodded to where Master Milo stood, some distance away, with his innocent orbs lifted pensively towards the heavens, more like a cherub than ever.

"But he's not looking, and oh, Cleone,--how can I bear to leave you so soon? You are more to me than anything else in the world. You are my life, my soul,--my honor,--oh my dear!"

"Do you--love me so very much, Barnabas?" said she, with a sudden catch in her voice.

"And always must! Oh my dear, my dear,--don't you know? But indeed, words are so small and my love is so great that I fear you can never quite guess, or I tell it all."

"Then, Barnabas,--you will go?"

"Must I, Cleone? It will be so very hard to lose you--so soon."

"But a man always chooses the harder course, doesn't he, Barnabas? And, dear, you cannot lose me,--and so you will go, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll go--because I love you!"

Then Cleone drew him deeper into the shade of the willows, and with a sudden, swift gesture, reached up her hands and set them about his neck.

"Oh my dear," she murmured, "oh Barnabas dear, I think I can guess--now. And I'm sure--the boy--can't see us--here!"

No, surely, neither this particular brook nor any other water-brook, stream or freshet, that ever sang, or sighed, or murmured among the reeds, could ever hope to catch all the thrilling tenderness of the sweet soft tones of Cleone's voice.

A brook indeed? Ridiculous!

Therefore this brook must needs give up attempting the impossible, and betake itself to offensive chuckles and spiteful whisperings, and would have babbled tales to the Duchess had that remarkable, ancient lady been versed in the language of brooks. As it was, she came full upon Master Milo still intent upon the heavens, it is true, but in such a posture that his buttons stared point-blank and quite unblushingly towards a certain clump of willows.

"Oh Lud!" exclaimed the Duchess, starting back, "dear me, what a strange little boy! What do you want here, little man?"

Milo of Crotona turned and--looked at her. And though his face was as cherubic as ever, there was haughty reproof in every button.

"Who are you?" demanded the Duchess; "oh, gracious me, what a pretty child!"

Surely no cherub--especially one in such knowing top-boots--could be reasonably expected to put up with this! Master Milo's innocent brow clouded suddenly, and the expression of his glittering buttons grew positively murderous.

"I'm Viscount Devenham's con-fee-dential groom, mam, I am!" said he coldly, and with his most superb air.

"Groom?" said the Duchess, staring, "what a very small one, to be sure!"

"It ain't inches as counts wiv 'osses, mam,--or hany-think else, mam, --it's nerves as counts, it is."

"Why, yes, you seem to have plenty of nerve!"

"Well, mam, there ain't much as I trembles at, there ain't,--and when I do, I don't show it, I don't."

"And such a pretty child, too!" sighed the Duchess.

"Child, mam? I ain't no child, I'm a groom, I am. Child yourself, mam!"

"Lud! I do believe he's even paying me compliments! How old are you, boy?"

"A lot more 'n you think, and hoceans more 'n I look, mam."

"And what's your name?"

"Milo, mam,--Milo o' Crotona, but my pals generally calls me Tony, for short, they do."

"Milo of Crotona!" repeated the Duchess, with her eyes wider than ever, "but he was a giant who slew an ox with his fist, and ate it whole!"

"Why, mam, I'm oncommon fond of oxes,--roasted, I am."

"Well," said the Duchess, "you are the very smallest giant I ever saw."

"Why, you ain't werry large yourself, mam, you ain't."

"No, I fear I am rather petite," said the Duchess with a trill of girlish laughter. "And pray, Giant, what may you be doing here?"

"Come up on the coach, I did,--box seat, mam,--to take Mr. Beverley back wiv me 'cause 'is 'oss ain't safe, and--"

"Not safe,--what do you mean, boy?"

"Some coves got in and tried to nobble 'Moonraker' and 'im--"

"Nobble, boy?"

"Lame 'em, mam,--put 'em out o' the running."

"The wretches!"

"Yes'm. Ye see us sportsmen 'ave our worritting times, we do."

"But where is Mr. Beverley?"

"Why, I ain't looked, mam, I ain't,--but they're down by the brook--behind them bushes, they are."

"Oh, are they!" said the Duchess, "Hum!"

"No mam,--'e's a-coming, and so's she."

"Why, Barnabas," cried the Duchess, as Cleone and he stepped out of the shadow, "what's all this I hear about your horse,--what is the meaning of it?"

"That I must start for London to-night, Duchess."

"Leave to-night? Absurd!"

"And yet, madam, Cleone seems to think I must, and so does Viscount Devenham,--see what he writes." So the Duchess took the Viscount's letter and, having deciphered it with some difficulty, turned upon Barnabas with admonishing finger upraised:

"So you 've been betting, eh? And with Sir Mortimer Carnaby and Mr. Chichester of all people?"

"Yes, madam."

"Ah! You backed the Viscount, I suppose?"

"No,--I backed myself, Duchess."

"Gracious goodness--"

"But only to beat Sir Mortimer Carnaby--"

"The other favorite. Oh, ridiculous! What odds did they give you?"

"None."

"You mean--oh, dear me!--you actually backed yourself--at even money?"

"Yes, Duchess."

"But you haven't a chance, Barnabas,--not a chance! You didn't bet much, I hope?"

"Not so much as I intended, madam."

"Pray what was the sum?"

"Twenty thousand pounds."

"Not--each?"

"Yes, madam."

"Forty thousand pounds! Against a favorite! Cleone, my dear," said the Duchess, with one of her quick, incisive nods, "Cleone, this Barnabas of ours is either a madman or a fool! And yet--stoop down, sir,--here where I can see you,--hum! And yet, Cleone, there are times when I think he is perhaps a little wiser than he seems,--nothing is so baffling as simplicity, my dear! If you wished to be talked about, Barnabas, you have succeeded admirably,--no wonder all London is laughing over such a preposterous bet. Forty thousand pounds! Well, it will at least buy you notoriety, and that is next to fame."

"Indeed, I hadn't thought of that," said Barnabas.

"And supposing your horse had been lamed and you couldn't ride,--how then?"

"Why, then, I forfeit the money, madam."

Now here the Duchess frowned thoughtfully, and thereafter said "ha!" so suddenly, that Cleone started and hurried to her side.

"Dear God-mother, what is it?"

"A thought, my dear!"

"But--"

"Call it a woman's intuition if you will."

"What is your thought, dear?"

"That you are right, Cleone,--he must go--at once!"

"Go? Barnabas?"

"Yes; to London,--now--this very instant! Unless you prefer to forfeit your money, Barnabas?"

But Barnabas only smiled and shook his head.

"You would be wiser!"

"But I was never very wise, I fear," said Barnabas.

"And--much safer!"

"Oh, God-mother,--do you think there is--danger, then?"

"Yes, child, I do. Indeed, Barnabas, you were wiser and safer to forfeit your wagers and stay here with me and--Cleone!"

But Barnabas only sighed and shook his head.

"Cleone," said the Duchess, "speak to him."

So blushing a little, sighing a little, Cleone reached out her hand to Barnabas, while the Duchess watched them with her young, bright eyes.

"Oh, Barnabas, God-mother is very wise, and if--there is danger--you mustn't go--for my sake."

But Barnabas shook his head again, and taking in his strong clasp the pleading hand upon his arm, turned to the Duchess.

"Madam," said he, "dear Duchess, to-night I have found my manhood, for to-night I have learned that a man must ever choose the hardest course and follow it--to the end. To-night Cleone has taught me--many things."

"And you will--stay?" inquired the Duchess.

"I must go!" said Barnabas.

"Then good-by--Barnabas!" said her Grace, looking up at him with a sudden, radiant smile, "good-by!" said she very softly, "it is a fine thing to be a gentleman, perhaps,--but it is a godlike thing to be--a man!" So saying, she gave him her hand, and as Barnabas stooped to kiss those small, white fingers, she looked down at his curly head with such an expression as surely few had ever seen within the eyes of this ancient, childless woman, her Grace of Camberhurst.

"Now Giant!" she called, as Barnabas turned towards Cleone, "come here, Giant, and promise me to take care of Mr. Beverley."

"Yes, mam,--all right, mam,--you jest leave 'im to me," replied Master Milo with his superb air, "don't you worrit on 'is account, 'e'll be all right along o' me, mam, 'e will."

"For that," cried the Duchess, catching him by two of his gleaming buttons, "for that I mean to kiss you, Giant!" The which, despite his reproving blushes, she did forthwith.

And Cleone and Barnabas? Well, it so chanced, her Grace's back was towards them; while as for Master Milo--abashed, and for once forgetful of his bepolished topboots, he became in very truth a child, though one utterly unused to the motherly touch of a tender woman's lips; therefore he suffered the embrace with closed eyes,--even his buttons were eclipsed, and, in that moment, the Duchess whispered something in his ear. Then he turned and followed after Barnabas, who was already striding away across the wide lawn, his head carried high, a new light in his eyes and a wondrous great joy at his heart, --a man henceforth--resolute to attempt all things, glorying in his strength and contemptuous of failure, because of the trill of a woman's voice and the quick hot touch of a woman's soft lips, whose caress had been in no sense--motherly. And presently, being come to the hospitable gates, he turned with bared head to look back at the two women, the one a childless mother, old and worn, yet wise with years, and the maid, strong and proud in all the glory of her warm, young womanhood. Side by side with arms entwined they stood, to watch young Barnabas, and in the eyes of each, an expression so much alike, yet so dissimilar. Then, with a flourish of his hat, Barnabas went on down the road, past the finger-post, with Milo of Crotona's small top-boots twinkling at his side.

"Sir," said he suddenly, speaking in an awed tone, "is she a real Doochess--the little old 'un?"

"Yes," nodded Barnabas, "very real. Why, Imp?"

"'Cos I called 'er a child, I did--Lord! An' then she--she kissed me, she did, sir--which ain't much in my line, it ain't. But she give me a guinea, sir, an' she likewise whispered in my ear, she did."

"Oh?" said Barnabas, thinking of Cleone--"whispered, did she?"

"Ah! she says to me--quick like, sir,--she says, 'tell 'im,' she says--meaning you, sir, 'tell 'im to beware o' Wilfred Chichester!' she says."

CHAPTER XLVIII

IN WHICH "THE TERROR," HITHERTO KNOWN AS "FOUR-LEGS," JUSTIFIES HIS NEW NAME

The chill of dawn was in the air as the chaise began to rumble over the London cobble-stones, whereupon Master Milo (who for the last hour had slumbered peacefully, coiled up in his corner like a kitten) roused himself, sat suddenly very upright, straightened his cap and pulled down his coat, broad awake all at once, and with his eyes as

round and bright as his buttons.

"Are you tired, Imp?" inquired Barnabas, yawning.

"Tired, sir, ho no, sir--not a bit, I ain't."

"But you haven't slept much."

"Slep', sir? I ain't slep'. I only jest 'appened to close me eyes, sir. Ye see, I don't need much sleep, I don't,--four hours is enough for any man,--my pal Nick says so, and Nick knows a precious lot, 'e do."

"Who is Nick?"

"Nick's a cobbler, sir,--boots and shoes,--ladies' and gents', and a very good cobbler 'e is too, although a cripple wiv a game leg. Me and 'im's pals, sir, and though we 'as our little turn-ups 'count of 'im coming it so strong agin the Quality, I'm never very 'ard on 'im 'count of 'is crutch, d'ye see, sir."

"What do you mean by the 'Quality,' Imp?"

"Gentle-folks, sir,--rich folks like you an' m'lud. 'I'd gillertine the lot, if I'd my way,' he says, 'like the Frenchies did in Ninety-three,' 'e says. But 'e wouldn't reelly o'course, for Nick's very tender-hearted, though 'e don't like it known. So we 're pals, we are, and I often drop in to smoke a pipe wiv 'im--"

"What! Do you smoke, Imp?"

"Why, yes, o' course, sir,--all grooms smokes or chews, but I prefers a pipe--allus 'ave, ah! ever since I were a kid. But I mostly only 'as a pipe when I drop in on my pal Nick in Giles's Rents."

"Down by the River?" inquired Barnabas.

"Yessir. And now, shall I horder the post-boy to stop?"

"What for?"

"Well, the stables is near by, sir, and I thought as you might like to take a glimp at the 'osses,--just to make your mind easy, sir."

"Oh, very well!" said Barnabas, for there was something in the boy's small, eager face that he could not resist.

Therefore, having paid and dismissed the chaise, they turned into a certain narrow by-street. It was very dark as yet, although in the east was a faint, gray streak, and the air struck so chill, after the warmth of the chaise, that Barnabas shivered violently, and, happening to glance down, he saw that the boy was shivering also. On they went, side by side, between houses of gloom and silence, and thus, in a while, came to another narrow street, or rather, blind alley, at the foot of which were the stables.

"Hush, sir!" said the Imp, staring away to where the stable buildings loomed up before them, shadowy and indistinct in the dawn. "Hush, sir!" he repeated, and Barnabas saw that he was creeping

forward on tip-toe, and, though scarce knowing why, he himself did the same.

They found the great swing doors fast, bolted from within, and, in this still dead hour, save for their own soft breathing, not a sound reached them. Then Barnabas laughed suddenly, and clapped Master Milo upon his small, rigid shoulder.

"There, Imp,--you see it's all right!" said he, and then paused, and held his breath.

"Did ye hear anythink?" whispered the boy.

"A chain--rattled, I think."

"And 't was in The Terror's' stall,--there? didn't ye hear somethink else, sir?"

"No!"

"I did,--it sounded like--" the boy's voice tailed off suddenly and, upon the silence, a low whistle sounded; then a thud, as of some one dropping from a height, quickly followed by another,--and thus two figures darted away, impalpable as ghosts in the dawn, but the alley was filled with the rush and patter of their flight. Instantly Barnabas turned in pursuit, then stopped and stood utterly still, his head turned, his eyes wide, glaring back towards the gloom of the stables. For, in that moment, above the sudden harsh jangling of chains from within, above the pattering footsteps of the fugitives without, was an appalling sound rising high and ever higher--shrill, unearthly, and full of horror and torment unspeakable. And now, sudden as it had come, it was gone, but in its place was another sound,--a sound dull and muffled, but continuous, and pierced, all at once, by the loud, hideous whinnying of a horse. Then Barnabas sprang back to the doors, beating upon them with his fists and calling wildly for some one to open.

And, in a while, a key grated, a bolt shrieked; the doors swung back, revealing Martin, half-dressed and with a lantern in his hand, while three or four undergrooms hovered, pale-faced, in the shadows behind.

"My horse!" said Barnabas, and snatched the lantern.

"'The Terror'!" cried Milo, "this way, sir!"

Coming to a certain shadowy corner, Barnabas unfastened and threw open the half-door; and there, rising from the gloom of the stall, was a fiendish, black head with ears laid back, eyes rolling, and teeth laid bare,--cruel teeth, whose gleaming white was hatefully splotched,--strong teeth, in whose vicious grip something yet dangled.

"Why--what's he got there!" cried Martin suddenly, and then--
"Oh, my God! sir,--look yonder!" and, covering his eyes, he pointed towards a corner of the stall where the light of the lantern fell. And--twisted and contorted,--something lay there; something hideously battered, and torn, and trampled; something that now lay so very quiet and still, but which had left dark splashes and stains on walls and flooring; something that yet clutched the knife which was to have hamstrung and ended the career of Four-legs once and for

all; something that had once been a man.

CHAPTER XLIX

WHICH, BEING SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT, IS CONSEQUENTLY SHORT

"My dear fellow," said the Viscount, stifling a yawn beneath the bedclothes, "you rise with the lark,--or should it be linnet? Anyhow, you do, you know. So deuced early!"

"I am here early because I haven't been to bed, Dick."

"Ah, night mail? Dev'lish uncomfortable! Didn't think you'd come back in such a deuce of a hurry, though!"

"But you wanted to see me, Dick, what is it?"

"Why,--egad, Bev, I'm afraid it's nothing much, after all. It's that fellow Smivvle's fault, really."

"Smivvle?"

"Fellow actually called here yesterday--twice, Bev. Dev'lish importunate fellow y'know. Wanted to see you,--deuced insistent about it, too!"

"Why?"

"Well, from what I could make out, he seemed to think--sounds ridiculous so early in the morning,--but he seemed to fancy you were in some kind of--danger, Bev."

"How, Dick?"

"Well, when I told him he couldn't see you because you had driven over to Hawkhurst, the fellow positively couldn't sit still--deuced nervous, y'know,--though probably owing to drink. 'Hawkhurst!' says he, staring at me as if I were a ghost, my dear fellow, 'yes,' says I, 'and the door's open, sir!' 'I see it is,' says he, sitting tight. 'But you must get him back!' 'Can't be done!' says I. 'Are you his friend?' says he. 'I hope so,' says I. 'Then,' says he, before I could remind him of the door again, 'then you must get him back--at once!' I asked him why, but he only stared and shook his head, and so took himself off. I'll own the fellow shook me rather, Bev, --he seemed so very much in earnest, but, knowing where you were, I wouldn't have disturbed you for the world if it hadn't been for the horses."

"Ah, yes--the horses!" said Barnabas thoughtfully. "How is your arm now, Dick?"

"A bit stiff, but otherwise right as a trivet, Bev. But now--about yourself, my dear fellow,--what on earth possessed you to lay Carnaby such a bet? What a perfectly reckless fellow you are! Of course the money is as good as in Carnaby's pocket already, not to

mention Chichester's--damn him! As I told you in my letter, the affair has gone the round of the clubs,--every one is laughing at the 'Galloping Countryman,' as they call you. Jerningham came within an ace of fighting Tufton Green of the Guards about it, but the Marquis is deuced knowing with the barkers, and Tufton, very wisely, thought better of it. Still, I'm afraid the name will stick--!"

"And why not, Dick? I am a countryman, indeed quite a yokel in many ways, and I shall certainly gallop--when it comes to it."

"Which brings us back to the horses, Bev. I 've been t

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