JONATHAN WILD'S STRATAGEM;

OR, THE

HIGHWAYMAN'S ESCAPE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CAPTAIN HERON; OR, THE HIGHWAYMAN OF EPPING FORREST," "THE HANGMAN OF NEWGATE; OR, THE HIGHWAYMAN'S ADVENTURE," "TOM RIPON AND JACK SHEPPARD; OR, THE HIGHWAYMAN AND HOUSE-BREAKER," "DICK TURPIN'S ADVENTURE; OR, THE RIVAL HIGHWAYMEN," "THE KING AND THE HIGHWAYMAN; OR, THE RACE ON THE ROAD," "JACK SHEPPARD'S STRATAGEM; OR, BLUESKIN'S BAFFLED," ETC.

BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED.

NEW YORK:
DICK & FITZGERALD, PUBLISHERS,
No. 18 ANN STREET.

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CHAPTER I.

THE WOUNDED FAWN—THE HIGHWAYMAN AND THE THIEF-TAKER—IN NEWGATE.

A storm had just ceased pouring a deluge upon Epping Forest, and tossing its tree-tops, when a heavy coach, the horses to which had been frightened, stopped at an old well-house in a leafy glade, in what was called the Well Road, in contradistinction, to another, the Lower Road.

In it were two men and a fair young girl.

The elder of the two looked out on the place, an open space with huge trees around an old ruined well.

Suddenly there darted out from behind the well-house, a woman in rags who waved a forked stick she had in her hand and screamed: "No, the birds shall not pick my boy's eyes out! Better be my poor gibbetted boy than the wicked Judge Tarleton!"

"Come away!" gasped the elder man.

A flash of lightning disclosed him to the woman, and she ran so close to him as to touch him with her stick.

"Keep off, hag!" cried he.

"I am a hag, now; but I was fair, thirty years ago, when my boy struck you, Judge Tarleton, to the earth. But my boy snared a hare, and, being brought before you, you remembered the old blow. What did you? pretended to recognize him as one who had robbed you, and so my son swung on a gibbet within the next three days! Time, time has come!" added she, rushing forward.

But she stopped, for the girl in the carriage had met her eyes.

"Are you an angel?" she said; gently.

"No, no," replied the girl, "I am only unhappy Edith Tarleton. But you, you suffer. Take this little purse, poor woman."

"No, only pray for me. But let me hold your hand a minute—prophecy is upon me.

"Much shall you see of the wild and the wonderful; but yet there shall be such golden happiness, that your heart will be as a little child's for peace and joy! I am called!—I come! What! more hawks, my boy, about there? Close those poor eyes; do not let them peck at them. Away! I strike at you!"

Quite forgetful of the Judge, the maniac disappeared in the ruins of the old well-house.

Then Sir John Tarleton—a dignitary who wanted to sell his daughter to the dissolute son of a Minister of State for the Chancellorship of England, and immunity for various transactions that the Right Honorable Sir

John Tarleton stood in fear of—bade the postillion proceed. But the girl leaped from the carriage.

"I will not marry Lord Warringdale," said Edith firmly.

"You will not — you will not! Help me, Mathew—help me to force this most unnatural daughter into the carriage."

Whereupon, the Judge and he called Mathew forced her into the vehicle which dashed off.

Suddenly, the postillion saw that a horseman, on a coal-black steed was reining in the leading horse on the near side.

"Halt!" then cried a sharp voice.

The next moment, the carriage window was let down, and the voice demanded the valuables of its occupants. The moment the highwayman's face was seen by Edith, she started.

"Do you not remember, sir, the poor wounded fawn before my father's house," said she to the highwayman, "which you saved from him who would have slain it? I am the fawn—save me!"

"You'll trust me?"

"I will."

The highwayman caught up the girl from the carriage and darted off with her into the forest, a shot from Sir John missing him. He reined in at last under a tree and asked Edith her future intentions: they were to go to her aunt's Lady Castleneau, in London.

But, unexpectedly, a voice shouted: "Now, you have him!" and at the head of half a dozen men, Jonathan Wild, the thief-taker, rushed upon the highwayman. But the latter hid Edith behind a tree and fought his way through them. Edith disclosed her hiding-place, and Wild (hearing her name, and with the intention of making her sign a transfer of property on coming of age) took her to his house in London. From it she was rescued by the highwayman, Captain Heron, by aid of one named Ogle and his wife, who joined a band of robbers which Heron had in Epping Forest.

A great assistance to the Captain was a little lad by the name of Tom Ripon, who had struck up an acquaintance with Heron's horse Daisy, an acquaintance which had been of great assistance on several occasions to the highwayman.

Ogle placed Edith with her aunt, but from that place Jonathan Wild dragged her by main force, and took her to the old Palace of Kensington to there imprison her. But she pretending to be cold, got Jonathan Wild to mount the coach-box, when she darted off in the darkness.

Lord Warringdale (Edith's intended) had meanwhile been stopped by Captain Heron and forced to sign a paper abandoning his claim to Edith's hand. He was a profligate and worse, for he had committed a murder on one Lord Bridgewater to clear some gaming debts.

Captain Heron had been captured in his attempt to rescue Edith Tarleton, and taken to Newgate.

Ogle hastened to the residence of Edith's aunt in Bedford Square.

He told her what would be the course with Captain Heron, in these brief, but wondrously plain words:

"It's Tuesday to-day," said he; "he will be committed to-day—tried on Friday—hanged on Monday! That's it, madam!"

"It will break Edith's heart!" cried Lady Castleneau, wringing her hands.

Suddenly the old lady started, and looking up sharply, she exclaimed:

"Is Mr. Sharples still the Governor of Newgate?"

"Yes, my lady."

"I will do what I can then. And, at least, the man who owes his situation to a good word in season, which I gave him to Sir Justin Marks, when he was Lord Mayor, will give me information."

"Do you know Mr. Sharples, ma'am?"

"I do."

Ogle shook his head.

"And you, too, know him?"

"A hard man, my lady. A hard man, with no heart at all in his breast, but a bit of granite-stone, ma'am, instead."

"No—no! Why—why, when I last saw him, he seemed so very—so very full of human kindness that I thought him the best and kindest of human creatures!"

"Ma'am!" said Ogle, putting himself into an oratorical attitude; "they say as there's a sort of crocodile, somewhere in Ingy or Afriky, or somewheres else outlandish that can cry like a child, and go on a-weeping and a-wailing till your heart bleeds to hear him; and when you runs up to do a service to somebody in distress, as you thinks it is, he snaps you up, and crack goes all your bones at once!"

"But——"

Ogle waved his arm deprecatingly.

"In human natur, ma'am, there's a sort of people who are always a-crawling about everybody, and pretending to shed tears over everything, and to praise everybody, and to be so good, and so tender-hearted, and noble, and generous, and have such fine feelings, but they are only twin-brothers of the crocodile, ma'am, and, so soon as they can, they show their teeth."

"Ah!" said Lady Castleneau, "you wish me to understand that Mr. Sharples is one of these sycophantic hypocrites, by this allegory."

"It may be an alligator!" said Ogle, "but I heard it was a crocodile, though mayhap they are much of a muchness. But don't trust Mr. Sharples, the Governor of Newgate, ma'am!"

"There is no occasion. But I will see him. Call Anthony!"

"Anthony! Hilloa!"

"Nay this will summon him!"

Lady Castleneau touched the little silver bell which was on the breakfast-table and old Anthony appeared, with his respectful bow.

"Anthony, you will go to Mr. Green, the livery-stable man, and tell him to put a pair of horses to my carriage at once, as I am going out."

"Out, my lady?"

"Yes, Anthony. And you can put on your over-coat, and drive, I daresay."

"Yes, my lady; but the old coach has not been out of the stables these eighteen months."

"Never mind."

"And it is forty years old."

"Never mind that, either. I will go in my own coach. Mr. Green will lend the horses. Go to him at once, Anthony, and do as I bid you."

To old Anthony, the will of his mistress was only second in his mind to the dispensations of providence, and he set about at once obeying her orders.

And when the old coach, which had been made forty years ago, was really at the door, and when old Anthony got on to the box with a livery coat that no doubt was new and fashionable about the time the Duke of Marlborough came home from his first campaign in the low countries, it was indeed a sight to see.

The old coach was very roomy—very roomy indeed. The hammer cloth looked like the draperies of a state bed, and the shape and aspect of the vehicle, take it for all in all, was eccentric in the extreme.

An odour, compounded of damp straw and decaying leather, came from the whole affair, but on the panels was a gorgeous display of the family arms of the Castleneaus.

"Stop, my lady," said Ogle, as Lady Castleneau reached the hall. "Suppose I go likewise. If there is such a thing as an old livery coat!"

"Oh, indeed there is!" said Martha. "In a moment I'll bring it—it's the very thing!"

And Martha brought an ancient coat that reached down to Ogle's heels, and the collar of which, when elevated, only left the top of the head visible, over which he put a cocked hat with a cockade in it, which Martha likewise brought him.

"That will do," he said. "Jonathan himself would not know me!"

"Your nose!" said Martha, hesitatingly.

"My nose?"

"It's very red!"

"So it is! so it is! He'll know me by that! What shall I do?"

"Whitening!"

"To be sure—to be sure! Commend me to the wit of a woman now in an emergency."

A liberal dose of whitening to Ogle's nose made such an alteration in his appearance that although he certainly presented a singularly frightful aspect, Jonathan Wild himself could not have known him.

Ogle then opened the old coach door ceremoniously for Lady Castleneau, and she stepped in.

"To Newgate," she said.

"To Newgate," said Ogle to Anthony.

"Bless us! ejaculated Anthony.

Ogle scrambled up behind the coach, and off set the horses. The ancient vehicle swayed from side to side in a very alarming manner, and the wheels creaked fearfully; but some kind angels, no doubt, knowing the errand of mercy on which Lady Castleneau was going, slily greased the axles of the old coach, and held its joints and springs together, for it fairly reached the Old Bailey in safety at a quarter to ten o'clock.

Now Lady Castleneau was resolved to see Captain Heron if it were possible, and to hear from him all that had passed in relation to Edith and her father which he was cognisant of, and then she intended to proceed to the Secretary of State or to the Lord Chancellor, and insist upon the protection of the law being thrown around Edith, in regard to person and property.

How it happened, however, that the old lady did nothing of the sort, but was compelled, in a very dashing manner, to aid in the escape of a prisoner from Newgate, we shall soon see.

CHAPTER II.

THE ESCAPE FROM NEWGATE.—THE SHERIFF'S COACH.

Our forefathers were not such early folks in the way of business, as we are.

By a quarter to ten o'clock, now, the City is all in the rush and bustle of active business. It was not so at the period of our tale when old Lady Castleneau's antiquated carriage stood at the Governor's house, at Newgate.

To be sure, all the shops were open, but there were not many passengers in the street; and only two or three stopped to gape at the coach. One of these was a boy, carrying two thin pieces of planking under his arm, and with a carpenter's cap on his head.

This boy laughed, and old Anthony frowned at him, as he said, "Be off with you, do! Go about your business, you young scamp!"

"Why, Noah," said the boy; "where did you come from, eh?"

Anthony made a cut at him with the whip; but the boy only laughed, and skipped out of the way, as he cried out, "If I were not busy, old fellow, I'd have your wig, as sure as my name is Jack Sheppard!"

"Go on, Jack, go on!" said one of the turnkeys of Newgate, who crossed the way at this moment. "I wonder you come down the Old Bailey, boy,

when you know who you are, and what was the last ride your father took from Newgate."

"To Tyburn!" said the boy, clenching his right hand. "To Tyburn, it was! But you may put me in the stone jug, when you can, though you won't keep me there, I can tell you! Only wait till I'm a man, that's all—that's all!

"'Where are you now?' says Claude Duval.
With a heigho! 'Stand! your money or life!'
And a dandy chap was he!
Says the Bishop, 'I've had an ugly fall,'
With 'a heigho! 'Bless us, I'm not for strife!'
And a fearsome chap was he."

Ogle laughed, as he got down from behind the coach, and opened the door for Lady Castleneau.

"Knock and ring," she said.

"Yes, ma'am."

Ogle did so, with an energy, at the Governor's door, that brought a man to it in a moment, who flung it wide open, thinking it was one of the sheriffs at the least.

"The Governor at home?" said Ogle.

He spoke in such an altered tone of voice from his usual one, that no one could by that have possibly recognized him.

"Yes—but——"

"A lady to see him."

Ogle did not wait to parley the matter; but assisted Lady Castleneau from her coach into the house, where the quiet dignity of her manner, and the unmistakable air of a gentlewoman about her, awed the man into at once showing her into a handsome enough room.

"Who shall I say, madam?"

"Lady Castleneau."

"My dear madam!" exclaimed a voice, at this moment. "I am delighted—de-lighted to see you! What fortunate circumstance has done me the honor of a visit from your ladyship! I am de-lighted!"

"Thank you, Mr. Sharples."

"And you are looking so well, too!"

"Thank you again. It happens that you have some one a prisoner here, who is in possession of some facts that I want to know."

"In-deed!"

"Yes. Can I see him?"

"See him? To be sure—to be sure! Why," added Mr. Sharples, lowering his tone, "I'll let him go if it's a light case!"

"Thank you! It is!"

"Who, then?"

"Captain Heron!"

Mr. Sharples started back.

"The highwayman! The celebrated—the well-known—the notorious Captain Heron! The—a—the highwayman and murderer!"

"Murderer?"

"Yes, murderer! He has murdered no less a person than my Lord Bridgewater!"

"No! Oh, no!"

"The evidence is quite conclusive, ma'am."

"Just heaven! can human nature be so contrary? Can it be possible the heart of a murderer can feel likewise the tenderest and most generous emotions? It cannot be—it cannot be!"

"I really cannot, my lady, let him go."

"I do not ask you, Mr. Sharples, but if you have any remembrance of some benefit I was able to confer on you years since, you will let me see him!"

"Hem! really! I—a—it is so irregular! But if your ladyship really wishes it (and here Mr. Sharples smiled), as your ladyship is not likely to have come on an errand other than you disclose——"

"What do you mean?"

"Just that it is not a plan of escape."

Lady Castleneau looked disdainful.

"Well, well! I will send for him here, my lady; only you must not object to my being present at your interview."

"On the contrary, I would rather

you were; as you will then hear that it is on account of a relative of my own, who is very dear to me, that I wish to question this man."

"Very good—very good! Excuse me a moment or two, and he shall be sent for."

The Governor left Lady Castleneau alone in the room. On the table there were various papers and half-open letters. One caught the eye of Lady Castleneau, although she was by far too scrupulously honorable to read it, yet she could not help seeing the words:

"And let the evidence be quite conclusive, that he may be got rid of next Monday, without fail. Yours,

"WARRINGDALE."

A painful feeling came over the heart of Lady Castleneau, to the effect that these words related to Captain Heron.

She was quite right in the conjecture. The letter was one just arrived from Lord Warringdale to the Governor of Newgate, where he had heard that Captain Heron was a prisoner.

The door opened and the Governor appeared.

"He will be here directly," he said. "I have sent for him."

Lady Castleneau inclined her head. Then there were footsteps in the passage outside the door, and it was opened.

Captain Heron advanced two steps into the room, with a look of surprise on his face.

There was the clank of the fetters in which he was partially held, and he was rather flushed with the sudden excitement of being told a lady was waiting to see him.

"What lady," was uppermost ever in his mind, "but his own darling Edith?"

Lady Castleneau's lips quivered painfully as she saw Captain Heron, and she said to herself:

"Still the strange likeness! It came over me before I saw him! Still the strange resemblance to one now no more! It must be accidental."

Captain Heron's eyes lighted up with that pleasant look that they could at any moment assume, and he said gently:

"Lady Castleneau, I believe? The dear aunt of Edith Tarleton?"

The old lady continued gazing at Captain Heron for a few moments in silence, and then, with a deep sigh, she said:

"I am the aunt of Edith Tarleton. She has told me all, and for her sake I would fain befriend you, if it be possible."

"Then she is in safety and with you?" cried Captain Heron, with a glance of satisfaction in his eyes.

"Alas, no!"

"No? No?"

"Her father has taken her from me. May heaven, in its goodness, protect her!"

"Amen! amen! to that prayer," responded Captain Heron; "and if, my dear madam, you have paid this visit to lift from my mind a load of sorrow and conjecture, by telling me that Edith is at all events, free from the villain Wild, I thank you with all my heart!"

The Governor coughed at this, and said:

"Indeed, Captain Heron, I don't know why Mr. Wild should be called hard names just for doing his duty; but of course you are not likely to be pleased with him, since you are what you are."

"Nor is any one pleased with Jonathan Wild," said Captain Heron, "except those who share in his plunder, or to whom he is useful!"

The Governor bit his lips, and muttered something inaudibly.

Then Lady Castleneau spoke in a tone of commiseration to Captain Heron.

"Believe me, sir, I am very sorry to

see you as you are; and if it gives you satisfaction to know that Edith is with her father, although that father is—is —"

"I comprehend you, my dear madam. We will not talk of him; but let me implore you to do your utmost to save that dear girl from being forced into a union from which her heart and mind revolt!"

"I will—indeed I will!"

"A thousand blessings on you!"

Tears started to Lady Castleneau's eyes, and she added, "It is from you that I want to hear if Sir John uttered any threat to Edith, in case she should refuse to marry my Lord Warringdale?"

"He did, indeed—abundance of threats!"

"Then I will go to the Lord Chancelor, who cannot refuse to make her a ward of his Court!"

"Do so—oh, do so at once!"

"And I will see Sir Dominick Browne!"

"Alas, madam! he is not to be seen! He has been away from his house for a long time, and no one seems to know what has become of him!"

"You know him?"

"I do. He was the friend of my youth; and as certain as I am that there is some mystery connected with my birth, so certain am I that Sir Dominick Browne knows of it!"

Captain Heron turned his eyes away from old Lady Castleneau as he uttered these words, and then, with a wonderful acuteness for her years, and considering her little acquaintance with the world, she said, "You are not yourself ignorant of the mystery?"

"That is true. But—but——"

"Nay, do not think that from idle curiosity I would seek to read your heart."

"My heart is easily enough read," said Captain Heron, and laying an expression on the word "heart." "Edith! Edith! shall I ever in this world look upon your dear face again?"

Lady Castleneau was much affected. She had all a woman's sympathy with real and sincere love; and the ingenuous countenance and tones of the highwayman convinced her that his was of that quality.

The Governor laughed scornfully, as he interposed, in a rough voice. "Saving your presence, my Lady Castleneau," he said, "I can easily answer the Captain. He never will see the young lady again, for his fate is fixed!"

"Fixed, say you, Mr. Sharples?"

"Yes, my lady! Next Monday Captain Heron will bid the world 'good morning' at Tyburn?"

"Good heavens!'

"It is certain!"

"But are you my judge and jury?" said Captain Heron, in a scornful tone.

"No, Captain; but Sir John Tarleton will be your judge, and Jonathan Wild has already pronounced your sentence, and he is always right in these little affairs!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes. And now, my Lady Castleneau, I am exceeding my duty very much; and, good gracious! there's the Sheriff!"

"The Sheriff?" said Lady Castleneau.

"The Sheriff?" said Captain Heron, as he went, in two strides, to the window, his fetters clanking as he stepped.

A gorgeous coach had stopped at the door of the Governor's house; and there was some altercation going on between the Sheriff's coachman and old Anthony, because the latter did not move on with Lady Castleneau's old coach sufficiently quickly out of the way.

Captain Heron turned sharply round with his back to the window, and faced the Governor of Newgate. Lady Castleneau sat somewhat to the left hand of the highwayman, but very nearly between him and the Gover nor.

It was a sudden thought—a flash of the suggestive faculty at the moment, which acted upon Captain Heron; he welcomed it by an exclamation as if it had come upon him by surprise.

With a rush, that almost had the appearance of a leap about it, he reached the Governor, and clutched him by the throat.

"A word—a cry—a struggle—and you are a dead man!"

"Mur——"

"Hush! That word again, and I will——"

The pressure of the hand of Captain Heron on his throat, supplied the words. The Governor got red and then livid in the face.

Lady Castleneau uttered a faint cry.

"For the love of life and liberty to me, madam," said Captain Heron, "be still. Ah! this will do!"

As the Governor made an effort to move from the chair on which he sat, Captain Heron saw the silver-mounted butt of a pistol show in a breast-pocket of his coat. To possess himself of it was the work of an instant.

Bang! bang! rat! tat! tat! came a knock at the outer door, by the Sheriff's footman.

The Governor made some inarticulate sound.

Lady Castleneau pressed both her hands upon her heart and looked very pale.

"Do not faint, my dear madam," said Captain Heron. "Who shall say that it will not be for Edith's sake that I shall be free?"

"What ought I to do?—oh! what ought I to do?"

"Nothing, Lady Castleneau—nothing! You aid me not—you are quite helpless! Now, Mr. Governor!"

Captain Heron released the throat of Mr. Sharples, and stepped behind his chair. Something cold and hard touched the Governor at the back of the neck.

"Help! murder!"

The cold, hard something pressed closer and closer, until it was absolutely painful.

Captain Heron spoke:

"Mr. Sharples, the muzzle of your own pistol is at your neck—the trigger is beneath my finger. Sit still and do as I bid you, and you are in no danger of your life; but resist, or give an alarm, and you perish! To a man who stands in such jeopardy as you have declared I do, it matters not that he makes a vacancy in the office of Governor of Newgate! You comprehend?"

"I—I—do!"

"You submit?"

"Mur—— I mean, mercy! I'm father of a family!"

"Glad to hear it!"

A rap came at the door of the room

"Say, come in!"

"Come in!" cried the Governor.

The door was flung wide open, and a voice announced, in a loud tone:

"His Honor the Sheriff!"

A little fat man, with a very red face, and a comical circle of grey hair covering his otherwise bald head, and the chain of office of the Shrievalty round his neck, and hanging low on his breast, bustled into the room.

"Well, sir—well, sir!" he said. "Eh, Mr. Governor—sir—this won't do, eh? Here have I been bamboozled—no, I mean emboozled—bezled—bam—bum What is it?—embimbeezled by that man you recommended to me, Mr.—— Eh?—Eh?—oh! beg pardon, ma'am! Don't move for me! I'm only the Sheriff!—that's all!"

The little fat man said this as if he considered he at once struck every body dumb by his condescension, as some great potentate might say, "I am only an Emperor!"

And then he looked at the Governor, and saw Captain Heron behind his chair.

"Bless me, Mr. Sharples, you have

company! Why—why, what's the meaning, eh? What's that?"

Captain Heron had suddenly slipped the low cravat that the Governor wore from his neck, and tied it tightly under his chin, and to the back of the chair.

The Sheriff looked aghast.

The Governor only rolled his eyes around.

"Now, sir," said Captain Heron, as he got hold of the hands of the Governor, and pulled them through the rails at the back of the chair, and tied them together at the wrists with the ends of the cravat.

It was a very ingenious arrangement.

If Mr. Sharples pulled and tugged to get his hands at liberty, he tightened the cravat round his neck, and strangulation was imminent. If he moved his neck, he jammed his hands hard against the sharp rails of the back of the chair.

If he were not to sit still, he would be virtually hanged at once.

The little Sheriff began to see that there was danger. A blue color began to spread over his face, in lieu of the red that usually found a place there. He screwed up his lips, and turned towards the door.

Lady Castleneau stood between him and it. She was a good head taller than the Sheriff; and as he stopped short and looked up in her face, it was quite a picture to see them both standing there, looking at each other and speaking not a word.

Then Captain Heron placed his hand on the Sheriff's shoulder.

Had that hand weighed a ton, it could not have more effectually moved the Sheriff, for he flopped down to the floor, in a sitting posture, in a moment.

"Fire! murder!"

"Silence!"

The muzzle of the pistol touched the Sheriff just between the eyes as Captain Heron leant over him.

The Sheriff gasped and turned more blue in the face than before.

"Listen to me," said Captain Heron, in his low, soft, musical tones. "I am Captain Heron, the highwayman! My object is to escape. You can aid me in so doing. I do not want to harm a hair of your head."

The Sheriff, in a weak, imbecile kind of a way, put up one hand and felt for the little circle of gray hair, which stood on end all around his head.

"You will take me with you in your carriage," added Captain Heron; "and you will put me down where I shall direct. You will call me Mr. Smith, and you will, for the next hour, obey me in all things, or——"

The pistol barrel pressed closely on the brow of the Sheriff, and the muzzle made a small ring upon the skin of a different color from the rest of his face.

The Sheriff moved his hands like the fins of a huge turtle, and he burst into tears. His mind was evidently off its balance.

"Save my life and take my money!" he said. "Oh, dear! oh, dear! A little of the green fat, Mr. Remembrancer! Wine with you, Mr. Mace! Bless us and save us all! I am but a poor creature—a very poor creature! My dear, don't look so angry! You know you do always have your own way; so go to Alderman Gibletts as often as you like! The Lord have mercy upon me! Amen! Spare my life and take my money! A little brandy-and-water, now, just to settle one's stomach; or a glass neat, after the fish! Oh, dear! oh, dear! it's a bad world, a wicked world! If, my unfortunate friend, you have anything to say, now that you are about to be hanged, I, as the Sheriff, will only be too happy to—to—Eh? Did you speak? A little of the marrow, if you please! I leave my body to the earth and my money to my wife!"

He sobbed aloud, and swayed to

and fro in all the imbecility of grief.

"This is troublesome," said Captain Heron.

Lady Castleneau did not speak, but she looked very pale.

The Governor glared at the highwayman, with eyes in which the concentrated malice of a dozen men might be seen.

"Be quiet!" said the Captain, giving the Sheriff a slight tap on the top of the head.

He was silent in a moment.

The Captain stepped up to the Governor.

"Mr. Sharples, these fetters I wear are fastened by a padlock. Have you the key?"

"My master-key opens all fetters."

"Where is it?"

"Ha! ha!"

"Where is it?"

The pistol-barrel was close to the eyes of the Governor, and he looked along it into the calm, resolute eyes of Captain Heron for a moment or two in silence. Then he said:

"My right pocket."

"Very good."

Captain Heron found the master-key and was free of his fetters in another minute.

"Now, Mr. Sheriff!"

"Yes, sir! Oh, dear! yes!"

"Get up!"

The Sheriff scrambled to his feet.

"We will go out arm-in-arm, if you please to your coach. Lady Castleneau, you, too, had better go home at once. Heaven bless you, and endow you with all the happiness this work can afford you!"

"We will go out arm-in-arm!" said the Sheriff, in an insane kind of way. "He! he! oh!"

"Come!" said the Captain.

"Come!" added the Sheriff.

Captain Heron opened the door. He saw and felt that the Sheriff was in such a state of mental confusion, that the imitative and repetitive power only remained to him, so he resolved to make him useful in that fashion.

"My carriage," said Captain Heron.

"My carriage!" called out the Sheriff.

"Come along, my dear Mr. Smith," added the Captain.

"Come along, my dear Mr. Smith," said the Sheriff.

"Quite delighted to see you."

"Quite delighted to see you!"

There was one man in the hall of the Governor's house—a sort of under turnkey of the prison, who acted as door-keeper—and he stared in amazement to see the Sheriff come out arm-in-arm from the Governor's room with Captain Heron, the highwayman.

"The Secretary of State will ask his own questions of you," said Captain Heron.

"The Secretary of State will ask his own questions of you," repeated the Sheriff.

"Oh, that's it!" said the turnkey. "It's hazardous. Shall I go with you, Mr. Sheriff?"

"Mind your own business, you rascal," whispered Heron.

"Mind your own business, you rascal," said the Sheriff.

The man slipped back, after opening wide the door of the Governor's house. Captain Heron bowed low to Lady Castleneau, and handed her to her coach with one hand, while he kept fast hold of the cuff of the Sheriff's coat with the other.

"For the love of heaven," said Lady Castleneau, "place yourself in safety soon; and oh, leave this life you are leading, and try honestly to live!"

"Too late!"

"No—no! For Edith's sake!"

"Oh, what an invocation! Tell her, if you see her that—that——"

"I know what you would say. Farewell!"

Lady Castleneau was in her coach.

"Home!" said Captain Heron, and Anthony drove off; but Ogle, who at

once recognized the Captain, had leaped down from behind, and stood the picture of amazement, as Heron followed the Sheriff into the gorgeous coach that stood at hand.

"Swallow Street," said the Captain.

"Swallow Street," cried the Sheriff, and then he slipped off the seat of the coach, and fainted away on the mat that was at the bottom of it; but the door had been shut, and the carriage was in motion.

Ogle rubbed his eyes.

"I'm in a dream!" he said.

"Out of the way, will you?" said the Sheriff's footman, as he was scrambling up behind to the perch.

"No," said Ogle. "Stop!"

"Eh?"

"I won't, then!"

A tug at the footman's legs landed him in the road, and Ogle was up behind the Sheriff's coach in a moment. The well-fed horses went quickly, and the carriage made rapid way down Snow Hill, and up Holborn.

There was a little window—a square of glass—it was about six inches each way—in the back of the coach, and Ogle clattered on it with his nails until he attracted the attention of Captain Heron within.

A small pad or cushion covered the window on the inside, but it was moveable, and the highwayman put it aside and saw Ogle's face.

Ogle made signs to signify that he would break the window, and Captain Heron assented by a nod. Then Ogle carefully splintered the glass with a knife and the noise of the wheels of the coach drowned the sharp crackle of the broken glass.

The pieces fell inside on to the prostrate Sheriff.

"Is it you, Captain," said Ogle, "or a 'happarition?'"

"I am here, Ogle? Where is Daisy?"

"Gone home, I think, Captain."

"To the forest?"

"I fancy so."

"And the boy, Tom?"

"I don't know."

"Yes; it must be so! He spoke the words to her I gave him, and she is safe. Ogle, you will go to Epping Forest, and when there you will stop in the wood in any shady place you like, and call 'Herons and Hawks,' until some one comes to you. Then you will show this ring, and they will trust you. Tell them to send Tom with Daisy to his mother's."

"Yes, Captain! Miss Edith——"

"Ah! you saw her?"

"I did, Captain! She is not with Lady Castleneau."

"I know that. The Judge has her—her father!"

"I don't think it."

"No?"

"No, Captain; not while Jonathan Wild has a hand in the business. But I say, Captain, here we are at the corner of Swallow Street, and the coachman is looking about him to know where he shall stop."

"All is well! You get down, and be off."

Ogle was gone in a moment.

Then Captain Heron pulled the check-string, and the coach stopped. He opened the door himself and got out, and shut it sharply again.

"Good day, Mr. Sheriff," he said. "I will not be late at dinner, you may depend. Home, coachman—home at once!"

The coachman touched his three-cornered hat, and drove on.

Captain Heron stood in the Oxford Road, at the corner of Old Swallow Street, free!

CHAPTER IV.

EDITH'S ADVENTURES IN THE LANE.—AN ESCAPE.—THE RIDE TO LONDON.

THE last thing that could have occurred to the mind of Jonathan Wild

would certainly have been that Edith Tarleton, at the moment when he thought she was past all chances of rescue, would have found the means of escape.

When he opened the coach door, after she had so successfully left the vehicle, and found her gone, one might have thought, for one or two brief moments, that Wild had received a shock sufficient to deprive him of his senses.

But his instant pursuit was futile. Bewildered by the darkness of the night—confused by the shadows of the trees on either side of the road, and still more confounded and deprived of his ordinary clear-sighted sagacity by the passion that raged in heart and brain, he passed the same lane down which Edith had flown for refuge.

"Edith!" he shouted. "Where are, girl? Speak to me, and I will take you where you please! Home, or even to him whom you love, in Epping Forest! Speak to me, I say, or dread the vengeance of one who never fails!"

Jonathan stood still and listened, but the night wind, and the solemn patter of the rain among the trees, were the only sounds that met his ears.

Returning to the coach, then, Wild had one of the horses taken out, and mounting it—wretched hack as it was—he urged it to great speed, and went to town.

Edith ran up the lane for a considerable distance before she could convince herself that she was not pursued by Jonathan Wild; but the intense stillness of the place, the deep gloom of its shadows, and the feeling of undisturbed serenity in the air, soon convinced her that she was free from all instant pursuit, and that she might rest, if she so minded, in perfect security.

And with her heart beating much quicker than its wont, with tears of gratitude to heaven in her eyes, Edith paused and listened.

A soothing, hushed sound came from the light collisions of the leaves of the tall trees, and the soft spring rain fell slowly from bough to bough ere it reached the soddened ground.

Once she heard a faint cry from some young bird, possibly dreaming of the sharp talons of the hawk—but that light sound only served to render the solitude in which she was the more complete.

But what was she to do?

That soon became the question she proposed to herself.

Whither was she to go now for safety and for sympathy?

Alas, poor Edith!

The door that should have been open ever to her was cruelly closed against her, and if she ventured across the threshold, it was to endure so much.

And it had been seen that her aunt, Lady Castleneau, had not the power to protect her, for if, as she imagined, she had been placed in the hands of Jonathan Wild by her father, of course he would soon be informed of her escape, and then the first place he would look for her again would be at her aunt's mansion.

Cold, weary, and sad, poor Edith—hitherto the child of luxury, upon whom the very winds of heaven had not been allowed to blow too roughly—stood shivering in that dim country lane; and up to that time the fond, warm, gallant heart that would have shed its last drop of blood in her defence, was in a cell at Newgate.

The hour of Captain Heron's escape, as we have recorded it, had not yet come.

But a sound came upon the night air which set the mind of Edith on a new train of speculation.

The tinkle of a bell came to her ears, and it sounded for the moment so like the bell which was over the iron gates of her aunt's house in Bedford Square, that for the time of its dull echoes she could almost have be-

loved she was close at hand to that haven of refuge.

The sound ceased, and then came the natural conclusion to the mind of Edith that she was in the neighbourhood of some house which possessed a similar bell, and that she might possibly find succor and assistance.

"I will tell them not who I am," she said, "but I will beg them to send to Lady Castleneau who will then find some means to aid me."

Full of this idea, Edith ran on up the somewhat miry lane, and she listened intently for the sound of the bell again, but it came not.

It might be about half a mile that Edith, with light and agile steps, traversed in that wild and sombre lane before she became conscious that something large and dark was before her.

A house—a mansion, with high turrets and a paling securing it from the roadway, and close to her; but although against the night sky she could see it well, and almost trace its minutest outline, there was not the least appearance of a light through the entire breadth of what seemed to be the front of the house.

But the bell sounded again.

So close to her, so startlingly near at hand was the sound now, that Edith recoiled a step or two, and hid, so to speak, in the deep shadow of the trees.

Then she heard a low, wailing voice. Its accents were so full of woe and suffering that they at once went to the heart of poor Edith.

"Help!—oh, help!" said the voice. "Save me! They may even now be upon my track! I am so cold and so weary, and death is far better than that prison-house again. Help!—oh, in mercy, help!"

The tinkle of the bell again mingled with the sighing wind among the trees.

Edith's was a heart to which the accents of suffering never pleaded in vain, and desperate just then as seemed her own fortunes, she stepped forward saying, "Whoever you are who ask for help say in what one who feels for you can aid you?"

A loud cry of alarm was the immediate response to these words, and a frenzied voice shouted, "No—no! I will not be taken! I will not go back! You may kill me if you will but you shall not drag me back to those dreadful cells! Help! Oh, heaven, have mercy upon me I will do as you wish! Tell the merciless judge that I will sign the papers!—Let him come—let him come! I am not mad!—I am not mad!"

"Believe me," said Edith. "there is no one here, sir, who would injure you. I am but a girl, and myself a fugitive."

"You? you?"

"Indeed I am! Oh! there is a rift in the clouds, and the young moon looks down upon us, even as it looked down in the old forest, when I saw *him* there?"

There was, indeed, a rift-like opening in the clouds, and a soft silver light stole down among the trees, and the outlines of a large mansion came clearly out against the sky, and tree and shrub, and wild flower appeared distinctly in the still and gentle light.

Close to an old gateway, at the top of which swung a bell, there knelt an aged man. His white hair was streaming in the puffing air that was still waving the leaves of the old trees. His garments were torn and scanty—his trembling hands were joined as if in prayer, and there was a look of intense suffering upon his face.

And as the moonbeams fell upon the fair face of Edith, he might well be excused for looking upon her as something more than mortal.

"Angel!—angel!" he said, "now I know you, and you will pity me!"

"Indeed I do pity you with all my heart," said Edith; "but I am mortal like yourself."

"Mortal! Can it be so?"

"Alas, yes!"

The old man shook his head.

"They do not hear me," he said mournfully. "They do not hear me; and yet here is my own house! This stately house—it is mine; and yet, in this lone path, full of tall trees, each one of which I know so well, I have hidden until want has forced me to ring at the gate and risk all for food. I am starving!"

"But this house—yours, say you?"

"Hush, dear child!—hush! You speak with the voice of the past. There was one whom I knew so well, and loved as a father might love a child dear to him, although no little one ever called me father. I have been a life-long solitary man—but you are so strangely like her!"

"Like whom? Of whom speak you?"

"The Lady Eleanor, the sister of Lady Castleneau."

"Oh, heaven! You know not—or if you do, this is so—so cruel!——"

Edith burst into tears.

"Cruel?—cruel? I am not used to be accused of that. Why these tears? It is I who only ought to weep."

"You may not know," sobbed Edith, "or this is all a dream. But you have named my mother?"

Upon this the old man raised a cry of despair and agony—mingled, too, with a kind of shrieking joy, as he called out, "If you be Edith Tarleton, oh! tell me so at once; and should this be my last moment upon earth, let me bless you, dear child, and tell you, that in the midst of all his sufferings, Sir Dominick Browne has not betrayed his trust."

"Sir Dominick Browne!" exclaimed Edith; "can it be that you are the gentleman of whom my dear aunt has spoken to me?"

"Yes, yes! Your aunt Castleneau!"

"She said that you had charge, conjointly with my father, of my fortune."

"True—true!"

"Of that cruel fortune, which I would so gladly renounce, since it has brought me nothing but misery and suffering as yet!"

"No—no!" cried Sir Dominick Browne. "No—no, dear girl, you must not say that! You shall not be beggared to smoothe the path of any bad man, were he ten times your father!"

The old knight sprung to his feet; and old and venerable as his white hair made him look, there was a stately dignity in his bearing, which the excitement of the moment, no doubt, lent him.

"No, Edith—dear child of a sainted mother!" he said,—"you shall not be sacrificed! I am joint trustee with your father, Sir John Tarleton, of the eighty thousand pounds which was your dear mother's, and which will be yours. A few words—a few terrible words—will tell you all!"

"My father? Is it of him?"

"I must tell you—I must sear your heart, sweet innocent! Your father wished me to give him leave to take the money for his own purposes, on pretence of speculations that would enable him to replace it. I refused. Within twenty-four hours of that time, I was seized in my own house here, and consigned to a mad-house!"

The old man burst into tears.

"Bear with me," he said. "Bear with an old man's tears, dear child! I am not mad! Indeed, I am not! but it is no fault of theirs—they did their best to drive me mad!"

"Alas! alas!"

"It is too dreadful, you see, to dwell upon! I will not tell you all I suffered!"

"Be comforted!"

"I am—I am! This is heaven's own work! I bless and praise the Providence that has preserved me to tell you this. You are but a child, yet, dear girl!"

"I am eighteen."

"Alas! two long years before you can claim your own?"

"Nay, I am within one month of

Captain Heron boldly escapes—walking out of Newgate arm-in-arm with the High Sheriff!

[See page 28.]

nineteen; and now comprehend why Jonathan Wild said I was to be kept a prisoner for thirteen months!"

"Jonathan Wild?"

"Yes. I have been a prisoner with him, and am but now escaped?"

"And I, too—I am but now escaped from that earful place where all the tortures of mind and body were used to drive me mad. Hush! What is that?"

"I hear nothing."

"Yes, yes. Hush! hush! Do not speak!"

Edith listened intently, but she heard no sound.

"They come! they come!" cried Sir Dominick Brown. "My long solitude and silent imprisonment has given me a preternatural sense of hearing. Now—now—hear you nothing."

Faintly, very faintly, Edith thought she heard the baying of a hound.

"A dog!" she said.

Sir Dominick Browne uttered a scream of terror, and rang furiously at the bell over the gate.

"They keep a hound," he said—"it

is of the old Spanish breed of blood-hounds. It is to hunt runaways—it is to hunt me! Help! Oh! mercy, heaven, and save me now!"

A prolonged baying sort of a howl came now on the night air.

Edith heard it plainly, and was seriously alarmed.

It mingled with the continued tinkle of the old gate bell, to which, at that time of the night, or rather of the early morning, no one seemed to pay the least attention from the house.

"Lost! lost! we are lost!" cried Sir Dominick Browne. "Fly, dear child! Fly from here while you can, and I will face the hound."

"No, no—the wall is but low."

"Ah! Oh, my poor wits!—they must have suffered, that I thought not of that! Surely—surely, yes! I can yet climb such a wall as this, and help you, dear one, over it. But should we be parted—should I be torn from you—always remember that I have not betrayed my trust!"

"I will—I will!"

"I have signed nothing, nor done any act which can jeopardise your fortune."

"Do not speak of it—of you I think much more than of it."

Again, and evidently nearer, there came the deep, baying tone of the dog.

"They make the beast well acquainted with all the inmates of the fearful prison-house," said Sir Dominick Browne, "in order that it may hunt any poor wretch who escapes, by the scent. I am lost, for there is no one here to aid me!"

The enfeebled man made the effort to climb the wall of his own grounds but it was too much for him. His hands would not grasp the rough bricks, and he fell, with a scream of agony and hopelessness, at the feet of Edith.

At the feet of Edith fell that helpless old man, who had suffered so much for her—who had been the friend of her mother—and who, whatever might now happen to him, would be the victim of his irreproachable integrity and firmness for her sake.

The courage of the young girl—the true, undaunted spirit which is inborn in noble creatures, made itself felt and heard; and Edith stood before him, with a flush of color on her cheeks, and a rough hedge-stake in her hands which she hastily snatched up from the foot of the wall.

"Courage! courage!" she said. "All is not lost yet! I—even I will defend you!"

The bloodhound bayed again.

The shouts of men were heard in the neighbourhood fields.

A shudder for a moment passed through Edith; and then she stood still as a statue, with the hedge-stake, in an attitude to strike.

What is that? The clatter of horse's feet? Surely, yes! God is merciful! Some one comes! Some one who will rescue her and Sir Dominick! Some gallant soul, perchance, to whom she can appeal to aid them!

"Sir! sir!" she cried. "Oh, Sir Dominick! Be hopeful yet. Some one comes on horseback, in a contrary direction from your enemies. Courage! oh, courage! You may yet be saved!"

"No, no! I am not mad!" yelled Sir Dominick Browne; and, springing to his feet, he, with a sudden strength and energy, lent him by despair, clambered over the wall and disappeared.

With a crash, through the hedge now, on the opposite side of the lane, came a huge bloodhound; but at the sight of Edith, and the hedge-stake held so threateningly, the brute paused a moment, with its head close to the ground, and its tongue protruding, and its hot breath visible in the cool morning air.

With a sudden flush, the first tinge of daylight came over a tree, and stream, and copse, and mingling strangely with the fair mooobeams, lit

up the lane so brightly, that the dog, and Edith, and the old tree, and Sir Dominick's mansion, were all plainly visible to a horseman, in a large blue cloak, who, at a hard gallop, came up the lane.

The dog growled threateningly.

"Off! off!" cried Edith, as she kept her eyes fixed on these of the brute.

"Hilloa! Hoy! hoy! Hilloa! At him, Demon! At him, Demon!" shouted a man's voice from the field at the other side of the hedge; and through the gap that the large dog had made appeared the visage of a man who wore an expression scarcely less brutal than that of the bloodhound.

"Help! help!" cried Edith.

"Hilloa! who are you?" said the man.

"Help! help!"

The horseman came up at increased speed, and cried, in a rough voice, "What is all this?"

He reined in his steed, and looked curiously, about him. The collar of the cloak fell a little away from his face, and to her consternation, Edith at once recoghized an enemy.

Lord Warringdale!

It was he, indeed. That terrible fascination which brings a murderer to the spot on which he has perpetrated the crime against God and man, had brought him up that lane as so early an hour—that lane in which he had in so dastardly and assassin-like a manner taken the life of Lord Bridgewater.

He had wished to look at the spot again, to satisfy a craven fear that was at his heart, that there was nothing at or about the place that would in any way criminate him.

And now he looked upon Edith, whom he knew instantly, with a surprise that might well make him almost doubt the evidence of his own senses.

"Edith Tarleton!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, lord Warringdale, I am Edith Tarleton. Heaven help me!"

"I will help you!"

Edith felt now her heart fail her, and the hedge-stake snook in her hands.

Lord Warringdale spurred towards the dog as he cried, "Hilloa! you fellow! Call off your dog, if it be yours, or I will do it a mischief!"

"It's much more likely to do you a mischief!" said the man, insolently.

"Ah! say you so?"

"I do say so! And you had better not touch him, I can tell you!"

"Then, I won't, my man. But since he seems, like his master, rather vicious, here goes!"

Bang came the report of a pistol, and Lord Warringdale had shot the bloodhound in the neck.

With a roar of pain and rage, the animal made a spring towards the horse and rider, but he only caught in his teeth the heel and spur of the heavy riding-boot that Lord Warringdale wore; and, after hanging for some few seconds, it fell dead in the roadway, and rolled over, vomiting black blood.

"I'll make you pay for this!" cried the man, as he forced his way through the hedge into the lane. "You have no right to kill my dog!"

"I'll do as much for his master," said Lord Warringdale, sneeringly, "if he is not off quickly. I am not apt to be over nice about a pistol bullet."

"Get away!—dont! Hilloa!—murder!" cried the man, as he saw another pistol from the saddle of Lord Warringdale's steed produced and levelled at him.

"Off with you!"

"I'm going! Oh! don't! I'm only a poor fellow—I'm not Mr. Smithers! Don't! I was obliged to come after a runaway with Demon. Don't shoot a fellow!"

"Off!"

"I'm going—I'm gone!"

The man struggled his way through the hedge again, and disappeared; but that he was only hiding on the other side of it Lord Warringdale fully believed, so he fired at once into the

hedge, which so terrified Demon's master, that, with a cry, he started out and fled at full speed over the meadows.

Edith stood now, looking as pale as possible, for the reaction of her courageous defiance of the dog had come; but yet her feeling was to say nothing of Sir Dominick Browne, in whose escape she might yet be instrumental, by drawing Lord Warringdale's attention off from the spot.

"Edith," he said, as he alighted from his horse, "I am so thoroughly amazed to see you here, that I can hardly credit my own eyes."

Edith slightly inclined her head.

"What is the meaning of it? The last I heard of you was from your father, and he said you had been forced from him in Epping Forest by a brutal highwayman."

"False, my lord!"

"Nay, that was the tale."

"A false one, then."

"But here you are, alone and unprotected, in a country lane at about five o'clock in the morning?"

"You see me here, sir. Will you, as a gentleman, believe that I have some reason to be here, and leave me."

"Leave you!"

"Yes. I ask that of the chivalry of Lord Warringdale."

"I am very sorry, Edith, but I cannot do so. You ask of me what I cannot reconcile to my——" conscience, he was going to say, but it was an ugly word for such a man to use, so he substituted "feelings" for it.

Edith had by this time made up her mind what course to pursue.

"Then, sir," she said, "I request that, as you are a friend of my father, you will take me to his house."

"With pleasure."

"Very well, Lord Warringdale; I will follow you."

"Nay, here is the horse; you can extemporise a side-saddle for once, no doubt, if you will let me assist you to mount."

Edith was light and agile as a fawn, and she glanced at the horse as she said:

"Allow me, sir, to mount without assistance, and I will extemporise the side-saddle."

Even as she spoke, she placed her hand upon the bridle of the horse, and led it to the side of the lane, where, from the nature of the bank, she saw she could easily mount it.

"Dear, charming girl?" said Lord Warringdale, as he stood on the other side of the horse; "let me ride, and I will place you on the saddle securely, and we will go to town together. My arm shall protect you, and I will tell you, as we go, how much I love you!"

Edith felt sick at heart.

"You do not speak! Come, now; discard this coyness. You know that, by your father's wish and command, you are to be mine?"

"Never!"

"Nay, say not so. You are my promised bride! Who, but your father, the Judge, is to promise and bestow your hand!"

"Once for all, my Lord Warringdale, I cannot, and I will not not, wed you!"

"Then I have but one course to pursue. You fled from your father's protection to place yourself under that of a highwayman, and now, for aught I know, you may still endeavor to seek him. I am resolved that you shall be my wife; and since I have your father's sanction, I shall consider myself justified in making you my prisoner."

"Your prisoner, sir?"

"Yes, I have a country house at Edgeware, and in it are people sufficiently devoted to me to take good care of you until I shall be able to go to the Judge, and say to him, 'Sir John, I have overcome your daughter's obstinacy, and she is willing to become my wife!'"

"You rave, my Lord! Is it possible that you ever would consent to make your wife one who now tells you that she is not indifferent, even, to you, but——"

"Say on—say on! I am not over sensitive! Ha! ha! Out with it!"

"Then, my Lord Warringdale, I not only cannot love you, but I could not even endure you!"

"Then, by this kiss, we will commence!"

Hardly were the words past his lips, when Edith gave a startled cry, and the horse on which she was seated, alarmed at the sound, plunged forward, dashing Lord Warringdale to the ground with its shoulder, as it passed him.

"Stop! stop!" he cried. "Edith, stop!"

"No—oh, no! This is an escape again! Farewell, my lord—once more—farewell!"

Edith was an excellent equestrian, and she now urged the horse forward by voice and rein, and at a rapid pace she soon left Lord Warringdale far behind her.

"Home! home!" she said, in a sobbing tone of voice. "I will go home once again, and I will see my father! He cannot be dead to all pity, now that he shall be convinced I can never be the bride of Lord Warringdale; and if it be the fortune my poor mother left me which is coveted, I will give it all up, and save Sir Dominick Browne from his persecutions, and myself from all these miseries. Then, with my dear Aunt Castleneau, I will find a home; and perhaps—perhaps—in time to come——"

A mantling blush came over the fair face of Edith, as she added:

"Yes, I may see *him* again, for I know he loves me!"

Her thoughts were with the gallant Captain Heron, in whom she had seen nothing but gentleness and chivalric feeling.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROOF-TOPS.—CAPTAIN HERON MEETS WITH A STRANGE ADVENTURE.—JONATHAN WILD'S DISCOMFITURE.

Captain Heron stood alone in the Oxford Road, and watched the carriage of the Sheriff out of sight. He then glanced about him, and saw that he attracted no more observation than any chance passenger of rather more than ordinary distinguished appearance might.

He was free! Free from Jonathan Wild—free from that gloomy prison of Newgate, which had ever appeared to his imagination like some fearful rock ahead of his voyage through life.

How he had shuddered as he entered its walls, he had let no man see or comprehend. How the chains had hung, so to speak, upon his heart, as well as upon his limbs, he had let no one see.

And now that he stood beneath the canopy of heaven, and felt that no stone walls or iron cased doors were around him, an elasticity of spirit came over him that was near akin to joy, and which gave a proud, passionate look to his eyes, and made him tread with a firmness and audacity the narrow roadway, which were but little in accordance with the real perils that normally beset him.

And then he thought of Edith—of his Edith, as he liked to call her; and the communication that Ogle had made to him, that she was with her father, was reassuring, although not quite without its painful bearings.

Ogle had had no knowledge of the manner in which Jonathan Wild had made a mere tool of the Judge in order to get Edith into his own power; and little did Captain Heron dream of the adventures which had befallen the darling of his heart in that dreary lane where Lord Warringdale had done such a deed of horror

And now with a quick step, Captain Heron took his way down Swallow Street, towards the shop where Tom's mother dwelt.

"I will there wait," he said, "till my gallant Daisy is brought to me, and then I am off and away once more to the road and the heath."

Mrs. Ripon, Tom's mother, uttered a cry of surprise as Captain Heron put his head into the shop.

"Oh, gracious! Captain, is that you? Oh, my side!—such a stitch!"

A man was cheapening a cravat at the counter; and Captain Heron placed his finger on his lips, and shook his head; upon which Mrs. Ripon looked conscience stricken, and said to the man:

"Very well, you shall have it for ninepence! How do you do, Mr. Green? And how is Mrs. Green?"

The last words were intended to mystify the man in regard to Captain Heron; and they seemed to have that effect, for he paid his ninepence for the second-hand cravat, which had belonged to some dilapidated beau, who had parted with it for a groat, and left the shop.

But if Captain Heron had seen this man, as soon as he got about twenty paces from the shop, fling down the cravat he had just purchased, as utterly beneath his attention now, and clapping his hands together, rush off, like one bereft of his senses, in the direction of the city, he would have had some suspicions.

The man was a discharged waiter at a tavern, or inn, on the Woodford Road, and had seen Captain Heron often, and he well knew that a price was set upon his capture.

Mrs. Ripon affected now to cry, as she said:

"Oh, Captain! I am such a fool—indeed I am! But it was nobody! Tom! my Tom! Where is he? The little ruffian, to stay away so long from his tender mother!"

"He is safe enough, I dare say, and you will see him soon. I wait here till he comes with Daisy."

"Yes, Captain! And who in all the world is so purely welcome?"

"I believe so. I have just got out of Newgate!"

At these words, Mrs. Ripon gave quite a scream; and that scream mingled with the sharp, bang shut of the shop-door, as Captain Heron, who had happened to glance down the street, stepped back, and closed it.

"What is this?" he said. "Am I betrayed?"

"Betrayed? Oh, gracious!"

"Silence, woman! The bar! Ah, it is here! Tell me, who was that man I saw here?"

"On my life—which spare! Take my life! Mercy! Oh, gracious!"

Mrs. Ripon became quite inarticulate, as she fell on her knees behind the counter.

Captain Heron had seen the man who had bought the cravat coming back to the shop at a smart pace, beckoning after him two other men, one of whom had a constable's staff in his hand.

One glance the Captain gave around the little shop; and then he said, sharply, "Mrs. Ripon!"

"Amen! Amen!" groaned Mrs. Ripon.

"Tell me at once who is in the attic?"

A sharp knock at the shop-door at this moment challenged attention; and a loud voice called out, "Open—open, in the King's name! Police! Open—open, I say! I'm Mr. Sivewright, the parish constable! Open the door at once!"

"The attic?" said Captain Heron, sharply. "Tell me who inhabits it now?"

"To let!"

"That is better!"

"Murder!"

"Hush, hush! I say! I acquit you of all intention of betraying me."

"But what can I say?"

"Nothing!"

"What can I do?"

"Faint away at once!"

"I will!"

Captain Heron darted up the stairs that led to the upper portion of the house, and passing a number of doors, he reached the attic; and without pausing for longer time than was necessary to lock its door on the inside, he went to the little latticed window and flung it open.

Immediately outside was a deep gutter, lined with lead, which seemed to run a considerable distance in each direction to the left and to the right.

"That will do," said Captain Heron; and he stepped out of the attic-window into the gutter at once.

The copping-stone of the house was only about two feet higher than the gutter; but, by crouching down low, Captain Heron prevented himself from being a prominent object from the street.

He ran along the fronts of several houses until he came to where an off-street turned to the left. There he found that there was an iron-spiked kind of railing, or fence, that prevented him from going further; but it was so rotten and eaten into by rust, that when Captain Heron laid hold of it, to ascertain its strength, it came down bodily in his hands, and he had some difficulty to prevent it from falling over the parapet into the street.

The highwayman strode over this obstacle in a moment, and made his way, still along the gutter, round the corner into the next street.

Hardly had he gone six paces in that direction, when he heard a scream in a woman's voice, and he felt confident it came from an attic, the window of which was close to him.

Captain Heron crouched so low down in the gutter beneath this window, that only his eyes were on a level with the lower part of it.

There was a curtain right over the window, but it wanted an inch in length to cover it entirely, and through this small space Captain Heron could see into the attic plainly.

What was his surprise to see no other than Jonathan Wild himself, standing in the middle of the attic, with his usual bludgeon that he carried with him, uplifted in the act as if to strike some one—that some one being a wretched-looking woman, in faded black, who was kneeling imploringly at his feet.

So intensely occupied were both these persons, that the slight noise Captain Heron must have made as he came along the gutter had escaped their notice completely.

The woman was speaking in a whining imploring tone of voice.

"Mr. Wild, be merciful! Oh, do not kill the son as well as the father! Oh, in mercy, spare my poor orphan boy! Mr. Wild, you will—you promise you will spare him! On my knees I pray you! Oh, you cannot be so inhuman! Mr. Wild, be merciful to me and my poor boy!"

She shed floods of tears—she wrung her hands—and with short hysterical screams she implored pity in that breast which never knew the sentiment.

Wild retreated his lips like a hyena, and slowly let his arm drop with the bludgeon.

"Hark you, Mrs. Sheppard!" he said; "your husband swung at Tyburn!"

"Oh, heaven, yes—yes! But he was innocent!"

"Ha! ha!"

"You laugh! You dare to laugh!"

"Of course. No one knows his innocence better than I do. But he swung."

"Oh, heaven!"

"Hold your peace about heaven—it has nothing to do with me!"

"It will have, Jonathan Wild—be you assured that it will have!"

"Bah! Bo!"

Despite this bravado, Jonathan's

color changed a little, but he shook off the fear that for a moment laid hold of his really craven heart.

"Listen to me, then, once more. I tell you your son is in my power! It is true he is only an apprentice now, but his hands have been in his master's till."

"No no!—oh, heaven, no."

"I say, yes. There was a boy, aged fifteen years and one month, hanged last session for arson! Ha! ha! How do you like that? But——"

"Mercy! mercy!"

"But, I say——"

"Oh, heaven look down upon me!"

"But," howled Wild, as he shook her by the shoulder, "if you do my bidding, your boy is safe!"

"I cannot."

"You shall! Hear me. You were once a servant to Sir John Tarleton?"

"Yes, yes!"

"You know Edith?"

"I do—I do! God bless her!"

"Bah! bah!"

Jonathan Wild paced the attic now in his usual way, with his hands behind his back, when he was considering anything, then he stopped opposite to the kneeling Mrs. Sheppard.

"You must go to Edith Tarleton—she will believe you, when she might doubt me. You must say that you come with a message from Captain Heron, who lies in Newgate, and who will assuredly be executed on Monday next."

Mrs. Sheppard shuddered.

"Ah, you recollect a certain bleak Monday morning, about two years ago, when the snow was falling!"

"Oh, do not—do not recall that dreadful day! Are you human?"

"I don't know. But you will say to Edith that you have seen Captain Heron in Newgate, and that he is to suffer, and that the only person who has influence to save him is Lord Warringdale, through his father, the Secretary of State. You hear me?"

"I do—I do! It is some great villany."

Wild laughed.

"Of course it is! That is, however, all you have to say or do; and, in recompense, I will save your son Jack."

"My boy—my own dear boy!"

"Is it settled?"

"No, no, no!"

"No, say you?"

"A thousand times no, Jonathan Wild, if needs be! I will not—I cannot give up all hope in the justice of heaven, as to believe that you will be permitted to play with human life and human feelings as you try to do. No, I will leave my boy in the hands of providence, and I will not do your bidding."

"Fool!—worse than fool! Have you no desire yet to live?"

"Yes, yes! But if it be the will of heaven that I should die—that I should be murdered by you, I bow to it—I bow to it!"

Wild uttered a growl that was scarcely human, and recoiled a step as he said, "Once more, hear me! I will hang your boy Jack, as I hanged his father!"

"No, no! Oh, no!"

"I say, yes! And as for you, I—no, I won't kill you; for that would be mercy! You shall live to know that Jack is hanged! And then—why, then you had still better live on, knowing that you might have saved him ——"

"Oh, fiend! fiend!"

"And would not! Captain Heron is safe in Newgate; and, whether or no, he shall suffer next Monday! That bird is in a cage he cannot get out of!"

Captain Heron felt now that he had heard all that there was to hear. He had been collecting his energies—and they were, in truth, of no common order—for a spring, and he made it with a force that took him right through the attic-window and on to the middle of the floor, amid a clatter

of panes of glass and frame-work. He had a grasp of Jonathan Wild by the throat in another instant, and they both rolled over on the floor.

But Captain Heron was uppermost.

He placed his knee upon Jonathan's chest, and held him down, while he dashed his head against the floor, and held his throat tightly.

"You villain! You worse than any villain that ever drew the breath of life!"

"Murder!" said Wild, in half-choked accents.

"What hinders me from at once ridding the world of a monster?"

"Your mother!" gasped Wild.

"What?"

"Your mother!"

Captain Heron relaxed his hold of Wild's throat a little; and then, although nearly black in the face, Jonathan gasped out, "I, and I only, know —where your mother—was—was—was——"

"Speak, wretch! Say the word!"

"Was married! Kill me, and you will never know—never—never!"

"I do not believe you!"

Captain Heron gave Wild's head two or three more hard knocks on the boards.

"Don't!" said Wild,—"don't! There is a big nail sticking up in the planks! Don't!"

"No, no!" said Mrs. Sheppard now, as having in some measure recovered from her surprise and fright; "do not kill him!"

"What do you plead for him?"

"I do! I do!"

"On what ground?"

"He may yet repent. Oh, sir! I know not who you are; but do not send this wicked man to his account with all his unrepented sins upon his head!"

"No, don't Captain!" said Jonathan, in a whining tone. "I always meant to repent, some day."

"If my nature was one bit like yours, I should not let you live another moment!"

"A bargain, Captain!—a bargain!"

"No, no!—no bargain with such as you."

"But you want to know——"

"What I will know! it is my turn now! You see, I am free!"

"I do see it; and it takes my breath away with amazement! You are the cleverest fellow I know, Captain Heron! I left you double-ironed in Newgate about six hours ago, and now here you are! Don't! you forget the nail! Don't do that!"

"Jonathan Wild!"

"Captain Heron!"

"You have, by some words you have uttered, let me see that you know something of my history, and my hopes."

"I do."

"You have named one——"

"Your mother!"

A gulping sort of sob came from the breast of the highwayman, and it took him an effort to control his emotion.

"My injured, persecuted mother! Where was she married?"

"Eh?"

"Where was she married?"

"Well, I a—a——Murder! Don't! Murder!"

"Speak, villain!"

"At Barnes Church! The page of the registry has been cut out, but your father has it!"

"My father?"

"Yes; the Earl of——"

"Silence! Not another word! How do you know he has the leaf from the registry? Fire would consume it, and it was not a thing to keep, being a thing to steal."

"But he has kept it!"

"Wherefore?"

"To frighten his second son with!"

"It may be so."

"It is so, Captain Heron! And now that I have told you more than I ever

thought to tell you, or any living man you will keep your promise, and let me go!"

"I promised nothing!"

"But I trusted you!"

"Oh, villain—villain! who that ever trusted you, but found that trust a broken reed? And yet I will not kill, but I must not be in danger from you, for some time to come."

"I promise."

"That I will not trust to for a moment. I see that, as usual, you have a rope in several coils round your waist. You meant it for some unfortunate who should fall into your power, and no doubt it is of tried strength. It will do for your own use."

Jonathan Wild was only too glad to escape with his life, and he made no resistance.

Captan Heron first tied the end of stout cord round one of his wrists, and he brought the cord under his arm, and around his neck, and round the other wrist; and, finally, he made him take in his mouth, crosswise like a horse's bit, a couple of lengths of the rope, and he tied the end behind him to the bars of the fire grate, in which there was no fire, for the attic was poor and wretched in the extreme.

"Now, Mrs. Sheppard," said Captain Heron, "if that be your name, let me advise you to leave this place at once. Here is money!"

Mrs. Sheppard would insist on kissing Captain Heron's hand, and they reached the attic door together. Wild uttered a growl, and just managed to mutter deep in his throat, "We shall meet again!"

"Probably," said Captain Heron; "and then beware of me, Jonathan Wild, for you have not another secret to barter your life for!"

As Captain Heron reached the landing of the stairs that led up the attic, a strange, lumbering sound came from somewhere above, and there was the rattle and crash of some falling tiles from the roof.

"They have followed me," said the highwayman; "but they have not caught me yet!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE ATTIC WINDOW.—A MAN HUNT.—DAISY TO THE RESCUE.

It was an undoubted fact that the officers were actually now on the roof of that house in pursuit of Captain Heron.

A couple of the "runners," as they were then called—that is to say, the regular officers attached to the police courts, and who always went about with red waistcoats, it is presumed, in order that thieves should know them at a glance—had joined the chase.

These men went by the nickname of Robin Redbreast, and it is not too much to say that they in many cases made such a trade of their calling that they were in league with thieves, fences, of receivers of stolen goods, and with every branch of the "family" as the great fraternity was named which lived upon peculation.

But the reward for the apprehension of Captain Heron was so large that it was not worth while now to keep any terms with him.

Hence the runners were truly and honestly—if such a word may once be used in cennexion with such men—intent upon his capture.

Captain Heron turned for a moment now to poor Mrs. Sheppard, as he said, "Seek at once an asylum elsewhere—anywhere but here; for now, as you know a something that Jonathan Wild wished kept a secret, your life is not safe. Farewell! I am in too great danger to pause another moment!"

Captain Heron ran down the staircase of the strange house he was in.

On the second floor landing, in the dark—for it was a poor and dingy

house—he stumbled over some boxes and trunks, but he heard no one, and it was not until he got to the first floor that a door opened, and a voice called out, "Bless me, what is that?"

"The cat!" said Captain Heron.

"The cat."

"Yes, my good sir. Out of the way, if you please."

Captain Heron dashed past what he saw was an elderly gentleman in a flannel morning gown, and then he reached the passage of the house, which was dimly lighted by a very grimy fanlight over the street-door.

The door was closed, though, and Captain Heron was making towards it, when a thundering volley of knocks came upon it from without.

A door of a parlor that opened into the passage was flung open, and a man and woman ran out with exclamations of fright.

"Lord!—lost!" cried the woman "We are lost!"

"Smash the moulds!" shouted the man; "smash them! Tread on them at once, and they cannot prove anything then!"

Bang!—bang!—bang! came the knocks on the street door, and then as Captain Heron strode forward the man and woman saw him, and the former cried out, "We are nabbed!"

"No!" said Heron. "I fancy it is after me the officers are this time."

"You—you? And who are you?"

"Never mind that. Is there a back-way to the house?"

"Not a bit."

A slight addition of color came over the face of Captain Heron, for he could not but feel the imminent danger in which he stood, and all unarmed, too, as he was.

Now he bitterly regreted that he had not searched Jonathan Wild for those arms which he always carried about him; but it was now too late.

"Open!—open!" cried loud voices outside. "Police!—police! Open!"

"Listen to me," said Captain Heron to the man, who no doubt was coiner of base money. "Listen to me?"

"Yes—well—what?"

"I am Capain Heron!"

"No! You? The celebrated highwayman?"

"The same, if you please to add celebrated to my name. You can do me a service for which I will pay you well. My word, though, must be taken now, for there is nothing in my purse."

"I will take your word, Captain."

"Good! When I open the door make a rush out, and turn to the left, if you can but shake off the officers for a moment. I will take the right."

"Very well; I will do it! They can't do anything with me now if they do catch me! Is all square, Martha?"

"Yes; all square."

"Come on then."

Captain Heron stepped up to the street door, and at the moment that one of the officers commenced another furious cannonade of knocks, he flung it wide open, and a couple of his foes fell sprawling into the passage.

"Whoop! away!" shouted the coiner; and he made a spring over the fallen men, and dashed of to the left.

"Whoop!—away!" cried Captain Heron, in imitation of him, and he went to the right.

So confounded were the officers by the sudden appearance of two flying men where they had no reason to expect more than one, that, for some seconds, they were bewildered which way to turn.

They could not both be Captain Heron; and he who would pursue the wrong one, would lose all share of the reward.

The consequence of this was a moment of indecision, that made the officers first run a little way in one direction, and then a little way in the other, and against each other.

There was a fearful amount of imprecations; and then one who had pursued the coiner, and actually came

danger, and, for a moment, his heart failed him.

Several of the officers were mounting horses that were brought out from a livery stable, which he had just glanced at as he passed.

Was he lost now?

A long hill lay before him. Tall trees were on either side of it. He knew it well.

It passed to the left of Stratford, and would take him on to the Woodford Road.

Would take him there, provided he could reach so far, exhausted as he was beginning to get, and how could he hope it now?

Fresh and untired horses were pressed into the hunt of the man who had already ran three miles at speed.

A dizzy feeling came over the brain of Captain Heron; and, for a moment, the world seemed to swing round with him.

It was but for a moment, however.

"Courage!—courage!" he cried.—"For Edith! for Edith! for the sake of that dear girl!"

"Don't run him down!" shouted a voice.

"Won't I?" cried another

He heard the dead beat of the horses' feet after him, and he sped up the hill.

Panting, and beginning now to feel a choking sensation of intense thirst and pain, Heron ran on. He heard the breath of the horses behind him.

"Bring him down with a shot!" cried one of the officers.

"No! We have him! It's good fun!"

"Let him run! Ha! ha!"

"Woa, woa! How do you feel, Captain? Eh? Nearly tired? Eh? Or would you like another mile of it? We will oblige you! Ha! ha!"

He did not speak—he did not turn to look behind him. With his teeth clenched close, the perspiration gushing from his brow, the dust choking him, and his heart wildly beating as though it would burst its bonds, he still ran on.

On towards the hill top—on, not to hope even of escape, but to hope rather of death now!

"Edith, my own dear Edith!" he gasped, "who will protect you now! God bless you! God hold you in his keeping, for I am lost to you for ever—forever!"

From the other side of the hill now, just over the topmost verge where it met the sky, and looked, as you came toward it, as though on the other side might be a chasm millions of feet deep into the bowels of the earth, rose up something—something black and life-like!

A horse! a black horse! And then it stood clearly reflected against the bright sky, which alone formed its background, as though it had been cut of basalt rock.

A horse, apparently without a rider; or the rider so small or so hidden that you could not see him! A horse with slender, delicate limbs—with a noble, small, well-formed head—a horse sleek as satin, and as full of life as the young day!

Through the dust—through the heavy beads of perspiration—through the hot mist that was beginning to gather about his eyes, Captain Heron saw that sight!

His voice was a half-scream, as he clapped his hands together, and cried aloud:

"Daisy! Daisy! Heavens, it is Daisy! Saved! saved! I am saved!"

With a bound and a rush, he made his way now. There was fresh strength in his limbs—there was new breath in his lungs—there was fresher blood in his veins, and his vision cleared. He was a new man!

"Daisy! Daisy! Ho! my gallant Daisy!"

The creature heard him.

The creature saw him.

A bound and a curvet—a short,

whinnying sound of pleasure, and she was by his side.

"Ah, Daisy, your poor hunted, weary master sees you once again—my own Daisy!"

Captain Heron placed his arm over the neck of his steed and felt faint for a moment.

The horse rubbed its head affectionately upon his shoulder.

"Iss, Capen," said a voice, "here we is!"

It was Tom on the back of Daisy, and Captain Heron looked up.

"Tom, my boy?"

"Iss."

"You have made good speed."

"Iss, Capen; Daisy would come over the fields, and take such jumps! Tom fell off once, but Daisy picked him up again out of a place with such a lot of little pigs."

"Sit forward, Tom."

"Iss."

"Hold on!"

Another moment, and Captain Heron was in the saddle.

One touch of the holsters let him feel that his pistols were there, and he turned proudly to the officers, who had come to a halt, and faced them.

"Hilloa, Captain!" cried one. "You know this won't do? We must have you!"

"Take me, then!"

"Come, come! what's the use of bloodshed? We must do our duty! We are ten fires to one, you see!"

"And here goes to cripple his horse," cried one; "or else we shall never have him!"

The fellow did not fire at Captain Heron, but he did at Daisy. A touch of the rein, to be sure, put her out of the line of the bullet, but the intention was the same.

A flash of rage came from the eyes of Captain Heron.

"I never care," he said, "to return a shot aimed at me, but I always do one aimed at Daisy!"

"Hoy!—hilloa!—don't! I say, Jackson, get before me! He'll shoot me! Get before me, all of you! Woa! woa!"

"Oh, a likely joke that!"

The officer reined his horse, in the attempt to turn it and fly down the the hill, but he had jerked the rein too hard. Just as he did turn, however, Captain Heron fired one of his holster pistols.

The officer did not speak or cry out, but he fell over his horse's neck, and the terrified animal tore down the hill with him at full speed.

"Who will be the next?" shouted Captain Heron, in his loud, clear, bell-like tones.

"Not I, by Jove!" cried one, and he fled at once down the hill.

Another of the officers now fired at the Captain, as he cried out:

"It's at you, Heron!—it's at you!"

"All right! Now, Daisy, on!"

Captain Heron, to the surprise of the officers, fairly now charged upon them down the hill, with the remaining holster pistol in his right hand.

That one of them would fall before its contents, the three remaining officers felt certain, and as neither wished to be the one, they all turned and fled as fast as their horses could go.

Captain Heron remained master of the field of battle.

"Hoorah!" said Tom. "I'll be a highwayman mineself some day."

"No, Tom, no!"

"Iss, Capen, Tom will."

"Tell me, Tom—did some one come from me in the forest?"

"Iss, on a grey horse."

"Ah, then Ogle got mounted," said Heron to himself, "or Daisy would not have reached me in time. Tom, you want to go home?"

"No."

"But your mother, Tom?"

Tom looked a little dull at these words, and then he said, brightening up, "Tom's afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Redbreasts. Tom's a highwayman—he is."

Captain Heron looked sad.

"No, my dear Tom, you must not let my example make you a highwayman. I must find a means of getting you home. Alas! I have much to do and much to think of now. Edith! Edith! where are you, and what are you, perhaps, suffering? I must know all. It may be hazardous, but I must go to Lady Castleneau. I must have money, though, and this night I must again take to the road. Why, here's a coach coming, Tom!"

"Iss. Tom will stop the coach—"*'Tand and 'liver!*'"

"Why, I do believe the young rascal means, 'Stand and deliver!'"

"Iss," said Tom.

Daisy was pawing the ground, as if anxious to be off, and Captain Heron raised himself in his stirrups, and took a long look about him over the surrounding country.

The bright sun of a fair spring day was upon tree, and road, and meadow, and the distant lowing of some cattle, with now and then the tinkle of a sheep-bell, were the only sounds that came upon the ears of the highwayman.

"Oh!" he said, "if I might only be so happy as to live in some sweet wilderness of nature, in the lowliest cot that ever reared its thatched roof amid an odorous screen of roses and clustering woodbine, with Edith by my side, how gladly would I forsake this life of feverish excitement and wild adventure! How calmly and how happily our days would pass away, with nothing to fret us but the seasons' difference, and the gentle death of the fair flowers about us, as the winter's breath chilled their young blood. Alas, alas! It may not be! I am what I am, and the dream of my heart is not fulfilled! I must to Barnes Church, too, for if what the villain Wild said, be true, I shall there find what, while it will wring my heart with grief to see, will yet bring with it its own consolation. But I must still have means—ample means—or I cannot fight for my inheritance; and those means I will get, or my name is not——No, no!—not even here, in this solitude of nature, will I, yet, breathe that name!"

There was a by-lane close at hand, with tall poplars on either side, which moved to and fro, like gigantic feathers.

The highwayman took one more glance about him, and then he dashed down the lane.

"Tom," he said, "if I put you down near to the Oxford Road, you can find your way home?"

"Iss, Capen."

"All right, then! Hold on by Daisy's mane, for we are going to have a gallop."

"'Tand and 'liver!' Hoorah!" shouted Tom, in a little cracked voice; and Daisy darted down the lane, with those long, lithe strides which made the trees seem to pass, as if in some wild revel, tumbling one upon the other, or a moving panorama, gone mad.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMMON.—THE PORTSMOUTH MAIL.—A STRANGE MEETING.—A MYSTERY.

That fair half summer day has passed away. A light shower at sunset has laid the dust, which had a tendency to rise in whirling masses on the soft roads round London.

The sky is speckled with a fleecy gause of clouds, through which the young moon sets in silver splendor, peeping down upon the earth at intervals of about half a minute each duration, and so speckling all objects with a fitful and evanescent radiance.

The hedges are soft and green. The last notes of the most dissipated and

Captain Heron stops the Portsmouth Mail! "Stand! Pull up, or a bullet!"
[See page 51.]

late-hour-keeping bird is stilled. The distant bay of a shepherd's dog has ceased. Soft, balmy, and beautiful seems earth, air, and vegetation. There is a solemn stillness about the country, as though towns and cities had disappeared, and Arcadian slopes and shady groves alone possessed the green wold.

And yet London is only distant five miles, and the hour is not late.

Nine o'clock has struck by an old church clock, in an antique square tower—one of the five hundred that the Norman William scattered over the land.

There is a wide expanse of open country. Furze bushes, and here and there a solitary tree, break the even tenor of the landscape; and the short, crisp grass is elastic to the tread.

It is a heath, a wild, solitary heath, with only here and there carriage and horse tracks across it. A number of foot-paths, however, traverse it in all possible directions, and by one side of it, coming out of a woody portion of

the surrounding country, there trickles lazily a little stream.

And now, close against a slaty-colored bit of night-sky, might be traced the figure of a horseman.

What little reflected light still came from the west, no doubt, shone upon him and his steed with a distinctness that might have exhibited the colors of his costume and the glossy black of his horse's mane and coat; but perceiving this horseman from eastward, he and his steed were but as statues of a horse and rider.

They looked black as bronze, and were for a time nearly as motionless.

Then cantering slowly from this slightly higher ground on which he had stood, the horseman was so mingled up with the shadows of the evening, and possibly, too, with a slight hazy mist that rose up from the heath, that he looked more like an apparition, through which you might see grosser objects, than anything of mortal life.

The horseman bent low in the saddle, and listened attentively.

"So, ho, Daisy!" he said; "we shall have some sport to-night, my girl, for I hear even now the sound of wheels, and our work will begin. Here we are, my beauty, on Barnes Common, which suits us to-night, since we have business with the clerk of the old church by the morning's light."

A dull, rattling sort of noise came upon the still air.

"It comes—it comes!" said Captain Heron. "If that be not the Portsmouth mail, I am no judge of sounds! Let me think! Why, it has not been stopped, I fancy, since it was said that a highwayman on the common took from it a Government bag containing ten thousand pounds; but no such good luck for us to-night, Daisy!"

Daisy made her usual whinnying sort of sound, such as she was in the habit of making when Captain Heron kept on repeating her name more than once or twice.

Then the sound of the rush of wheels over one of the roadways of the heath, and of the tramp of horses, came so plainly upon the night air, that, for the moment, Captain Heron thought the mail coach was nearer than it really was.

He touched Daisy lightly on the neck, and with some half-dozen bounds she brought Captain Heron close to the side of the principal roadway across the common.

There was then the clear notes of a bugle through the still night air. It was the guard of the coach giving warning to the man at the turnpike at the end of the common, as it merged into the Hammersmith Road, that the mail was coming.

The lights on each side of the coach were now plainly visible, and Captain Heron could hear the short breathing of the leading horses, as the coachman urged them to increased speed over the common.

"Now, Daisy!" said Captain Heron, in a short, sharp tone.

Daisy made a leap over some furze-bushes, and, light as a fawn, was in the roadway, where she seemed to plant herself more firmly on her feet, as if she expected she was called upon to stop the mail coach by sheer strength.

Flashing onwards came the lights of the mail coach, and as, at that instant, the moon was in its passage behind some clouds that took a longer space than usual to clear away, the light from that source on the common was but slight.

The mist, of which we have made mention, was about four feet, now, from the ground, and there it seemed to rest. It was not very dense, but it produced an odd effect upon the mail coach and its horses as they approached Captain Heron.

The vehicle seemed, as if it rose out of the ground, as it came fairly into

sight, and its lamps had their rays refracted in some strange way by the damp mist, till they seemed to send light far away on the common.

Edging off just a little from the centre of the road, Captain Heron watched his moment of action, and in a loud, clear voice, that had something monotonous and chant-like in its tones, he cried out:

"Stand!—Stand! Pull up or a bullet!"

By impulse, the coachman drew rein; and the two leading horses reared and plunged.

Darting, then, forward with a leap, Captain Heron was at the horses' heads in an instant, and, seizing one by the bridle, he turned them on one side, and they were trampling in the furze bushes by the side of the road.

The fore-wheels of the coach were, by the action, turned very much from their onward path, as the wheelers had followed the impulse given to the leading horses, and had turned aside.

All this was the work of a moment only; and the coachman then cried out, "A highwayman, by George, Bill! Get out of the way, you villain!"

"Where is he?" cried another voice.

"Here!" said Captain Heron.

A scream came from the interior of the coach, and a window was broken.

"There you go!" said the guard. "Pepper for you, my fine fellow!"

He had scrambled from his seat behind on to the top of the luggage on the roof, and levelling his blunderbuss at Captain Heron, he pulled the trigger

But the blunderbuss had no idea of going off in such a smart, off-hand sort of way, so it only flashed in the pan quite harmlessly.

"You had better prime again," said Captain Heron, "and try your luck again, my man!"

"I know'd it!" said the guard. "I told Jem Bowers! He's put in the bullets first, and it won't go off—not a bit!"

The coachman made a savage cut at Captain Heron with his long four-in-hand whip.

"You don't stop my mail!" he cried. "I'm Joe Winterton, and you don't stop me!"

The horses reared and plunged.

"Down with your head a little, Joe Winterton!" said Captain Heron.

"Eh?"

It was impulsively that the coachman ducked his head.

Bang! went a pistol-shot from one of those holsters which Captain Heron had loaded again, and the coachman's hat flew off with a bullet in it.

The man dropped his whip, and then rolled off the box on to the wheelers.

"I'm a dead man!" he cried. "I'm a dead man! I'm off the road!"

"Now for you!" said Captain Heron, as he levelled a pistol at the guard, who, with the useless blunderbuss in his hand, was crouching down on the top of the luggage on the roof of the coach.

"Murder! murder!"

"Are you ready?"

"No, I ain't! Don't be a fool! Don't! I'm not a-going to shoot you!"

"But you tried!"

"No, I didn't! I know'd as it wouldn't go off! Do you think I'd go about with a thing like this, if it was ready to go off any minute? Not I! Why I should do a mischief to myself, or some of the outsides, every journey!"

Captain Heron laughed.

"Young man," said a voice from one of the outside passengers,—go your way, and let us go ours. You will be hanged some day. This is his Majesty's mail."

"Fire! fire!" yelled another of the outside passengers, who had been in a sound sleep, that he only now woke up, as the frightened guard put his foot on his head

"No, don't," yelled the guard.

"Don't! What do you mean?"

Captain Heron left the ontsides to settle matters among themselves, and went up to the door of the mail coach.

But before he adventured either himself or Daisy directly at the window, he adopted a plan that had more than once saved his life.

He took off his hat and feather and he thrust it forward over the window.

Bang! went a pistol from the inside, and a voice called out:

"That's settled! Ha! ha!"

"Not yet!" said Captain Heron, as he appeared at the coach door, and laid a pistol on the edge of the panel, —"not yet! Your money, watches, jewels, and such other small matters of value, if you please, gentlemen, that you may regard less than your lives!"

"Missed him, by Jove!" said a voice.

"Yes, sir," replied Captain Heron, as he looked into the eyes of a gentleman, who was sitting one remove from that door of the coach;—"yes, sir! And as I see you have your left hand concealed under your cloak, with another pistol, if you do not hand it out to me, butt foremost, I will blow your brains out at once!"

The gentleman turned pale, for he could see almost into Captain Heron's pistol, which was within twelve inches of his head.

An old lady who was in the coach screamed aloud, and immediately inflicted a great scratch down the face of the warlike gentleman, as she cried:

"You villain! We shall all be murdered through you! We shall—we shall!"

A young lady who sat right away in a remote corner, added now her scream to the general uproar.

"Silence!" cried Captain Heron.

The command was so sharp and sudden, that all was still in a moment.

"Now, sir!—that other pistol!"

"Take it—I am not justified in casting away my life."

"Certainly not, sir. You have had your shot at me, however."

"Ah!"

"Nay, sir, do not be alarmed; you are quite safe now. It was a fair shot. One, now, I should call a treacherous one."

"Have mercy upon us all!" now whined a man in one corner "Good Mr. Highwayman, take our lives and spare our money. I'm only a poor man."

"Then I begin with you!" said Captain Heron.

"Certainly, my dear sir—certainly! There—there!—and I'll never prosecute you!"

"What is this?"

"My purse, sir, if you please."

"But there is nothing in it!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Come, come!" said the gentleman who had fired the pistol; "this is childish. We are robbed, and there's an end of it. Here is my purse, watch, and ring; take them, sir. And as for you, Mr. Marrables, you had better be candid, and say who you are."

"Murder! mercy!—no! There's a young lady here with diamond earrings; they have three stones in each, and they are worth sixty pounds, as I'm a jeweller—I mean, a sinner!"

"Ah!"

There was now a burst of tears from the young lady, as she said, "I cannot—indeed, I cannot get out one of them! Here is one! Oh, have mercy! One of them won't come out of my ear, but I will try again."

"Pull it out," said the jeweller; "pull it out, Mr. Highwayman! It's only a jerk, and the ear soon gets well again."

"Now, you scoundrel!" said Captain Heron; "I'm half in the mind to cut your ears off before I leave!"

"Serve him right, too," said the gentleman who had fired the pistol.

"Oh, sir, take this one!" sobbed the young lady. "Indeed, you should have the other if I could get it out."

"Who gave you the earrings?" asked Captain Heron.

"My uncle."

"Then we will share them, I will take this one, and you keep the other. Now, madam!"

"You're a villain!" said the old lady.

"I know it, my dear madam; but I want your money and jewels, if you have any."

"Go along, do; and take that man's leather case that he is sitting on."

"Ah, indeed!"

The jeweller uttered a yell of rage and despair, but the sight of Captain Heron's pistol at his head made him give up a small leather case about six inches square, and then he seemed completely prostrated as he groaned out, "They were for my Lord Bridgewater—jewels of price! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

At this moment Daisy gave a sudden plunge, and Captain Heron found that a couple of hands were on the collar of his coat from above, and it was evident that some one had had the audacity to lean over from the top of the coach and seize him.

At the same moment the guard, who had alighted, grasped Daisy by the rein, calling out, "Woa! woa, horse! woa! Now we have him!"

"Hurrah!" yelled the jeweller. "Shoot him! kill him! smash him!"

"No, no!" screamed the young lady.

"Very good," said Captain Heron; "if you want me up there, I'll come. Hawks! hawks, my Daisy! Hawks ahoy, lass!"

Then Captain Heron whistled in a peculiar manner, and drawing up his feet, he stood for a moment on the saddle, and sprang on to the roof of the coach.

A yell from the guard testified that Daisy had a good hold of his rather redundant and scrubby head of hair, while the manner in which she lashed out, first with one foot and then with the other, was awful to see.

The man on the coach roof who had laid hold of Captain Heron, rolled over him, and fell on to the coachman and the two wheelers.

"Help! help! Murder! Thieves!" shouted the jeweller, who jumped out of the coach, and ran as hard as he could go over the common.

"Daisy! Daisy!" cried Captain Heron.

Daisy had got handsomely rid of her opponents, who had come off sadly the worst in the struggle, and she now trotted up to the back of the coach. Captain Heron was in the saddle in a moment.

"Good night, ladies and gentlemen," he said; "you will all remember Captain Heron!"

Off into the night air on the common went the victorious highwayman; and Daisy, whose sense of sight was most acute, leaped lightly over the furze-bushes which were in the path.

And then Captain Heron knew, by a sound she uttered, that some other horse was near at hand, and he drew rein to listen.

Coming apparently exactly over the common, in a direction that would face him, was a single horseman, at a sharp trot.

The blood was circling warmly in the veins of the highwayman, and he was resolved that the night should be one of adventures; so without a moment's hesitation he advanced towards the horseman, and called out, "Stand, sir! Your money or your life!"

The moon, which, up to now, had been hidden in a confused web of clouds, burst out in all its beauty through a long crevice, and sailed slowly and sweetly with the deep blue sky behind it, and one small star in it's wake of vivid brightness.

The horseman drew up, and as the

moonlight fell full upon him, a cloak that he wore fell away a little from his face, and showed an elderly man, with, what then was a very rare thing indeed to see on the face of an Englishman, a moustache, white and full upon his upper lip. It was the whiteness of age, for this man could not be less than something approaching seventy years. Yet he was hale and strong, and he sat his horse well.

"So, sir," he said, "you are a highwayman!"

"I am. Quick, sir!"

"And if not?"

"Sir, I have neither time nor inclination to parley with you. You have said it. I am a highwayman, and I stop you on Barnes Common. You know my purpose, so let us part quickly."

"You are bold!"

"I should be."

"And young!"

"I am so. Come, sir, your money!"

"And it seems to me as if I had heard your voice some time in my life before to-night."

"It may be so. Now, sir,!"

"Well, there is my purse; it is indifferently well filled, and I promise you——"

"I don't want any promises, sir. I take what you happen to have with you. I want that brilliant ring, sir."

"Oh, you do!"

"On my faith, I do!"

"I am loath to part with it."

"So am I."

"You are an insolent ruffian! Do you know who I am?"

"No, nor care. The ring, sir! Be you whom you may, I don't like you."

"You don't?"

"Indeed I do not!"

"And may I ask, why?"

"Yes and I will tell you. There is a cold, sneering way with you which bespeaks a bad heart and no conscience—a manner about your voice, and accents, and language, which seems to me that of a man who would pursue his own path, even if it had been over bleeding hearts and throbbing brains of the young and innocent. You are a bad man, be you whom you may!"

The horseman bit his lips.

"And you," he said,—"if ever we meet again, young sir, it may be that you will repent this candor."

"Look at me well, then, that you may know me."

Captain Heron lifted his hat, and held it at arm's length, and the silver moonlight fell on his handsome face and well-turned head, and upon his glossy hair and noble brow; about which, and in his eyes, too, there was almost a feminine sweetness.

"Good heaven!" said the horseman

"Amen, sir!" said Captain Heron, as he glanced upwards, as though he took the exclamation for a prayer.

"Amen, sir!—and well for us that it is so!"

"Your name!—your name, young man?"

"What matters?"

"Tell me—oh, tell me!"

"Heron."

"No, no! What other?"

"Felix."

With a short, sharp cry, the stranger sunk down low on his horse's neck, and striking the spurs into his steed's flanks, he flew, rather than galloped off, over the common.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR.—CAPTAIN HERON RESCUES A PRISONER.—THE MORNING'S DAWN.

The night was now rapidly passing away, and as Captain Heron felt himself once more alone on Barnes Common, that intensely chilly feeling that precedes by perhaps one hour the dawn, swept over the bleak and bare expanse around him.

The wind was light, but it made

its presence manifest by a low, half-whistling sound, which died away mournfully in the distance.

Captain Heron felt an uneasy sensation at his heart that he could not account for; and one moment he thought he would set Daisy to speed, and overtake the stranger who had behaved so mysteriously, and force him to an explanation of his disjointed sentences.

Then again he paused; for what could it possibly be to him? Some accidental likeness to some one had struck the stranger in his lineaments, and as the recollection appeared to be painful, why should he, Heron, seek to open afresh the wound of any one's heart.

"No," he said, "I will let him be—it can concern me nothing."

Daisy shuddered, at this moment, as that keen morning air swept around her.

"It is cold, my Daisy," said Captain Heron. "Come, then; we will have a canter over the heath. It will warm our blood."

Daisy was far from loath, and as she sped over that death-like looking common, they might have been mistaken for a spectre horseman on a spectre steed.

Two early pedestrians saw them, and shrunk away into the shadow of some bushes, as they passed.

The young moon looked down at intervals, and cast a long shadow of Captain Heron and Daisy on the dewy grass.

This rapid ride raised the spirits of the highwayman, and when he paused, and patted the neck of Daisy, he said aloud:

"Better now—better now, by far, my gallant Daisy. And not here, on the bleak common, would I keep you at this cold hour before sunrise, but that I have business at the old church yonder."

By some freak, or of the shadows, at this moment, a bright gleam of moonlight was projected on to the old square turret of Barnes Church, and a small window in it glittered like burnished silver.

"There! there!" exclaimed Captain Heron,—"the villain Wild said it was there I should find a mute confirmation of my mother's lawful marriage; and if, indeed, and in truth, the leaf of the church registry be missing, such must be the case, and I shall believe what he has said."

It was strange how, whenever Captain Heron's thoughts turned in the direction of Barnes Church and the statement that Jonathan Wild had made to him, the figure of the strange horseman with the grey moustache always seemed to rise up at the same time before him.

Visible connexion he could see none between these two affairs, but such appeared to be the association they enforced on his mind.

Captain Heron, then, was on the point of riding towards the little old church, for an idea came over him that, mingled with the moonbeams, there was the reflection of a light of a different color from the small window of the turret; but he paused as the crack of the whip of a postilion, and the unmistakable sound of horses' feet and wheels on one of the cross roads of the common, came upon his ear.

He had not the least idea of the value of the plunder he had already obtained on the heath from the passengers of the Portsmouth mail, and from the horseman with the moustache, but as he was there with a determination to get what he could, Captain Heron turned an attentive ear to the approaching sounds.

"A post-chaise," he said, "I fancy, by the sound. We shall perhaps have yet another adventure before dawn, my Daisy."

It was evident that the post-chaise was approaching at a very rapid rate, and that the postillion was

urging on his horses by whip and spur.

Mingled with the sounds of the horses' feet, the wheels, and the whip of the postillion, Captain Heron thought that he heard something like a human voice in high tones of expostulation.

Stooping low in the saddle, as well to listen better, as to prevent himself from being seen, against a rather light background of clouds, Heron, at a quiet trot, went forward on the path of the chaise.

There was a mass of furze, yellow gorse, and brushwood close to the roadway which was about six or eight feet in height, and which went a long way towards concealing both horse and rider; and Heron halted on the heathside of that breastwork, so to call it, and waited the approach of the chaise.

He now clearly heard a voice call out something, but what it was, the distance and the light, baffling wind that blew upon the common prevented him from distinctly hearing.

Another minute, and the chaise had reached close to where he was, when a loud, angry voice shouted from one of its windows:

"Stop! stop!—I say! Pull up now! Stop!"

The postillion reined in the horse he rode, and the chaise came to a standstill.

It was evidently a private and handsome carriage. The lamps seemed to be of silver, and the wax candles within them cast plenty of light upon the carriage—upon the furze and gorse bushes, behind which were Captain Heron and Daisy, and upon the dusty road over the common.

"Stop, I say!" roared the voice again.

"I am stopping, my lord," said the postillion.

"Excellenza!—Excellenza! Idiot, Excellenza!" said the voice again.

"Very well," said the postillion, doggedly, "I don't care! What you like!"

"Ah, you shall suffer!"

Captain Heron was now aware that this voice had about it a decidedly foreign tone, although its owner was well acquainted with English.

The door of the chaise was now violently opened, and an elderly man, wrapped up in a cloak that seemed to be lined with the rich fur, sprang out. He turned, then, to the door again, and stamping on the ground, he cried angrily, "Come out—come out!"

"Gladly," said a voice. And Captain Heron saw a most charming young lady alight from the carriage.

She held lightly about her slender form a rich shawl, and pearls sparkled in her hair.

Head-dress she had none.

"Come out, I say!" cried the man with the cloak.

"Yes—yes!" said the young lady. "The saints be good to me! I am here!"

"Wretch!"

The man shook her by the arm violently, and then he added, "Tell me at once, who was it?—who was it?"

"Geraldo!"

"Bah! No, it was not!"

"As I live!"

"No—no, I say!"

"I swear it, by the blessed Virgin in heaven! He whom you have basely murdered was Geraldo, my own dear brother!"

"False—false yet! Hark you, hark you, Lisetta—Jezebel, hark you!—are you not my wife!"

"Alas!"

"My slave—my property—my own, to keep—kill——"

"No, no!—oh, no! It is true that my cruel uncle at Madrid forced me, when I was an ignorant girl, almost a child fresh from a nunnery, to marry you, and I knew no better. No doubt you bought me as you would a horse, or a mule, or a jewel!"

"Ha! I did."

"I thought so."

"Twenty thousand gold crowns."

"Villains both! the uncle who sold and the husband who bought. It is well, sir! You are his Excellency the Marquis Spinola, Ambassador from the Court of Spain to St. James'. It is well—it is well."

"Silence, caitiff!"

"I will not be silenced. If you had been kind to me—gentle to me—and if you had trusted me——"

The Spanish Ambassador burst into a roar of mocking laughter as he cried, "Trust a woman! Trust a woman! Ha! ha! ha? Good! Trust a woman!"

"So say men like you, and so fall men like you most miserably. He who trusts a woman truly, has her heart and his own in his keeping."

"Come, come! The papers!"

"Never!"

"The letters, I say! You have hidden them. Where are they? you have them not! Geraldo, as you say,—he has had them not. I searched the body."

"Oh, murderer! murderer!"

The young lady wrung her hands and wept, and then she cried out, "You shall know all, and it shall haunt you. I wrote to Spain, to my brother Geraldo, that you used me more like a dog—no, no! far worse than any dog would be used without madness and resentment; and I implored him to come here to this cold, chilly land, and take me away to our dear Andalusia. He came—he came! dear Geraldo!"

"Peace! The papers!"

"He came, and I saw him. I told him all, and we fled."

"Ah, and I overtook you on the other side of the common, and slew him!"

"Let me fly to him—there may be life yet!"

The young lady made an attempt to rush away in the direction which the chaise had come, but the Ambassador grasped her by one wrist.

"No, no; you are mine!"

"Help! help! Even to you, Robert, I appeal!"

"The postilion made some growling reply.

"He dare not interfere," said the Ambassador. "He knows he is in my power. And now, Countess, I tell you that you may go at once and join your Geraldo, or any one else, if you will give me back the packet of letters you took from my Cabinet."

"They are my protection."

"No. But I wish to have them."

"I know it—I know it. When I was about to leave, Geraldo said, 'My dear sister, what can we do to put a stop to further persecution on the part of the Marquis?' and I at once thought of those letters—letters that have passed between you and my Lord Whitcombe, the English Minister, in regard to the Spanish Treaty, and which show how you were both receiving heavy bribes from the respective Governments."

"Hush! hush! You are mad"

"Do you deny it?"

"I do—I do! Give me those letters of Lord Whitcombe's—I must have them."

"No; never! never! While they are in my possession I hold a power over you that will make you tremble!"

"Do you know another thing?"

"What thing?"

"That I hold a power over you that may well make you tremble!"

"What power?"

"That of life or death. Robert? Robert?"

"Yes, my lord."

"You are faithful enough to me, because you know, that being a deserter from the English army, and having killed your officer——"

Robert, the postilion, turned and faced the Ambassador; and as the light of the carriage lamp fell upon his face, it was perfectly hideous and vivid with rage and fear.

"You have no hope but in my employment," added the Spanish Ambas-

sador. "Now, Robert, I purpose waiting here while you run back and examine the body of the man I shot over there on the common, about half a mile off. Go!"

"Yes."

Robert slowly dismounted and approached the Ambassador. They looked into each other's eyes for a moment, and then Robert nodded and went away.

"He is going to murder her," said Robert, in a low tone; but it reached the ears of Captain Heron, since the postillion was close to the furze and gorse bushes as he spoke.

"Now," said the Ambassador.

"Now, what?" said the young lady.

"The letter."

"Never!"

"Girl, you do not—you cannot know your own danger! Listen to me! An ancestor of mine, an old Castilian like me, once had a wife who cast a stain upon his honor. He tied her by the hands to one of the wheels of his carriage; and so drove to her father's house with her; and when there, her mangled corpse was released, and left on the door-steps. Do you hear me?"

"I do."

"That, then, shall be your fate, if you will not give me that packet of letters!"

"I have no father."

"You quibble; but I will leave you on the borders of this heath!"

"No, no! Mercy!"

"Ah, you are taken by surprise! This silken scarf, you see, confines your hands at once! Ha! ha! you are taken by surprise!"

"And so are you!" said Captain Heron, as Daisy took a flying leap over the furze and gorse bushes, and alighted so close to the Spanish Ambassador, that the highwayman had him by the back of the neck, in a grip of iron, before he could stir from the spot.

A scream of surprise burst from the lips of the young lady, and she half dropped to her knees.

The Spanish Ambassador, by a great effort, screwed his neck round, till he could look Captain Heron in the face; and there, with retracted lips, and with eyes that seemed as if they would start from his head, he glared at the highwayman.

"Quite by surprise," added Heron, "quite so, sir, I think! Madam, fear nothing."

"Oh, in the name of heaven, who are you?"

"Your deliverer from a fearful death, it seems, madam!"

"Yes, yes!—oh, yes! he would have killed me! I am free now! I will fly!"

"Not now! You might run into more danger! Pause a moment, I pray you!"

The Ambassador, now, from out of the breast of his apparel, drew a poinard, and, with a scream of rage, he made an attempt to plunge it upward into Heron's breast, but the highwayman just touched Daisy on the flank, she reared, her two fore-feet were dashed against the Spaniard's breast, and he fell.

"Hold him, Daisy!" said Captain Heron.

Daisy placed one fore-foot on his chest, and held him down.

Captain Heron sprang from the saddle.

"Still hold him, Daisy! Now," said Captain Heron to the young lady,—"you are free!"

She flung herself on her knees before him, as she said, "How shall I thank you, my preserver?"

"I want no thanks. Only tell me how you can proceed to save yourself?"

"At a place called Kew, my brother was to meet two friends. But, alas he is dead!"

"Are you sure?"

"My husband shot him! He lies further on."

"Come, do not give way to grief! I will go back with you, and try to find him. Your brother may not, after all, be badly hurt."

"But my husband—the Ambassador?"

"Leave him to me."

The young lady seemed to hesitate half a moment, and then she sprung on to the steps of the carriage, and put her hand on to the roof, from which she took a folded packet.

"There," she said—"there are the letters, about which so much has been said. I had them about me, and only flung them up here on the impulse of a moment."

"Am I to take them?"

"Do so; and keep them in trust for me."

The Ambassador now uttered another cry of rage, not unmingled with pain; for Daisy was not very particular about the weight she threw into her fore-foot, as it rested on his chest.

"I will take care of these letters," said Captain Heron. I know that Lord Whitcombe is the Prime Minister, and that such a correspondence as I have heard described to me would be his ruin!"

"And that, too, of his bad son, Lord Warringdale," said the young lady.

"Ah, it is so!" cried Captain Heron. "I had forgotten that! It is so! —it is so! Edith, I may perchance have new power to aid you!"

Captain Heron closed the door of the carriage after the Ambassador's child-like wife had entered it. She could not be above sixteen even then.

Approaching the Ambassador, he said, "Now, sir, rise! Release him, Daisy!"

Daisy lifted up her foot. The Ambassador, with a groan, struggled to his feet.

"What is this?" he said.

Captain Heron had adroitly fastened the same silk scarf round his wrists that he had begun to secure his young wife with.

"What do you mean? What is this?"

"I do not intend to fasten you to the wheel of the carriage."

"No—no!"

"You would be sure to slip, and be torn to pieces!"

"Good heavens!"

"It is well, indeed, for a man like you to call out 'Good Heavens!' Now, my Lord Marquis de Spinola, what money have you about you?"

"That is well?"

"What is well?"

"Money you speak of. That settles all! In my pocket book here, in the breast of my coat, you will find five hundred pounds. Take them and be my humble servant!"

"Your what?"

"My humble servant. I buy you. I buy all people with money, from the highest to the lowest."

"In Spain, possibly; but this is England!"

Captain Heron coolly possessed himself of the pocket-book, and then dragged the Ambassador to the back of the carriage.

"Murder! Help! What are you about to do?"

"An act of mercy, compared to what you were about to do."

"No—no!"

"Yes! I have no doubt in the world but that you would have fastened your unfortunate wife to one of the wheels, as, in fact, you announced your intention of doing. She would have been killed. I shall only fasten you behind, and give you a run over the heath."

"I can't run."

"Very well. That's nothing to me."

"I am old."

"What? With such a child for a wife? Pho! You must be quite a youth!"

"Murder!"

"Ah!"

"Mercy!"

"Look for it in your heart!"

Captain Heron tied his hands securely to a portion of the framework of the chaise, and then he sprung himself into the postillion's saddle.

"Daisy, lass!" he cried. "Soho! Follow on!—follow on! Off and away, my Daisy!"

Captain Heron turned the carriage round, and off he set with it, urging on the horses by cries and spurs with his heel, or rather kicks.

The Spanish Ambassador roared and ran at a tremendous rate and the dust half choked him, but he dared not fall. His cloak flew away, his hat flew away, and his wig flew after it, and still he roared and ran at the back of the carriage for a good half-mile, when the handkerchief tore into fragments, and he was free, but only to roll headlong into the ditch, where he lay perfectly exhausted.

"Hoy!—hoy!" cried a voice.

Captain Heron saw two persons in in the roadway, and he drew up.

"For the love of heaven," cried one, "have you seen a lady?"

"The wife of the Spanish Ambassador?"

"Yes—yes!"

The young lady now looked from the window, and called out, "Geraldo! Brother! Is that you?"

"Yes—oh, yes! I am hurt, but not killed, and here is my friend, Raphael de Ancona!"

"I leave you in good hands then, madam," said Captain Heron. "I wish you a clear escape and more happiness than it appears has yet fallen to your share. Adieu!"

Captain Heron sprang from the carriage, and the young lady called out of the window, "Oh, Geraldo, thank him—thank the gentleman, for he has saved me even from death!"

"Daisy! Daisy!" cried Captain Heron.

A moment more, and he was in the saddle. A glance at the back of the coach showed him the fluttering end of the silk handkerchief that had held the Ambassador, and he called out, "Gentleman, make haste, for the Ambassador is somewhere on the road; and although he may be a little out of breath, he is dangerous! Adieu. May all good fortune attend you!"

"Stay, sir!—stay! Our thanks—our gratitude—our prayers!"

Captain Heron waved his hand, and was off over the common, in the direction of the church.

"Enough for to-night!" he said. "Enough adventure for to-night, my gallant Daisy!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE PARISH REGISTRY.—A DISCOVERY.—OFF TO THE FOREST.

Dim and grey the young morning showed itself in the eastern sky as Captain Heron stopped at the door of a half-inn, half-public-house, on the borders of the common.

Each moment objects about the still, pretty, rural spot were becoming more and more visible.

The tree-tops seemed to be tinged with a yellow lustre. The soft, balmy morning air was inexpressibly grateful to the senses, and the carol of thousands of birds began to make the groves and bushes vocal with melody.

"Hilloa!" cried Captain Heron to a lazy-looking man, who was opening the shutters of the house. "Hilloa there! Can I find the ostler?"

"Yes, you can!"

"Where is he?"

"I be he!"

"Come out, then, and take charge of my horse. Give her a little damp hay, and a rub down with a clean leather. After that, a pint of old ale!"

"Well, you be's a odd one!" said

the ostler, as he sallied out of the house, and took hold of Daisy's bridle, casting at the same time a critical glance over her.

"She's a beauty!"

"She is indeed!" said Heron, as he patted the neck of his steed. "I do not think there is her equal in all England! Be careful of her, my man. Don't halter her up; treat her kindly, and she will be mild and placid as a lamb."

Captain Heron placed a crown in the ostler's hand, which seemed immediately to speak so eloquently to his feelings, that he was half-inclined to go on his knees.

At all events, he seemed never to be done touching his cap to the highwayman; and then he touched it to Daisy, who seemed to take the subservient civility quite as a thing of course.

"I want," said Heron, "the parish clerk of the old church"

"Muster Watkins?"

"I don't know his name."

"Well, sir, that be it. And if so be as you goes right away past them chestnut trees, and then gets round Willis' Barn, and takes your way by Jones' piggeries, you will be all wrong!"

"Can I see the house from here?"

"Why, sir, seeing that it bean't a house, but a bit of a cot, you can; and there it be, with the porch, and the ivy all over it!"

"That will do. I shall be back in half an hour! You don't get many visitors so early as this?"

"Lor', no, sir; but I was called up in the night by a mad sort of a gentleman, sir; for his horse had gone lame, and he was main impatient. He was some furineering sort of a chap, sir!"

"Why do you think that?"

"He had those here—what do you call 'em, sir?—musquitoes on his lips!"

"Moustache?"

"Very like, sir!"

"Grey, were they?"

"Mainly grey."

"And—and what did he here? Do you know him?"

"Not I, sir; but he left his horse here—a dark bay it was—while he went towards the old church."

"It is very strange. Be careful until I come back, and you will get another crown. I don't wish any chance traveller to see my horse!"

"All right, sir!"

Captain Heron went at a rapid step towards the cot with the ivy-covered porch, and glancing to the chimneys, he saw smoke issuing from one, which convinced him that the family were astir; so he had no hesitation in rapping at the door, despite the yelping opposition of a little dog who was in the trim front garden of the cottage.

It was an old man, with hair perfectly white, who opened the door, and looked inquiringly in the face of Captain Heron.

"I want Mr. Watkins, the parish clerk."

"At your service, sir!"

"Oh, you are Mr. Watkins?"

"Man and boy, sir; these seventy-nine years now, come June. Always be Elias Watkins, sir, praise heaven!"

"I want to look the church registry."

"Bless us!"

"You look surprised! Is it so unusual a request?"

"Well, sir, may be it is; but as you are the second gentleman within a matter of four or five hours, I do feel bit-startled!"

"Ah, who was the first?"

"A good man, sir!"

"You knew him? A gentleman with grey moustache, was he not?"

"He was, sir. But I am keeping you waiting here. I will get the keys, and go with you, sir. It's a shilling—a shilling the fee!"

"Pho! A guinea, you mean! Make haste!"

The old clerk, stimulated by the promised guinea, very nearly stumbled over his own threshold in his haste to fetch the keys of the church; and then a sudden idea came across the mind of Captain Heron, and he hastily took from his pocket the pocket-book that had been handed to him by the gentleman with the grey moustache, and opened to see if any name was to be observed within it.

The first thing that struck Captain Heron was an earl's coronet, stamped in gold, just within the pocket-book. Then within, a fine light hand, on the first blank page, was the name—the Right Honorable the Earl of Whitcombe!

Captain Heron could not help uttering an exclamation as he read this name; for, coupled with the events of that night upon the common, as well as with his previous adventures in respect to Lord Warringdale, the name was most interesting to him.

That Lord Warringdale was the only son of Earl of Whitcombe, Captain Heron knew quite well; but it was an intense surprise to him to find that the Earl himself had had business at the little old church of Barnes at such an hour.

An undefined and uneasy feeling, that in some way all these matters were mingled with his own fortunes, came over him, and by the time the old clerk came out of the cottage with a bunch of ancient keys in his hand, Captain Heron was in a complete state of conjecture.

"Tell me," he said, as he placed the guinea he had promised in the hand of the old man,—"tell me, if you can, what was the business of Earl of Whitcombe here at the church last night!"

"Ah, then you know him, young sir?"

"Yes! That is, slightly!"

"I knew him at once, though it is—Let me see!—dear me, let me see!—a matter of three-and-twenty years agone since I saw him!"

"Indeed!"

"Why, yes, sir! My Bob went for a soldier! Old Mortlake Mill was burnt down, you see, and Archdean Manvers, when he came down, he says, 'Watkins,' says the Archdeacon. Poor Bob—poor Bob! He was a general!"

"Your son?"

"Yes; or a corporal, or something of that sort!"

"But about Lord Whitcombe?"

"Eh?"

"I say, about Lord Whitcombe? You say you recollect him twenty-three years ago!"

"The Earl of Whitcombe!"

"It's all the same."

"Begging your pardon always, sir, an earl and a lord don't seem the same to me. But here we are at the old church!"

The clerk opened a side-door, and stepped into the church, closely followed by Captain Heron.

"The registry is in the sacristy, as we still call it. As I was saying, I remember the Earl three-and-twenty years agone——"

"Yes—yes! Well—well?"

"Eh?"

"Go on!"

"Dear me, sir, I'm a going on; but, you see, I'm not so young as I was once upon a time, sir. But here we are at the sacristy, and here is the register! Is it a baptism search?"

"No; a—a marriage!"

The voice of the highwayman shook for a moment with emotion as he spoke.

"Ah, a marriage! The parties!"

"I want to know if one Amelia Staunton was married at this church some three-and-twenty years ago?"

"Bless us!"

The old clerk looked curiously in the face of Captain Heron, and placed his shrivelled hand on the book

"You look surprised!"

"Why, sir, I am—I am—I am indeed surprised! It's gone!"

"Gone! What's gone?"

"The leaf! That leaf of the parish registry, sir! I don't know how, but it's gone; and strange to say, sir—very strange to say—it was that leaf that the Earl of Whitcombe came to see, though he didn't tell me; for I saw him turn and turn over the leaves till he came to about that date, and then he looked at the numbering you see, sir, at the corners, and he said, 'It is so! He speaks truth. It is gone!'—and then he went away, sir. But I know him—I know him!"

The color went and came on the face of the highwayman as he listened to the old clerk.

"Show me—show me!" he cried. "For the love of heaven, show me where the leaf ought to be in the registry!"

"Here—here!" said the old man.

"Ah, I see!"

"To be sure—page 262! Well, sir, the next ought to be 263, but it is 264!"

"Alas—alas!"

"Amen!"

The old clerk shut up the book with a loud clap, and stood shivering in the cold air of the church, and looking intently into the eyes of Captain Heron.

"Can you tell me how this page came to be toru out, and by whom?"

"No, no, no!"

"But the Earl of Whitcombe? Twenty-three years ago you say you saw him?"

The old man turned slowly round, and pointed through the open door of the sacristy, as he called that portion of the sacred edifice in which they were, and he pointed towards the altar.

"There!" he said; "there!"

Even as he spoke, the first broad beam of sweet golden sunlight found its way into the church, and fell, clear and sparkling upon the steps and the railing that shut in the communion table.

"The very spot!" cried the old man,—"the very spot! That was where I saw him! The Earl himself and a fair young girl—almost a child she seemed to me—knelt by him, and he made her his wife; and I gave the bride away, for they were all alone; and the rector that was—old Mr. Barrowdale—is dead long and long ago! A good man, sir—a good man! He is where that dear sunlight comes from But I saw the Earl; and though he was so much older last night, and though his black hair had turned grey, I knew him well! Yes, I knew him well! There, sir—there, where the sunshine rests! The very spot—the very spot, sir!"

Something between a sigh and a sob burst from the lips of Captain Heron.

"Tell me, for the love of justice, of truth, of heaven—tell me the name!"

"The name?"

"Yes; of the bride! Speak, oh, speak!"

"Amelia Staunton!"

With a half-shriek, Captain Heron sprang forward and sank down on his knees in the sunshine on the steps before the communion rails.

"Mother!—mother!—my own mother!" he cried. "You are in heaven now, but you may yet be permitted to look down from the glory of Paradise and see your son—your own boy! Mother—mother! Oh, heaven! what a tale is this! Can it be true, mother? Injured—broken-hearted?"

He let his face drop upon his hands, and sobbed aloud.

The old man tremblingly approached him.

"Good gracious!" he said,—"good gracious, my dear young man! Don't, now—don't! Do you mean—that is, can it be that you are the son?"

"Mother!—mother! dear, dear, lost mother!"

"How he weeps!"

"Soon—soon!" said Heron, mournfully.

"Soon, what?"

"Let me be for a short space! I shall soon be able to speak to you—not now!"

The old man crept away, and sat down in a pew and said a prayer.

The sobs of Captain Heron gradually died away, and then, very pale, and, with the traces of tears in his eyes, and a look of solemn suffering, mingled with determination, upon his face, he rose from his knees.

"Where are you?" he said.

"Here, sir."

"You are an old man, but I think you have a good heart!"

"I hope so, sir."

"You have suffered grief!"

"My son Bob!"

"Ay, that has been a theme for tears! You can feel for others, too! Now, tell me, are you quite sure that the Earl of Whitcombe was married in this church twenty-three years ago?"

"The fourth of June, twenty-three years ago!"

"To—to———"

"Amelia Staunton! I steadied the poor young thing's hand as she signed the registry, and the tears fell so fast on the page that she could not see it?"

"You held my mother's hand?"

"I did—I did?"

"You saw her tears?"

"Ah, yes!"

"God bless you!"

Captain Heron took one of the old shrivelled hands of the aged clerk in his own, and kissed it.

"God bless you, old man!"

"My dear boy," said old Watkins, "I thought at the time that it was not a happy wedding, you see! But the Reverend Mr. Borrowdale had a special order put in his hands about it from his bishop, you see! I think I see the dear young lady now!"

"What was—was she like?"

"Fair and gentle, and with such little hands like some child's!"

"Yes—yes! Her hair?"

"A sort of brown, with a tint as if the blessed sun ever shone on it."

"Her eyes?"

"I cannot tell! They were so—so ——Well, I don't know, but they made me cry to look at them, and yet they were so very beautiful!"

"My poor mother! And the leaf of the registry is gone, and the Earl of Whitcombe is my father!"

"Bless us!"

"And I am——"

"A lord!"

"Ha—ha! No, I am a high—— Well—well, old man, you are in possession of a secret that may make or mar many fortunes! Will you promise me that you will keep secret my visit and who and what I am? I shall take it very kindly of you!"

"I will—I will! It is a secret that the leaf of the registry is torn out!"

"Be assured that you will be doing a good deed now by acting under my directions in this matter! You, I am certain, have but one feeling; and that is, that right should be done."

"Surely—surely!"

"And when in a happier world than this you meet that young and gentle girl, whom you saw kneeling in the sunshine in this old church, it will be a joy to you to be able to say you played a kindly part to her son!"

"It will!—it will! Bless me, yes! And I am getting old, too! To be sure! My good young man, I will do just as you wish! Bless me, yes. Do you know—I—I have never been quite the man I was since Bob went for a soldier!"

"Come, I will see you to your own door! And when I come to you again, you will know me, will you not?"

"Surely—surely!"

"And if it should happen that I want your testimony, and cannot come to you myself, I will send some

me, who will say to you, 'Remember the sunlight on the altar-steps!'"

"That will do! I shan't forget that!"

"Good-bye, then!"

"Heaven bless you!"

Captain Heron shook hands with the old man and left in his palm several guineas; and then he hurried away to the inn where he had left Daisy.

Oh! what a whirl of new thoughts and sensations was in his mind now! That his mother had been really and legally married to the Earl of Whitcombe three-and-twenty years ago he did not entertain a doubt; and such legal marriage made him the legitimate heir to the Whitcombe title and estates, provided he could establish the fact.

And that bold, bad Lord Warringdale, who now paraded the world in all the pride of wealth and rank, as eldest and only son of the Earl of Whitcombe, what, then, was, he?

The Earl had married a noble lady, and that marriage must have been twenty-two years of ago.

Alas! how soon had *his* poor mother been cast aside—the plaything of an hour! Her heart broken, as a child breaks a toy, to get at the heart of its mystery!

The bosom of the highwayman swelled with indignation and grief.

It was his father, too, whom he had met on the common,—and who, no doubt, had detected the likeness which (Heron) bore to his mother; and hence the emotion and half-fright of the Earl at sight of him without his hat—hence his riding off so mysteriously. Yes, that was the highwayman's father!

And then he thought of Edith—of the strange combination of circumstances which had induced Sir John Tarleton to wish to marry her to his half-brother, the Lord Warringdale.

Why he—even he, Captain Heron, the highwayman, was Lord Warringdale; for was not that the title always, by courtesy, given to the eldest sons of the Earls of Whitcombe? What if he were to go to Judge Tarleton, and say to him, "Behold me! Here am I! Lord Warringdale shall yet wed your child; for I am he, and I love her truly!"

"Oh, I must think over all this!—I must think over all this most carefully and maturely!" he said to himself. "But now I must to Epping Forest; for there was those there who have a right to my care and to my protection!"

Captain Heron reached the inn. Daisy was brought out to him; and he gave the ostler the other crown he had promised him, and vaulted into the saddle.

The ostler jerked his thumb over his shoulder, as he then whispered, "Sir! Sir!"

"What is it?"

"In the house; a-talking to master!"

"Who?"

"Mr. Wild! There's his horse, sir!"

A stout half-breed horse was standing not far from the inn-door, with its bridle tied to a low, hanging branch of an alder-tree.

"Thank you," said Captain Heron. "A guinea!"

"All's right!"

A yell burst, at this moment, from the lips of Jonathan Wild, as he appeared, booted and spurred, at the door of the inn.

Captain Heron reined in Daisy, and looked fixedly in the face of the ruffian.

"His lordship was right!" cried Wild. "He said it was you! I met him at Starch Green. So you got out of Newgate, Captain?"

"I did, as you see."

"But you will soon be in it again!"

"No!"

"But I say yes! You thought you left me secure enough in the attic!"

"So I did, for as long as was necessary."

Wild was edging off towards his horse.

The ostler ran up to the other side of it officiously, crying out, "Let me help you, Mr. Wild! Dear me, is that good-looking young gentleman a highwayman?"

"Get out of the way, fool!"

"Are you in the mind, Jonathan Wild," said Captain Heron, "for a race over the common?"

"We shall see!" said Wild.

He put his foot in the stirrup, and in a moment was riding on his back sprawling in the road.

The saddle had turned completely round with him, and looked ludicrous enough by the side of the horse.

"Good day!" said Captain Heron.

Daisy was off like the wind in a moment, while the ostler, with a look of affected commiseration, lifted up Wild, who then made a blow at him with the end of his heavy riding-whip, for he had a pretty good notion of who had loosened the saddle-girth, so as to give him the fall he had had.

Pursuit from Wild was what Captain Heron, now that he was fairly mounted on Daisy, thought nothing of, and he went at a half-gallop only on his road to Epping.

It was rather a long journey, but Daisy performed it as easily as though it had been a canter round the park, and Captain Heron found himself amid the bushes and coverts of the old wood, while yet the sun was low in the eastern sky.

He dived down one of those narrow, shady brakes in the forest which had the appearance of being perfectly impervious to man and beast, and when he had got some distance he placed the whistle to his lips, and made the wood resound with a call in the tones of various birds, but really much louder than the feathered tribe ever attuned their throats.

There was a death-like stillness for a few moments, and then some distance off there came an answering whistle.

Again Captain Heron repeated his signal, and then, from various parts of the wood, came whistle-calls, and soon from out the branches of a huge tree there descended a man, who called out, "It is the Captain!"

"And that is you, Ogle?"

"To be sure! Hoorah! All's right! Hoorah!"

CHAPTER X.

THE ROBBERS' HAUNT IN THE FOREST.—UNEXPECTED FORTUNE.—THE SCOUT.

"Hush, Ogle!" said Captain Heron, in reply to the congratulatory cries of the late assistant of Jonathan Wild,—"Hush! You must learn to be more careful in the forest. The good greenwood keeps our secrets well, but it may likewise hide foes!"

"But I'm so glad to see you, Captain!"

"I will not doubt it! Follow me!"

Captain Heron, with the bridle of Daisy hanging over his arm—for he had dismounted—led the way still further down the little narrow lane in which they were, and which merited that name, although its sides were trees, its pavement the brown fresh turf, and its sky a roof of leaves, through which even the mid-day sun found it difficult to penetrate.

Daisy seemed to enjoy immensely this return to the sweet sylvan glades of old Epping Forest.

No fatigue appeared to have any effect upon her volatile spirit, and occasionally tearing off a branch of some overhanging tree, or astonishing Ogle by making an unexpected attack upon him with her teeth, which he was a long time in fully believing was but play, she plunged deeper and deeper into the wood with Captain Heron.

But as the highwayman went forward into those sweet sylvan recesses, the shadows that gathered upon

his brow were not all those cast by the forest leaves. Captain Heron was fast losing some of that springy lightness of character that had made him look upon human life with sunnier eyes than it is probable he would be able to behold it for some time now to come.

The discovery he had made regarding his birth, and the mysterious circumstances in connexion with his mother's marriage, touched his heart, and more than once he sighed deeply.

"Why, Captain," said Ogle, "you don't seem happy to come back to the greenwood."

"Oh, yes—yes!"

"Humph!" muttered Ogle, to himself. "If that be happiness, why I don't know what being in the dolefuls is! But here we are, I take it!"

Captain Heron paused now in a little woody glen, where there was an old, ruinous-looking hut that seemed to have been erected either merely for shelter, or for the residence of some keeper in old times, when the forest was more rigorously guarded than it was at the period of the highwayman's presence in it.

"There should be some one here!" said Captain Heron: and he sounded a faint note upon his whistle.

This note was immediately replied to by the appearance of a man from out of what appeared to be impenetrable brushwood, close at hand.

"The Captain?" cried this man.

"Number Eight, I think?" said Heron.

"Yes, Captain. All is well!"

"Lead on then! But you have had alarms?"

"Indeed have we, Captain! The wood was pretty well beaten for game, but nothing was found. The old hermit's cave and the ice-house were found; but the hidden passages were not even suspected, I fancy; and all are well!"

"Lead on, then! This friend of mine will be Number Thirteen"

The Captain intimated that it was of Ogle he spoke; and then Number Eight, as he was named, set to work with an iron bar, that he sought for and found where it had been concealed beneath some rank weeds in the dilapidated little building, and proceeded to remove a couple of heavy stones that formed a portion of the ruined wall of the place.

The moment these stones were out of their position, a narrow opening presented itself which seemed to go right down perpendicularly into the earth.

Ogle drew back a step.

"Down there, Captain?" he said.

"Yes, Thirteen."

"Well, but——"

Captain Heron smiled as he handed the bridle of Daisy to Number Eight; and then he commenced a descent of the narrow opening, as he said, "I think, Eight, your may get Daisy round to the old Manor House now, and you will find me there."

"Yes, Captain!"

"Come on, Thirteen!"

"Steps?" said Ogle.

"Oh, yes! there are steps!"

Ogle took a look about him on the forest trees and the wild flowers, and at such portions of the sky as he could see through the interstices of the trees overhead; and then, with the air of a man who was going to execution, he descended the narrow opening in the ground.

"Follow me closely," said Captain Heron. "You cannot come to any harm here."

"I'm following on, Captain. Oh, lor'! what's that?"

"Number Eight putting the two stones in their places again."

"Why, it's pitch dark!"

"For a little way only. Come on!"

"It's lighter!"

"To be sure!"

It was, in good truth, a singular place into which Captain Heron, the highwayman, now led his new associ-

ace, Ogle. For a short distance, perhaps about twenty feet, they were in a subterranean passage, in which there did not appear to be the least ray of light.

But this gloom soon passed away.

A faint twilight began to show itself, and there was plenty of air; and, at the same time, a grateful odor of vegetation and wild flowers.

"Bless us!" said Ogle; "where are we now, Captain?"

"On our route to the Manor."

"What manor?"

"Hinchcliffe Manor House, it was once called; but it is now a ruin. We shall pass through the cavern, though, we properly call our haunt."

"Oh!"

"Where, now, do you suppose you are?"

"In a trench."

"It is not a bad guess. This passage that we are in now lies at the bottom of an embankment. Above, there is such an abundance of vegetation, and the thorn-bushes are so impenetrable, that no one has ever dreamed of attempting either to pass through them, or walk in their midst. It is the daylight through their leaves that gives up the kind of twilight we have down here."

"It is mighty curious!"

"It is so; and now we descend a little!"

"And all is dark!"

"Yes. This is a short tunnel through a hillock. If you put out your hands you will feel on either side of you the old roots of trees that are waving in the breeze over our heads."

"Yes, I feel them. It's wondrous dark here."

"But now light again."

The tunnel-like passage was very short, and from it they emerged into a cutting with bushes and trees meeting overhead; and finally Captain Heron paused at a grating which was nearly covered over with wild ivy-shoots, and they heard the trickling of water.

"These cavernous recesses formed at one time," he said, "I have no doubt, ice wells and cellars of some old monastic institution which stood on or about this spot in ancient times. Can you see through the grating, Ogle?"

"Yes, faintly."

"What do you see?"

"Are they bones?"

"I fancy so. I rather think that the whole of this part of the forest has been excavated in old times. Some portion of it may have been vaults for the dead."

Ogle shook a little.

"I don't like the idea of it, Captain."

The highwayman laughed.

"You see, if these are vaults, it seems almost like being buried alive!"

"Seems, without being so in reality. The fact is, my friend, we live here beneath the earth in Epping Forest, but the secret of how we are enabled to do so is just this. Beneath all this part of the wood there lie the foundations of some extensive building, which, to judge from them, must have been of good size and strength. These foundations are partly of stone and partly of masses of brickwork concreted together. They form a complete series of chambers and habitations below the trees, and all we have had to do has been to establish such communications with the upper air as shall answer the purpose of ventilation."

"Ah, now I comprehend."

"Come on, then; there is nothing to fear! Put out your hands again!"

"Yes, yes!"

"What do you feel now?"

"Cold stone and rock, rugged surfaces, too!"

"Brickwork you feel now; and here we are!"

There was a flash of light, as Captain Heron flung aside some blanket-like covering that hung across the passage in which they were, and entered at once an apartment—if one may be permitted to give it that title—which deserves a description.

This place, then, was evidently some ancient crypt, or cellar, that had belonged to the upper building, which had long disappeared, even as a matter of history. It was about twenty-five feet in height, floor to ceiling, and the roof was strongly arched with bricks. The walls seemed to be of enormous strength, and here and there there was a brick pier or column to give additional strength to the roof.

A wood fire sent a ruddy glow over the place, and a strange, soft warmth from it pervaded the air—a warmth that felt as if the atmosphere of the place could not be dried, but only heated into a steamy condition.

A suspended lamp from the centre burnt but dimly.

Scattered about in the place was a profusion of articles of use and comfort, which it would be impossible to particularise.

Clothing of all kinds, cushions, saddlery, portions of carriages, from wheels and springs to the remotest nut or screw used in their manufacture.

Indeed, it seemed as though, on some occasion when a vehicle had been stopped in the forest, it had been taken to pieces and brought bit by bit into that place, for the various conveniences it afforded in lieu of other and more ordinary furniture.

Arms, too, of all sorts were there, mostly hanging on the walls. Some rough planks, supported on logs of wood, served as a table, and numerous small casks seemed to be the chairs of the establishment. There were but two men present.

The moment that Captain Heron appeared in this place the two men advanced towards him with evident satisfaction in their looks.

"Captain," said one, "you bring us good luck!"

"Always good luck!" said the other.

"I hope so! What has been done?"

"A grazier, with a couple of hundred pounds in his pocket, has been forced to pay so much as toll to pass through the forest!"

"It is well. Summon all but the four scouts!"

One of these men now left the vault by some way in its further extremity; and Capain Heron, turning to Ogle, said, "We have half-dozen different secret entrances to the place, all of which will be shown to you by those who will be your comrades. I don't live here, though"

"You don't, Captain!"

"No, I live at the ruined Manor; but I have business here to-night."

In a few minutes, there were eight of the robbers assembled in the cavernous place. Four more were on guard at the four points of the wood.

A strange, faint sort of cheer broke from the lips of these eight men when they were all assembled, but it sounded like people cheering under their voices. They knew how much caution was necessary in that place, over which the possibility of a stranger passing was always present to their minds.

Captain Heron raised his hat for a moment, politely; and then he said, "Friends, I bring you an associate. Number Thirteen joins us to-night."

"A bull-dog!" said one.

"I know him!" said another.

"Ogle is his name!" said a third.

"Yes. He was one of Wild's bull-dogs; but he is such no longer. Wild and he have quarrelled; and as he prefers to keep his neck out of a halter, why, he has joined me. And, unless he goes mad, he will be quite safe."

"Mad?" said Ogle.

"Yes. We consider that any one who should in the smallest degree fancy he could better himself by betraying us is a madman, and we treat him, or would treat him—for such a thing has never happened—accordingly."

"Oh!" said Ogle. "May I ask eh——"

"What that treatment is, you mean? Oh, certainly! There is a well of unknown depth close at hand."

"That will do," said Ogle. "I don't want to hear any more. Nor is it interesting to me, because I am with you heart and soul!"

"Come here, then!" said one of the men.

"Well!"

"Give me your hand!"

"What for?"

"Give it me! Stand still! If you flinch, you are not fit to be with us!"

Ogle did not absolutely flinch, but he made a hideous contortion of countenance, at this one of the robbers, with a sharp point of steel, fairly cut, skin deep, on his arm a little above the wrist, the figures "13;" and then, opening the pan of a pistol, he shook gunpowder over the marks from which the blood was oozing, and rubbed it well in.

"Murder!" said Ogle.

"Be quiet!"

"I think I am; the deuce! Oh! Ah!"

Why, what is the matter? Any one would think I was a-hurting of you!"

"Well, I should not wonder—oh—! if—ah, dear me!—if they did!"

"Does it tickle?"

"Tickle! Bah! Bo! It stings as if red-hot-iron were searing—searing! Gracious!"

"Well, now you are all right!"

"Perhaps I shall be."

"Ogle," said Captan Heron, "I have nothing to do with this. It is a fancy of my men. They have all marked themselves with their respective numbers."

"Then Number One was a lucky fellow, Captain, and got easiest through it."

A long, low whistle at this moment sounded as if coming on the night air from a great distance.

"Hawks in the wood!" said the Captain. "Let us be up and stirring! Who is this?"

"Scout to the East!" said a voice; and one of the robbers suddenly made his way into the vault.

"Report!" said Captain Heron.

"There is approaching the forest a couple of carriages and a troop of light horses, and I don't know how many men beside! It seems to me, Captain——"

"Well what?"

"Why, that since the Judge's men failed in finding us out, awhile ago, the wood is to be clean swept from one end to the other in search of us."

"Well, let them do it. Now, in the first place, my men, I hear you have two hundred pounds from a grazier who was passing through the forest."

"We have, Captain, and that's all!"

"Here, then, are some of my successes! There are some jewels, too, which I can say nothing to you about until I go to London again."

Another long, low whistle now interrupted the conference.

"Scout West!" said a voice.

"Speak!"

"Light horsemen are on the skirts of the wood! I crept near, and I heard one say that it was a good ten guineas each to them all, if they unearthed the robbers of Epping Forest and took Captain Heron prisoner, who had escaped from Newgate!"

"So they are in earnest, it seems! Well, my brave comrades, all we have to do is to hold our own as best we may! How many light horsemen did you see, East Scout?"

"I should say fifty!"

"And you, West?"

"Fifty more."

"A hundred light horsemen, and a good supply of police-officers, and we are thirteen in all; with me, fourteen! Well, I fancy we can show them some sport, my men!"

"Hoorah for Captain Heron!" said the robbers, in that same odd, subdued

way in which they had cheered him before.

"Keep close, then, all of you! I will go and reconnoitre! Ah, another! You come from the north?"

"I do, Captain! The light horsemen are spreading round the forest, and slowly pushing forward in a great circle, keeping each other in sight as they come! Here is South, who knows more about it?"

"Speak, South!"

"The Governor of Newgate is in a carriage along with some runners, and in another carriage there is Sir John Lodge, the magistrate!"

"Good! Now, my men, we know just what we have opposed to us! One hundred of the light horse; some twenty, I fancy, police; the Governor of Newgate, and Sir John Lodge!"

The robbers murmured an assent to this.

Captain Heron paced the vault twice before he spoke again; then he said, "Let Daisy be placed in the hunting stable at the ruined Manor!"

"It shall be done, Captain!"

"Wait here, all of you! I will be with you soon! I am going to secure the common safety, but should you be attacked by any means, disperse, and meet me at the Manor!"

Captain Heron disappeared from the vault along a winding passage, that led from it into some of the intricate windings of the old foundations.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LIGHT HORSEMAN.—CAPTAIN HERON'S STRATAGEM.—THE REWARD.

The day was begining to wane, although it was still light enough to see any object clearly in the old forest, when a couple of carriages paused at the entrance to the principal road that ran through the wood.

Immediately following those two carriages were about twenty-four men on horseback, who, by their costume and general appearance, were evidently officers of police, turnkeys, and such other persons connected with the prison establishments of London as could be, on the spur of a moment, pressed into some extraordinary service.

Following these persons rode some fifty of the then well-known light horse, which were so well known at that period to the inhabitants of London, since they did a good deal of duty which now falls to the lot of what is called the Household Brigade of Cavalry.

Those two carriages were stopped, then, at the commencement of the wood, and the doors being opened, a gentleman alighted from one, and the Governor of Newgate from the other.

The governor was exceedingly polite to the gentleman who alighted from the first carriage, and lifting his hat and bowing, he said, "Sir John Lodge, I really think now, without the shadow of a doubt, that we shall catch this fellow and all his gang!"

"I hope so, Mr. Sharples! Halt—halt, there! Just call out to the light horse to halt!"

"Well, Sir John," said an officer of the troops, riding up to the carriage; "what are we to do now, since we are elected to the honorable position of thief-takers?"

"Nay, Captain Benson," said the magistrate, "that is not so! You only aid the civil powers, which it is ever a soldier's duty to do!"

"Well, well!"

"So I don't think—especially considering that I came myself—that there is anything to complain of."

"I don't complain; but I wish the job were over. However, Sir John Lodge, I, and my men, are under your orders."

"Sir, I thank you! Halt your men!"

"Halt!"

The light horse drew up; and then

Sir John Lodge added, "I fancy, Captain Benson, that the other troop are arrived."

"No doubt; here is a messenger."

A light horseman now came riding round an angle of the wood, and made a communication to Captain Benson, who, turning to Sir John Lodge, said, "Yes, Captain Lane is on the other side of the wood."

"Then, Captain, what I wish is, that you and Captain Lane should form a large circle with your men round the forest and ride in; then diminishing that circle as you go, so as to prevent any one leaving it; and I will go in with the officers and you, Mr. Sharples."

"Who? Me?"

"I think you had better."

"Well, Sir John, don't you think Mr. Beard had better go by himself? He understands his men. He is an experienced runner, you know, and we can wait here, and receive the prisoners."

"Well, well! perhaps so, Mr. Beard!"

"Yes, Sir John!" said an officer of police, riding forward; "yes, Sir John, I am here!"

"Now, Mr. Beard, you see you have the light horse to back you. Do you think you can go into the wood and ferret out those fellows and their captain?"

"We will try, sir."

"Very well! Mr. Sharples and I will wait here, you understand? The light horsemen surround the forest, and ride in, so that you have plenty of help. I am resolved, if possible, to clear the wood of Captain Heron and his gang before sunset this day."

"Sir—sir!" cried one of the officers, who had ridden a little way into the wood; "there is a letter!"

"What? A letter?"

"For you, Sir John."

"No, no; impossible!"

"I found it tied with a piece of pack-thread, Sir John, round the stump of a tree."

Sir John Lodge took, with amazement, a letter, certainly addressed to him, and opened it.

The letter contained the following words:—

"Capt. Heron to Sir John Lodge, Knt.

"SIR JOHN,

"It will convenience me if you make up your money, watch, and what jewelry you may have about you, in as small a parcel as possible, as I shall shortly call upon you to deliver them. Be so good as mention to Mr. Sharples that I shall expect the same of him likewise.

"FELIX HERON."

"Insolence!" cried Sir John Lodge.

"What is it, may I ask, Sir John?" said the Governor of Newgate.

"Read it."

The Governor did; and when he had finished, his countenance was expressive of concern, as he glanced around him in evident fear.

"This fellow, Sir John," he said, "is capable of anything in the world! Don't you think, eh? if a couple, now, of the light horse were to stay here ——"

"I cannot ask it. We shall be within call of them, no doubt. But—but yet——"

"One may stay. Captain Benson! Captain Benson! Bless me, he is out of hearing!"

Mr. Sharples turned paler.

"There!" he said; "there goes that Davidson! I am sure that will do mischief."

"What? what?"

"He is posting the printed bills on the trees that offer the new reward for Captain Heron!"

The state of affairs in the forest now was both curious and interesting.

The soldiers evidently enjoyed the sport on which they were amazingly,

and the prospect of ten pounds each if they caught Captain Heron and his gang was one that presented itself to them in the most enticing colors.

They called and shouted to each other as they advanced deeper and deeper into the wood.

The officers had dismounted, and were, in a straggling body, searching in every bush and brake. But, owing to the nature of the place, the soldiers soon got separated, so that, although they were nearer each moment to each other, they saw less of each other. There was, to be sure the gleam of their arms and the glitter of their accoutrements through the trees, but they were getting involved in the interstices of the wood.

It was then that one of the light horsemen was accosted by a man in a red waistcoat, and with a little constable's staff in his hand, which at once convinced the soldier that he was a veritable Bow Street runner.

This man came from behind some trees, and he nodded to the light horseman, as he advanced towards him.

"Bill, Bill!" he said. "I say, Bill!"

"What is it? My name ain't Bill!"

"Never mind! No more is mine. Ha, ha! But I want to speak to you."

"Well, what? Woa! What is it?"

"If you and I, by ourselves, could catch this Captain Heron now, eh? All by ourselves! Why, it would be a matter of a hundred pounds a-piece!"

"More!"

"Very likely!"

"But can we?"

The man with the red waistcoat put his finger to the side of his nose and looked waggishly at the light horseman.

"I have gone out of the track of the others," he said, "but I cannot do anything by myself. I want a light horseman, and, by the look of your face, you seem to me just the man."

"Do I?"

"To be sure you do! Are you afraid to follow me?"

"I should think not; but what for?"

"Why just this—that if you do, I can enable you to place your hand upon the shoulder of Captain Heron himself!"

"No?"

"I can, and I will."

"Then I'm your man! A hundred pounds, say you? Why, if I nab him, it will be double that! Because," added the light horseman to himself, "I will put you out of the way, my fine fellow, and take all the credit of it myself."

"Come on."

"I'm on your track."

"This way."

"The branches are low."

"Dismount."

"Oh, no! I can stoop. Is it far?"

"Hush! Don't speak loud. Some of your comrades, or of my comrades, may hear you."

"To be sure—to be sure!"

"Now stop."

It was a beautiful shady spot at which they stopped. The low, hanging branches of the trees dashed against the shako of the light horseman, and he had to stoop to avoid them. He looked curiously around him, as he said, "Where is he?"

"Close at hand."

"Eh?"

"Place your hand on my shoulder. There! didn't I promise you that?"

The light horseman made a dash to get hold of the hilt of his sword.

"I am Captain Heron!"

At the same moment that he spoke, Captain Heron laid hold of the soldier's foot, and canted him right over the saddle on the ground on the other side of the horse, where he fell with a crash.

Another instant, and Captain Heron had his foot upon his throat, and the point of his own sword at his breast, as he said, "One cry, and you are a dead man!"

The light horseman glared upwards, in the face of Captain Heron, like a man only half awake.

"Fool! fool!" he said.

"Meaning yourself?" said Captain Heron.

"Yes."

"Then you are right. Be quiet."

The man was so amazed and confounded, that he allowed Captain Heron to gag him with a bit of wood and a strong cord, and then to lift him to his feet without making any resistance.

"Hark you, now!" said the highwayman. "If you like, from any absurd notions of doing your duty and so on, to lose your life, you may; for if you resist me, I shall assuredly, in self-defence, and for self-preservation, kill you!"

The man made a gesture.

"But if, on the contrary, you keep quiet, not a hair of your head will be injured. I want your shako, your jacket, and some of your accoutrements."

With great rapidity, Captain Heron divested the dragoon of the articles of dress he required to make himself pass muster very well for one of the light horse.

Then he tied the man's hands behind him, and the cord to a tree, and, mounting his horse, he said, "My friend, I leave you to your meditations; and, after all, you know, you have had your hand on the shoulder of Captain Heron!"

The mock bow with which the highwayman now took leave of the dragoon seemed to be much more annoying to him than his defeat; but as, in consequence of the gag, he was debarred from even the great luxury of expressing his feelings in the language that would probably have come uppermost to his lips, he could do nothing but look the savage state of his sensations.

Captain Heron at once proceeded towards the dragoon's horse, which had found some herbage that sufficiently pleased its fancy to engage its whole attention.

The creature had likewise come from London at a trot, and was by no means in a reasoning frame of mind.

To mount was the work of a moment, and then, looking as much the dragoon as it was possible for any one to look who was not absolutely one, Captain Heron quickly turned the horse's head towards the outskirts of the wood.

"Hilloa!" cried a voice. "Is that you?"

"Yes!" said the highwayman.

"Joyce, I think?"

"All right!"

"Where are you going? A message to Sir John, have you?"

"Just so!"

"Be off, then! But, I say, I don't at all like this duty."

"Nor I!"

Captain Heron could just see the shako of the light dragoon through the thick, down-hanging branches of the trees, as his horse picked its way among the brushwood, which grew perplexingly thick about the spot.

It was about ten minutes after this time that Mr. Sharples, who was standing close to the window of the magistrate's coach, called out, "There is some news, Sir John."

"Indeed! Who is it?"

"Not that way, Sir John. From the wood, I mean."

"But here is a man on horseback coming quickly towards us, from London."

This was so; and this man halted at the carriage, and called out, "How do you do, Sir John Lodge? My father, the Judge, you know has sent me on to give you a note. You know me, Sir John Lodge?"

"Yes—oh, yes! You are the son of Judge Tarleton, I think."

"To be sure! My name is Mathew, you know. I am step-son to the old

gent—and here is a note from him, all about this highwayman fellow you are after."

"Very well."

Sir John Lodge here opened the note; it merely contained the words:—

"For reasons of State, it would almost be better if Captain Heron, the highwayman, were taken dead rather than alive.

"JOHN TARLETON.

"Atrocious!" said the magistrate. "No—no!"

"Well, Sir John," said Mathew, looking with curiosity into the face of the magistrate, "what do you think?"

"Why, sir, that I am sorry Sir John Tarleton has written this letter."

"Oh!"

"And equally sorry for you, if you know its contents!"

Sir John Lodge got into his coach as he spoke, and beckoned to Mr. Sharples, and said to him, "Will you go into the wood, Mr. Sharples, and say that I add, out of my own pocket, twenty guineas to the rewards, if Captain Heron be taken alive!"

"But here's a dragoon, sir, with some message."

It was at this moment, while Sir John was actually in his coach, and while Mr. Sharples stood close to its open door, and Mathew, with whom we had a slight acquaintance, was standing by his horse, patting its neck, that Captain Heron, in his light dragoon's uniform, rode out of the wood towards the carriages.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN HERON BAFFLES HIS ENEMIES—EDITH'S RESOLUTION.

At a light, easy trot, Captain Heron came up to this little party on the outskirts of the forest.

"Oh!" said Mathew, "I am glad to see one of the soldiers, for now I feel safe; for that Captain Heron is such a deuce of a fellow, that he would think nothing of——Eh? What does the soldier want with me, I wonder?"

Captain Heron, on emerging from among the trees, had seen at once the character of affairs about the two coaches. He remembered Mathew, the step-son of the Judge, in a moment.

In another moment he had made up his mind what to do.

He beckoned to Mathew in a mysterious manner; and partly curiosity, and partly the hope of learning something had happened to the highwayman, induced Mathew, with the bridle of his horse over his arm, to approach the seeming dragoon.

Danger he had not the least idea of.

When Mathew got close to Captain Heron, the latter bent down from his saddle, and said, in a soft and low tone of voice, "Mathew, if you so much as breathe louder than usual, to say nothing of making any alarm, I will blow your brains out at once."

Mathew's mouth opened like that of a newly-landed fish panting for air.

"You know me!"

"No, I—that is——Oh!"

"I am Captain Heron!"

Mathew did utter a low groan.

"You will oblige me, I am sure."

"Oblige——"

"Yes, I want you to go to town, and carry a message from me to your father in London."

"The—the old governor?"

"The Judge."

"Yes!"

"You will do it?"

"Anything in the world to oblige you, sir; only do—oh, do spare my life—my poor, worthless life! Oh, don't blow my brains out, good Mr. Highway——that is, good sir!"

Mathew began to cry.

"Idiot and coward!"

"Yes, I am—I am!"

"You will mount at once, and go to Sir John Tarleton, and say to him that I intend to call on him to-morrow at noon, and that I will bring with me 'Enclosure No. 4,' marked with the initials J. T. Go!"

"Yes. Initials No. 4, marked enclosure."

"Bah! Is it possible that you cannot take a plain message? But it will do—it will do."

"Yes; it will do. Good-bye, sir! You will come to him at No. 4 to-morrow, with enclosure at noon."

It was evident that Mathew was in such a state of mental fright, that it would be impossible to make him comprehend what Captain Heron actually meant him to say to Sir John Tarleton.

So the highwayman paused a moment or two in deep thought. Then he said, "No matter—no matter, so that the words go. Sir John Tarleton will have the tact to arrange them in their proper order. Go, now, at once."

"Yes, dear sir—yes. I've only got ten guineas about me."

"Keep it!"

"Yes, dear sir. Bless you!"

"Be off!"

Mathew was only too glad to be off. He scrambled on to the back of the horse, and turning its head towards London, he went away at a hard gallop.

Captain Heron gently trotted up to the coach.

"Have you a report to make to me?" said Sir John Lodge.

"Yes."

"Well? Well?"

"The dragoons and officers will not take the man they seek."

"No! And why not?"

"Because——But first let me put a question to you, Sir John."

"A question to me?"

At this moment, Mr. Sharples made an attempt to dart past Captain Heron's horse with a loud cry, and then the highwayman knew that he was recognized, and he drew one of the holster pistols from the saddle, and covering Mr. Sharples with the muzzle, he said, abruptly, "One step further, and you are a dead man!"

The Governor of Newgate cowered down with a terrified air.

"What is this? What is this?" said the magistrate.

"Get into the coach!" added Captain Heron to Mr. Sharples; and he was obeyed instantly.

"Now, Sir John Lodge, you had a note from me, I think. I hope you have complied with its contents, for I have no time to spare. I am Captain Heron!"

The astonishment, mingled with anger, that sat on the countenance of the magistrate amused Captain Heron, who smiled quietly as he added, "Come, sir, be quick! Your money, watch, and jewels, if any! Be quick, sir!"

"You are the most audacious villain——"

"Sir, bad language as ill becomes you to utter as me to hear! You may be in danger!"

"Don't irritate him!" said Mr. Sharples, in a faint voice. "Don't——"

"But——"

"Sir John Lodge, resistance is useless! You have sought me here in my own domain beneath the greenwood tree, and I rob you! In plain language, I say, I rob you! Come, sir, deliver!"

"There is my purse, Captain Heron!" said Mr. Sharples. "You are one too many for me!"

The magistrate bit his lips, and looked anxiously towards the wood. Faint sounds of the pursuit, and the beating the bushes that was taking place in its recesses, came upon their ears; but those sounds were retreating rather than advancing, as the light horse contracted their circle, and followed the police officers.

A forest bird, upon a tree hard by, burst out into a beautiful trilling song at this moment.

That, for about the space of time in which you might have counted ten, was the only sound that broke the stillness of the actual spot.

Then the magistrate spoke.

"Captain Heron!"

"Sir!"

"If you were not what you are you would be a wonderful man!"

"Your money, sir!"

"A most wonderful man!"

"Your watch and rings, Sir John!"

"But as it is, I am sure——"

"So am I!"

Captain Heron dashed his hand in at the carriage window, and got hold of the arm of the magistrate, and while his eyes flashed with excitement, he said, "Sir John, it is treacherous——"

"What!"

"You have been for the last two minutes quietly possessing yourself of some weapon in your pocket. Drop it! drop it!"

"You will break my arm!"

"I intend!"

"There! I own it!"

The magistrate withdrew his hand from his pocket, and turned very pale. Captain Heron had closed his hand upon his arm with the pressure of a vice. Mr. Sharples murmured out a few words.

"Oh, Sir John Lodge, give him what he asks for! It's of no use to resist him, and may make him angry. Do give him your money!"

"Take it!" said the magistrate, as he handed Captain Heron a well-filled purse. "You are ungrateful to me, though, for I had a note to take your life."

"From whom!"

"Nay—nay!"

"Give me that note!"

The direction of the magistrate's eyes guided Captain Heron's observation to the floor of the coach, where lay the note that Mathew had brought. He possessed himself of it, and glancing at its contents, a smile of contempt came across his face as he flung it to the ground.

"Good day, sir!" he said; "and good day to you, Mr. Sharples!"

"Good day!" said the Governor of Newgate, faintly.

"Your search in the wood will do no good," added Captain Heron. "My band have all escaped, and I am off to London! Farewell!"

He put spurs to the dragoon's horse as he spoke, and galloped off.

Sir John Lodge immediately jumped out of the coach, and ran into the wood, calling out aloud "Hoy! hilloa! help! hoy! This way! Another hundred pounds reward for Captain Heron! He is this way! Hoy! hoy!"

These cries reached at length some of the dragoons, and they called to the officers who were in front of them, so that in a short time there was a pause in beating the wood for the highwayman and his band, and the magistrate related what had happened.

"Let Captain Heron himself be taken," he cried, "and the band that own him as a master will scatter. Pursue him, I beg of you! He is on one of the dragoon horses, and has, no doubt, killed its proper rider."

A curious noise now came from among some trees to the right of where they were, and upon some of the officers going to see what it was, they found the light horseman, who had been dispossessed of his horse, arms, and uniform by the highwayman, still tied to a tree, and making odd sounds deep in the throat, despite the gag in his mouth.

This at once explained the whole affair; and in less than five minutes more the whole of the dragoons were on the London Road at a full gallop, in the hope of coming up with Captain Heron.

"You must have him," called out Mr. Sharples, "for the horse looked tired."

"And recollect," added Sir John Lodge, "he is not mounted on his own horse, Daisy, that I would give a thousand pounds for any day!"

Sir John Lodge was very much mistaken, for at that very moment Captain Heron was standing close to Daisy, with an arm over his neck.

To draw off the dragoons and the officers from the forest in chase of himself to London was Captain Heron's object, but he had not the most distant intention of proceeding there on the dragoon's horse.

Had he indeed been mounted on Daisy he might with ease have galloped to town and back again by another road; but as it was, he only went far enough until he came to a turn in the roadway where some trees hid him from the sight of the coaches, and then he turned abruptly to the left, and dashed at once into the forest.

Dismounting there, Captain Heron turned the dragoon horse adrift, and was satisfied that the creature would not stray from the spot where he left it, on account of the sweet herbage that grew there in abundance.

Then Captain Heron took a route among a quantity of bushes through which there was a narrow path which only one person—and that one well acquainted with it—could possibly pass.

This path seemed to end at a ditch of stagnant water all overgrown with duckweed.

Lightly did Captain Heron leap this ditch, although on some soft marshy ground on the other side of it.

Then there was a low paling, originally, no doubt, stout and strong, for it was of real oak, but the weather and various violences and neglects had broken it down in many places.

Crossing this paling, Captain Heron came upon a most curious and interesting spot of ground.

It was a garden.

A garden still, but taking exactly the converse condition of what ordinarily goes by that name.

In this garden, on the other side of the broken-down park paling, all that art, that culture had done for the floral and vegetable kingdoms were being reversed.

Everything there planted and tended, no doubt, at one time, with all the care that could be bestowed—was going back to a state of nature and wildness.

Season after season had passed over that once well-tended piece of ground, and no hand had made the least attempt at restraining the wild growth of tree, and bush, and flower.

In one mass of bud, blossom, and leaf, this garden presented the aspect of a beautiful floral ruin, but yet it had about it many a charm that the most trim and well-kept garden would have wanted. Paths there were now none. Borders, parterres, lawns, all had disappeared, and a riot of vegetation, compounded of trailing roses, weeds, and unpruned trees, made up an odorous wood of beauty and bewildering enchantment.

This was what had once been called "The Lady's Garden," of Hinchcliffe Manor.

A murder of a strange and awful character, had many a long year since been committed in the old Manor House, and it had been suffered to go to decay and ruin by those who, on account of that deed, became its master. The old house had an evil repute; and while it was far from being suspected of being a refuge or a residence of Captain Heron's, its grounds and gardens were well known to be a sort of sanctuary for bird and beast.

No poacher would venture across the ruined palings of the old domain.

No adventurous urchin ever did more than look from a distance with longing eyes at the nest of the birds who found an unmolested home in that deserted place.

From out of the ruins, no doubt, of the much more ancient ecclesiastical residence, among the foundations of which we have been with Captain Heron and his band, Hinchcliffe Manor House had been built, and there were various routes from those foundations to the old house.

It was, however, more suitable now to Captain Heron's views to seek the Manor House by the route of the deserted gardens.

And every now and then the highwayman paused and listened attentively. He was on the outskirts of the forest, and every unusual sound from amid its leafy glades he must have easily heard; but all was still.

The light horse had gone on the fruitless chase after him, and for once again the attempt to capture him and his band was foiled.

Emerging, then, from this wilderness of a garden, Captain Heron came upon a small lawn, in the midst of which had been a fountain. It was long since choked up.

The old dilapidated Manor House itself was immediately on the other side of this little lawn.

It had been originally of red brick, with stone facings, but now an universal green tint was over it, and it was completely overrun by creeping plants, which seemed as if they were intent upon making a perfect network of interlacing vegetation from foundation to roof of the old place.

The stillness of the house, the lawn and the garden had something profoundly melancholy about it, and it was with a quickened step that Captain Heron made his way to one of the old windows, and, opening it with ease, stepped into a low-roofed room on the ground floor of the Manor House.

Captain Heron did not pause in this room, but hastily passing out of it by a door opposite to the window, he traversed a dark passage, then opened another door, and passed through an old greenhouse, one-half of the roof of which had fallen in, and then across a melancholy-looking courtyard in which a pump lay prostrate.

Another moment, and he had opened a door of a barn, and was by the side of Daisy, who was standing mid-leg deep in sweet-scented hay and clover.

Daisy made the usual greeting sound with which she always welcomed her master.

Captain Heron flung one arm round the neck of the noble creature, as he said, "and so, my Daisy, you are glad to see me!"

Daisy made playful bites at his apparel, and seemed surprised at the dragoon's uniform.

Captain Heron smiled.

"You do not comprehend me in this disguise, my Daisy!" he said. "But rest awhile, friend of my heart; I have something to do before we can take a gallop on the green-sward again."

With several light patting caresses on the neck, now Captain Heron left Daisy, and went into the Manor House again.

Slowly and as if in deep thought, he ascended a staircase, balustrades of which still, in places, showed the rich gilding that had once adorned them.

At the head of these stairs there was a passage, apparently a long way to the left, but Captain Heron opened a door immediately facing him, and entered an apartment that had evidently been one of the most important, if not the most important, in the Manor House.

This room was about thirty feet in length, and to its five windows there still fluttered the remains of what had been once handsome draperies.

A faded carpet, nearly black, was on the floor.

Some heavy old articles of furniture, too heavy and too valueless to remove, were in the room: one was a huge old table. There were some dilapidated chairs, too; and on the hearth there

seemed to be the remains of some recently burnt logs of wood.

Dust in abundance, mingled with a black sort of substance, half fine and half soot, was upon every article of the room, and was clinging even to the old walls, from which pieces of plaster and papering were peeling off in various places.

The five windows of this apartment looked to the west; and, as Captain Heron faced them, a yellow tinge from the fading daylight came in upon him, and glittered upon the uniform of the dragoon that he wore.

It was only, after all, the coat and the shako that made the difference in his dress, and now he flung them aside, and sat down by the old, heavy table, and from the capacious pockets of his waistcoat he took the packet of papers that the Spanish ambassador had been so very anxious he should not have, together with the pocket-book he had taken from Lord Whitcombe.

Captain Heron had already taken a glance at those papers, but now, as he looked carefully over them by the fading light, he saw that they contained a correspondence with the Spanish Minister, in which not only the Earl of Whitcombe and Lord Warringdale, but Sir John Tarleton, bore a part, and which was most decidedly treasonable, inasmuch as it showed that, for personal advantages, the Misister was willing to make certain concessions to Spain in respect to some matter connected with her and our South American interests.

In fact, there was quite enough to have, at once and forever, ruined the Earl of Whitcombe, and possibly to have sent both him and Sir John Tarleton to the Tower.

"What shall I do?—oh, what shall I do?" said Captain Heron to himself, as he leant his head upon his hands and gave himself up to deep thought. "My poor mother! This bad Earl of Whitcombe my father! Edith—Sir John Tarleton her father, too! Oh, what can I do amid this maze of deep perplexity? Edith!—Edith! my own love!—darling of my heart!—if I could but see you—if I could but consult with you, I should feel, indeed, that this poor struggling heart of mine had found a resting-place!"

CHAPTER XII.

EDITH AT HOME.—THE PORTRAIT.

We must perforce leave Captain Heron for a time in the old dilapidated mansion of Hinchcliffe, while we follow the fortunes of our too much neglected Edith.

The exigencies of our story have carried us far away from that night on which she made her escape from Jonathan Wild, only, as it appeared, to fall into the as bad, if not worse, hands of my Lord Warringdale.

But how she escaped from him—with what nerve and courage she left him on foot in the old lane, while she on horseback galloped towards London, may be well remembered.

And now, once more, we are with our fair heroine, who, with all the gentleness and loving tenderness of her disposition, yet had the true courage of an English girl.

There was a great struggle in the mind of poor Edith.

"Shall I go once more to my aunt Castleneau," she asked herself, "or to my father?"

There was something to be said on both sides of this question, and the idea that had the greatest weight with Edith was, that by going to Lady Castleneau, now that her father would naturally look for her there, she would be again exposing her kind-hearted aunt, at a time of life when she could least bear them, to all the excitements and to all the shocks contingent upon Sir John Tarleton's attempts to recover her.

The Portrait! "Away, away! I cannot bear the gaze of those eyes!"
[See page 85]

Moreover, she was under age, and Sir John had taken good care to let her know that the law gave him considerable power over her while such was the case.

To be sure, even that authority had its limits, but what they were Edith did not know, as her father had not thought it necessary to define them in the midst of the threats he had been in the habit of launching at her innocent head.

And it came with a terrible shock to the young heart of Edith, all so unworldly as it was, to think that the persecutions and the threats that she had endured from her own father, all had their rise in a desire to do something with, or to become possessed in some way of, the money which was hers in her mother's right.

Revolted as was the pure spirit of the young girl at this view of the subject, she was resolved to put an end, if possible, to such a state of things.

"Yes," she said to herself, mournfully, as she reached the Oxford Road, —"yes; I will take a bold step, and

I will go to my father, and tell him he may have all if he will but leave me in peace—in peace, with my dear aunt —in peace with my own thoughts"

A heightened color and a deep sigh sufficiently proclaimed what those thoughts were. It was the image of the gallant and handsome Captain Heron which rose up before the "mind's eye" of the young girl, as she pictured to herself, at all events, a life of peace in her aunt's house.

Tears started unbidden, and suffused her long eyelashes, as she then said mournfully, "No, I ought not to think of him—not to dream of him! I ought not to love him! I will try not! Oh, hard trial! Was there ever one so sad as I?"

Yes, fair Edith, many a one much sadder, much unhappier than you can ever be. For, in the midst of all your precautions and of all your anxieties —ay, were they even ten times what they are—you have the light of love in your heart, and its sunshine irradiates the most gloomy passage of mortal life.

You love, Edith, and you are beloved.

Happy, happy Edith. Your heart is but like some summer landscape over which the passing clouds project a fleeting shadow—a shadow that will be swept onward by soft airs and fluttering zephyrs, leaving all the beauty and bright coloring below again to laugh in beauty to the sun.

A chance passenger now and then paused to look at the young girl so ill attired for equestrian exercise, but she gave the horse the rein and passed on rapidly.

Edith had made her determination.

She would not go to her aunt's house, to carry fear and constant disquietude into that household. She was resolved to go to her father, and make what terms she could for peace.

For that peace which would leave her free from Lord Warringdale's persecution, backed as they were by parental authority.

For that peace which, it shook her heart to think, might be purchased by gold, but was denied to affection.

And now the reader will see what a pity it was that Edith did not go first to Lady Castleneau's house, for in that case she would soon have known something of the fate of Captain Heron, instead of, as will be seen, being subjected to a deception in regard to him which nearly wrecked her entirely.

The distance down the Oxford Road to Bloomsbury, and thence by a long by-road towards old Finsbury, was soon passed over, and the morning was getting advanced, as Edith, exhausted and half famished, halted at the door of her father's house.

She alighted from Lord Warringdale's horse without assistance, and let the animal go where it pleased, for she gave it a smart tap and the word to be off, and the horse, with its stirrups dangling against its sides, strayed on into the City.

"Bless us, Miss Edith!" exclaimed the hall porter. "Is this you or a ghost?"

"My father! Is he in?"

"Why, I should say no, miss."

Edith tottered into the hall, and passed slowly up the principal staircase, and made her way into a room on the first floor.

She had just strength then sufficient left her to ring a bell, and then it seemod to her as if the hand of death was on her heart.

But it was only the faintness of inanition from want of food, and she was soon recovered, when her own maid who had passed the time of her absence in tears and lamentations, attended to her wants.

An hour passed away, and Edith had some of the color in her cheek, and the brightness of youth and health was in her sweet eyes.

"My father, Mary!" she said to her maid. "Tell me of him! Does he seem happy?"

"Oh, no, no! Twenty thousand times no, miss! And, saving your presence, my dear lady, he is quite a wretch."

"Mary! Mary!"

"Well, I don't exactly mean a wretch as is a wretch, but only as to looks. He walks up and down his room all night long, and he gives such groans that we hear him all over the house."

"Alas! alas!"

"But I wouldn't have Lord Warringdale, Miss Edith, for all that."

The sound of carriage wheels in the street below at this moment came on the ear of Edith, and she rushed to the window.

"My father!"

It was Sir John Tarleton.

Edith saw him get out of his carriage. He was in his robes as a judge; and she saw how white, how fearfully cadaverous was his face, and how his hand shook as he placed it on the arm of the footman who assisted him to alight.

She could see that even at the distance she was from him.

"He, too, suffers," she said. "Oh, why will he so suffer? Why will he not be happy—happy as affection can make him?——Oh, heaven, no! He cannot—cannot be!"

A dreadful recollection had come over Edith, and what it was, was sufficiently expressed by her tearful and half frantic exclamation of "My mother—my poor, murdered mother!"

Then Sir John tottered into the house, and she lost sight of him.

Full of a thousand griefs, now, poor Edith sunk back into an armchair, and made a vain effort to still the tumultuous beating of her heart.

She heard a heavy footstep.

"He comes! He!—my own father! And such a father! Oh, heaven! was ever child placed in such circumstances of agony? No, no! It cannot be true! He would not be so wicked—no one could be so wicked!"

The hall-porter had begun to tell Sir John Tarleton that Edith was at home, but a stern gesture and look from the Judge had chilled him, and the words died away on the man's lips.

So Sir John, who thought it was merely some trivial communication that the man had to make to him, met with a surprise when he reached the room in which Edith sat, that he might have spared himself.

It was a few moments before he saw her.

He had walked right up towards the fire-place where smouldered some wood, for the old Judge's frame was chilled, and his blood required some artificial warmth even in that fair spring weather.

"Lost still!" he said. "Lost still! What can it all mean, I wonder? Ah?"

He saw Edith.

She did not speak at once to him, but she sunk on the hearth-rug at the foot of the chair on which she had been sitting, and she looked up in his face with such an expression of inquiry and hopelessness that it was heartrending to see it.

"Edith! Edith!" he gasped.

"Yes, I am Edith!"

"My child?"

"Your child! Are you my father?"

"Good heaven!"

"Amen to that prayer, father—for I believe you are my father! You see I have come home to you—home to your hearth, to ask you to be a father to me! To ask you why and how we should be seperated in affection for ever and ever? To ask you to be frank and candid with your own child, so far as to tell her why it is that you will strive to force her into the arms of one she can never love? To offer you freely—most freely—all that she can do to—to—purchase peace, if it be that the fortune which——"

Edith's pure soul was so revolted at the idea, and the apparent necessity of saying to her father, "It is the

money you want, and I will give it to you to purchase freedom from your persecutions," that she could say no more, but burst into tears.

The Judge shook as if possessed by an ague, and then he thrust his hand deep in a pocket, and pulled out a small phial.

Edith saw the movement, and cried out aloud, "No! no! Oh, no! Not that?"

"Not what?"

"Self-murder!"

"Girl, you are mad! This is but a restorative! I am weak and chilled."

The Judge took a small portion of the liquid drug that the phial contained, and then returned it to his pocket. It was a powerful medicament that had been given to him by a physician.

He felt better, or fancied he did so, which came to the same thing.

Then Sir John Tarleton went to the door and turned the key in the lock. After which, he approached his daughter, and knitting his brow with that ominous frown which many a poor trembling wretch at the bar of justice had seen as a death-warrant, he said, "So, Edith, you are here again!"

"I am!"

"After contemning my authority! After resisting my commands—even my entreaties! After disgracing me and yourself by an association with an outlaw and a felon——"

"No!"

"But I say yes, girl!" added the Judge, raising his voice to a pitch of anger. "I say yes; but your tardy repentance is scarcely sufficient."

"I do not repent!"

"Ah!"

"No, father, I do not! Now I have strength to say it!"

"To say what?"

"That which I came here to say, and which my tears choked on my very lips. Father! father!"

The Judge bent forward in an attitude of listening. Edith had risen from her suppliant posture, and was standing with one arm on the elbow of the chair, and she spoke in a soft, gentle voice, much agitated still; "Father, I am told that I am entitled to a sum of money in thirteen months time, when I come of age."

Sir John stepped back one step.

"And I am told that if I marry it will be at once, of course, the property of myself and my husband—that is to say, that it can be released from the trustees who now have the care of it, and made use of. Now, if—if it be that my entire and unconditional surrender of every farthing of that money will induce you, father, to let me be free to go and live with my aunt Castleneau, God knows—how freely, how gladly, you may have it all!"

The Judge turned a shade more cadaverous, and he paced the room twice before he spoke.

"Edith! Listen to me!"

"Yes, yes!"

"You speak in ignorance."

"Have I, then, no such fortune?"

"Yes—that is to say—well, yes, but it cannot be touched unless you marry. You, then, and your husband can release it from the trustees, and then all will be settled, and there will be no further questions about it. Edith, you must still wed Lord Warringdale!"

"Never!"

"You shall!"

"Never!"

"I swear it! Girl, I say, if I have to drag you by the hair of your head to the altar!—if I have to goad you there with blows——Edith! have mercy on your poor lost father!"

The Judge crouched down nearly to his knees before Edith, and so rapid was the alternation of feeling, from the wildest threats to the most tearful supplication, that Edith was both terrified and saddened.

The Judge was playing a part, and he played it well.

"Edith! Edith! my only one!—listen to me!—to me, your father! I do love you!—I have loved you ever!—

and, in my old age, when I tell you that it will save me—yes, actually same me from disgrace, if you will marry Lord Warringdale—you will consent. You will not see, my child, your poor father's grey hairs sink with sorrow, with anguish, and with shame to the grave! Your father, recollect! Oh! Edith! is your heart stone—flint—adamant? I ask of my own child to save me!"

Edith sobbed as if her heart would break.

"You hear me! You are not so cruel! —you were ever tender-hearted when a child! Edith! you consent?—you will do this for your father?"

"Oh, heaven help me!"

"Yes, dear! Heaven will help you then—will always help the good child, who sacrifices all to its parent! I have your word, Edith?"

"And I!—and I, father?"

"What would you say?"

"Am I to go down to the grave broken-hearted in my youth?"

"Oh! no—no! You will be quite happy—happy in the arms of a husband! He is young——"

"Father!—father!—I cannot!"

"It is well! God bless you!—I can die!"

"No—no!"

"Alas! yes!"

"Mother!—mother, now in heaven! look down upon your child! Oh, mother!"

Sir John Tarleton reeled backward, as if each of these words had been an actual blow upon his heart or brain.

There was a loud, crashing noise in the room. A large and heavy painting—a sea-piece, with the waves in wild commotion, and a ship seeking a port—which hung above the chimney-piece, fell down, and striking the shelf of marble, lay broken on the hearth. Immediately beneath it, on a sunken panel, there was a portrait. The sea-piece had been hung over it for years. It was the portrait of a young gentlewoman, smiling, though with a touch of sadness in the smile, and holding a rose as if offering it to the spectator

Sir John Tarleton uttered a cry of dismay.

"It was not removed!" he shouted. "Why was it not removed? They told me it was gone, and it was here still, to stare me into stone! Take it away! —take it away! Away—away!"

Edith, with her hands clasped, gazed upon the portrait as if fascinated.

Then she found breath to cry out but a few words.

"Father!—father!"

"Away! away! Away, I say! I cannot bear the gaze of those eyes!"

"Tell me, on your soul and conscience, father, tell me—whose portrait is that?"

"Your mother's!" said Sir John Tarleton.

Even as he uttered the words, he fell upon his face in a deep swoon on the floor.

CHAPTER XII.

EDITH AT HOME.—THE JUDGE CONSULTS WITH HIS EVIL GENIUS.

It is night at the Judge's house in Finsbury.

Sir John Tarleton, after his swoon in the reception-room, had been conveyed to bed. Edith had there remained, with her eyes fixed upon the portrait of her mother, so long as there was light to see it.

And so the day had passed away, for her, in a strange confusion of mind, the only two prominent features of which were her two affections, as she called them.

One for her mother in heaven.

The other for Captain Heron, on earth.

The room had got very dark, when a couple of the Judge's servants came into it quietly

One of them carried a ladder.

Edith started and comprehended them.

"What is this?" she said. "What is this?"

"If you please, Miss Edith, Sir John is getting up, and he has ordered us to take away that picture."

They pointed to the portrait.

"Be it so!" said Edith.

The ladder was placed against the wall.

"Do you know where it is to go?" added Edith.

"Well, miss, into one of the lumber-rooms, at the top of the house."

"No! It is mine! It is to go to the Lady Castleneau's in Bedford Square!"

"Indeed, miss!"

"Yes; and I go with it! You will get me a coach, Jones, at once, and tell Mary I want her!"

"Yes, miss!"

"No!" said a voice at the door of the room.

Sir John Tarleton, looking so aged, that it seemed as if some extra half-dozen years had been added to his mortal career in the last six hours, entered the room.

"No!"

The servants hesitated.

"You will take that portrait to one of the spare rooms, above!"

"Father!"

"I have said!"

"Then I go to my aunt alone!"

"No! You are in my house!—you are my daughter, and here I detain you! This way, Edith!"

The Judge opened the door, which conducted into a small chamber that was close to the reception-room.

"This way!"

"A prison?"

"If you please to call it such! These two rooms you will be free of, but you do not leave them! I have given my servants their orders! Any attempt, now, to leave this house will bring upon you insult from them!"

Edith was silent.

"Your maid will attend you. Come in, girl!"

Mary entered the room.

"Since you are willing to be the voluntary felon-prisoner of your young mistress, you can stay with her!"

"Very well, Sir John!"

The Judge waved his arm, and the portrait was removed from the room. The footmen left without a word, and Sir John followed them. Edith and Mary heard him lock, and double lock, the door, and remove the key.

"Don't you mind a bit, miss," said Mary. "I did not say a word, but I will manage that we get away as soon as you like!"

"Where?" said Edith, sadly.

"Where! Well—I—a—where?"

"Yes, Mary; I can now go nowhere but to my aunt's, you know, and there my father will find means to follow me, and he has, I fancy, authority to do so!"

"But, miss?"

"Yes, Mary!"

"What is to be done?"

"Nothing—nothing! Heaven, in its good time, will help me! I must have patience; and if I could only get news of one—who—who——"

"Oh! who, Miss Edith?"

"Is there not a newspaper called the *Evening Mercury!*"

"To be sure, my Lady; and Sir John always has it, because, you see, it gives him an account all about the courts, and Newgate, and the trials, and who is to be hung, and so on!"

"I want, regularly, to see that paper, Mary!"

"To be sure! I always like to see it, for there is always something about that odious, ugly Jonathan Wild in it. And so you won't escape, Miss Edith?"

"No—no!"

"Then I will get the *Mercury*, and we will see what is to be seen in it. It's very pretty reading, it is! Why, only last week, there was an account of Colonel Jack's execution!"

"Colonel Jack?"

"Yes, bless you, my lady! He set up as a highwayman, poor man, but was caught up and hanged off-hand, and there was his speech. It began with, 'Young women, all take warning by me; I'm too handsome to live any longer!' But I'll go and get the *Mercury!*"

"You forget!"

"Forget?"

"Yes that we are locked in!"

Mary's reply was a very peaceful one—namely, the production of a key.

"Lord bless us! Sir John may be sharp enough in some things, but not for me! All the keys on this floor fit all the doors, so I put this one in my pocket, in case we wanted it!"

"You were quite right, Mary!"

"I will run for the *Mercury*, at once!"

Edith remained in the solitude of these rooms, which although she felt she had the opportunity of leaving when she pleased, she had no desire to abandon, as no place of real refuge seemed open to her.

Little, however did she suspect that if she found her way to her aunt's, she would there have heard a piece of news—namely, the escape of Captain Heron from Newgate—that would have rendered abortive the cruel persecution to which only the following day was to subject her.

Sir John Tarleton, after he had locked up Edith and Mary, stepped into his carriage again, and ordered the coachman to drive to Newgate.

It is true he had just come from there, but now he had something to do in that locality which took him at once to it.

On alighting at the Governor's house, he was told that that functionary was away on some expedition; but that suited Sir John just as well, and he walked into one of the sitting-rooms of the house, and summoned a turnkey.

One of these men waited, hat in hand, for the orders of the Judge.

"What is your name?"

"Atkins, my Lord Judge."

"Very well. Do you know Mr. Wild?"

"Oh, lor', sir, yes! We all knows Mr. Wild."

"Seek him, and say I am here, and would speak with him about—about business."

"Yes, my lord."

The man left in search of Jonathan Wild, who was at the moment in his own house, raving and imprecating at a great rate, for he had not been able entirely to make up his mind what to do in the event of Edith having communicated to her father all his conduct in regard to her.

At this message from the Judge, Wild felt convinced that Sir John knew all, and that only downright assurance would carry him through; and as that was a quality in which Jonathan Wild was by no means deficient, if it were all that was required, he would be safe enough.

It was with a swaggering gait that Wild made his appearance before Judge Tarleton, but the quiet way in which Sir John spoke began to shake his opinion that he knew all.

"The little minx," said Wild to himself, "has not gone home, after all."

"Sit down, Mr. Wild."

"Yes, my lord. Thank you."

"Mr. Wild!"

"My lord!"

"I am lost in amazement!"

"Hem!"

"Quite lost in amazement at all these strange events in regard to my daughter!"

Wild coughed again.

"When she was wrested from us, after you had so cleverly got possession of her from Lady Castleneau's I missed you."

"I went after her."

"Oh!"

"Yes, my lord, but I could not exactly come up with her then, you see."

Wild hazarded this speech, in order

to find out how much Sir John Tarleton knew, and he looked closely at the Judge's eyes as he spoke, and then added to himself, "He has either not seen her, or she has told him nothing."

"When you called upon me," said Sir John, shading his face with his hand as he spoke, "you made some remarkable statements."

"I generally do."

"You said that in five minutes you could persuade my Lord Warringdale to acquiesce in the arrangement you then proposed."

"Just so!"

"And in five minutes more you would produce the like effect on Edith, my daughter?"

"Just so!"

"Are you in the same opinion?"

"I am, Sir John!"

"Then, in the name of—Hem! Well, I require you to carry out that plan!"

"You consent to it fully, Sir John?"

"I do!—I did!"

"Well, not quite, I fancied."

"But I do now. It is essential. Will you now tell me what are your means of action?"

"Two."

"Two what?"

"Two powerful means of action upon men and women!"

"What are they?"

"Fear and love!"

The Judge looked inquiringly at Wild, who laid his broad, dirty hand on the table, as he added, "I can make my Lord Warringdale do anything I please, from fear."

"Indeed!"

"It is so; and we can make your daughter Edith wed him, for love!"

"No—no! she hates——"

"Him, truly; but not another! She loves——"

"Ah!"

"With all her heart, with all her soul—in the way that girls love, you know!"

"Whom?—whom?"

"Captain Heron!"

"The highwayman?"

"Just so! Now, I will convince her that the only way to prevent his being hanged on Monday next, at Tyburn, will be to consent to marry Lord Warringdale."

"And you think she will consent?"

"I am sure of it!"

"You hardly know her!"

"Pho! When it comes to the last she will say yes, and pride herself on the sacrifice. You, Sir John, can help in that matter. You can produce the seeming pardon for approval and signature. Indeed, you can get a real one!"

"I can!"

"Then it is as good as done!"

Sir John Tarleton drew a long breath of relief. He began to have faith in Jonathan Wild's scheme, and he looked better than he had done for some hours.

"I live again," he said. "I have hope now that all will end well; and you know the old saying, Mr. Wild, 'All's well that ends well!'"

Sir John Tarleton tried to smile as he uttered these words, and it may be supposed that Jonathan Wild felt the necessity of sympathy, for he, too, made a contortion of his countenance, which he meant for a smile.

"I will leave the management, Mr. Wild, of Lord Warringdale to you!"

"It will be better!"

"Ah, how sad a thing it is to have a thankless child!"

Jonathan Wild elevated his brows where his eyebrows might have been, but that they were scorched off long since by the discharge of a pistol in his face.

"A thankless child, did you say, my Lord Judge!"

"Yes, yes! Our great poet has finely expressed it—

> "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child."

"I wonder, now," said Jonathan

Wild, half aloud, "if he really thinks he is imposing upon me? It's perfectly humiliating if he does!"

"You, Mr. Wild, have no daughter?"

"Oh, dear, no!"

"Well, our business is arranged now, I fancy, and I will send to you!"

"Very well, Sir John, I think you may rest now in peace, for all will be as you desire; only you must get from the Secretary of State a full pardon for Captain Felix Heron, and show it at the proper time to your daughter. That he has escaped is of no moment—she need not know that—and if you keep her securely, there will be no futher difficulty in the matter."

"None—none!"

Wild paused a moment in debate with himself whether or not it would be his best policy to be more frank with the Judge concerning the detention of Edith in his house, but he decided to say nothing.

"Let it come if it will," he muttered to himself. "I will now seek out my Lord Warringdale."

The clatter of horses' feet in front of the goal at this moment attacted the notice both of the Judge and of Jonathan Wild.

They both went to one of the windows.

A man was alighting from a horse, which had evidently been urged to speed.

"That is Mr. Johnstone, the Goverment messenger," said Wild.

"Then he seeks me."

"No doubt, Sir John. They don't send for me in such a hurry."

The Government messenger, it appeared, had been to the Judge's house in Finsbury, and was there informed that he had gone to Newgate, where he had followed him.

The packet that Mr. Johnstone handed to Sir John Tarleton had the name of "Whitcombe," written in the corner.

"It is from the Earl of Whitcombe," said Judge Tarleton. "Some affairs of State, no doubt. Good day, Mr. Wild! I shall see you, I presume, as soon as you have anything satisfactory to say to me from Lord Warringdale?"

"Yes, Sir John; and that will be to-morrow morning, as early as you like."

"Eight o'clock, then."

"I will be at your house."

The Judge left Newgate with the packet in his hand—packet, though, it could hardly be called, since it was but a long letter. He gave the order to be taken home, and the horses set off at a smart trot.

He opened the letter. It contained the following words:—

"My dear Sir John.

"Something disastrous has happened, I fear. The papers and letters which concern you and me and the Spanish Ambassador so closely, and which ought to have been destroyed, are by a series of accidents of the most annoying description, in the hands of a highwayman who, I believe, is named, or who has named himself, Captain Heron.

"Come to me at once.

"Yours ever,

Whitcombe."

Sir John let the letter fall to the floor of the coach, and uttered a deep groan.

"Dead!—dead!" he gasped. "If I were only dead now! All is lost! That man will go to Lord Trelawney, who leads the Opposition, and those papers will destroy us!"

It was an accidental stoppage in the streets which aroused Sir John from the semi-trance that had come over him, and he started to a full sense of his situation.

It was one full of danger.

He pulled the check-strings of the carriage, and the footman alighted from behind, and came to one of the doors.

"To Lord Whitcombe's!"

"Yes, Sir John."

"Haste!"

The footman touched the rim of his hat, and called the coachman over the roof of the coach, when he had attained his perch behind again, "The Earl of Whitcombe's, Thomas, and as quick as you can go!"

The horses were put to speed towards Pall Mall, where the Prime Minister resided.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WAGGON AND THE PASSENGERS.—CAPTAIN HERON'S PLAN.

We left Captain Heron at Hinchcliffe Manor House, in deep thought.

Many anxious reflections crowded his brain, and he felt that much of the happiness of his life would be for ever clouded over, unless he could make further discoveries in regard to the fate of his mother, and have with Lord Whitcombe a thorough explanation of the events of the past.

In fact, this desire to see Lord Whitcombe, and, by acting upon what good feelings he might possibly possess or, failing them, upon his fears, to enforce a recognition of who he really was, became soon the most urgent desire of the heart of Captain Heron.

The most urgent desire, we mean, of that bold and really gentle heart, next to the happiness of Edith.

Nothing in the world could compete really for a single instant with his love for her.

What would rank—wealth—the recognition of society—even of a father—be in comparison with that affection—that devoted, passionate tenderness of Edith, which was now more to him than his life?

And visions began to crowd over his fancy to the effect that, after all, the strange romance of his existence might end in a poetic justification of his love.

How singular it was that, when he rescued Edith from her own father in the forest, her distress was an attempted compulsory marriage with the Lord Warringdale!

If, then, the registry of the old church at Barnes were true, and if all the evidence that had, bit by bit, come to him on the subject of his mother's marriage with the Earl of Whitcombe were not wild chimeras, who but he—even he, the now recognised Captain Heron, the highwayman—who but he was the real, the veritable Lord Warringdale?

That was the courtesy title of the eldest son of the Earl of Whitcombe; and if, in truth, he, Captain Heron, was that eldest son, why it was no other than himself, the real Lord Warringdale, who had snatched Edith from the contamination of the association that was attempted to be forced upon her with the false one.

It was with almost a smile that Captain Heron rose and paced the room, saying to himself, "I can go to the stern, wild-tempered, and cruel Judge, and say to him, 'Good sir, I am a convert to your wishes with all my heart and soul, and your child shall have no other husband while I live but Lord Warringdale.'"

But these fancies soon died away, and the important present pressed upon his attention.

It was immediate action that was now required.

The view that he made of the papers he had taken from the Spanish Ambassador convinced Captain Heron that they were of such vital importance to the Earl of Whitcombe, that, should he feel disposed to carry them to Lord Trelawney, or to any of the Opposition peers, the Earl of Whitcombe would most probably sleep if sleep he could at all—that night in the Tower.

And thus Captain Heron felt that he

could, if it so pleased him, avenge the wrongs of his poor mother.

But was not the Earl of Whitcombe his father? and was he, the son, the proper avenger?

"No! Heaven will save me from sin!" he said, "I will not forget who and what I am; and I will go to the Earl, and I will restore to him these most dangerous documents as the first duty that his discarded, neglected son has yet been able to pay to him; and then—and then, if there be one spark of nobleness in his heart, he will be touched, and it will glow into a flame, and he will call me son! We shall see—we shall see! How weary—how very weary I am!"

Captain Heron glanced once towards the western sky. The last glow was there of the setting sun and he saw it fade away. The shadows of the night crept into the room; and flinging himself upon a couch, he fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

It seemed to Captain Heron as if he had only just closed his eyes, when he heard a voice say, "I think you said six, Captain?"

"Eh?"

The highwayman started up.

"What is that?"

"Only me, sir—Number Two. You told me to call you at six."

"Six—six in the morning?"

"Yes, Captain."

"You amaze me! Ah! I see the daylight is abroad. How soundly I have slept! Thank you, Number Two! I have much to do. Get Daisy round to the Forest Gate, as we call it. Is all still?"

"Quite! The enemy left the wood, Captain, and there is not a leaf astir without our leave now."

"It is well! Let me think! Summon the band to meet me in the Prior's Glade, in an hour from this time, and be there with Daisy!"

"It shall be done, Captain! Is it an expedition?"

"It may be—it may be!"

Captain Heron, by the aid of a sparkling stream of water which flowed through a channel of stone in one of the court-yards of the old Manor, performed his morning's ablutions; and, with the glow of health upon his cheeks, and its sparkle in his eyes, he made a hasty breakfast, and then sallied forth to the Prior's Glade.

This was a part of the old forest that evidently had at one time, many a long year ago, been carefully cultivated, and had owed to art many of its picturesque beauties.

It was named the Prior's Glade from time immemorial, no doubt from the period that the monastic institution amid the ruins of which Captain Heron and his men found a shelter, had existed.

This glade, then, was nothing more nor less than a kind of walk in the wood, lined on each side by very choice and stately trees, placed at regular distances the one from the other, and with green alleys branching off at intervals, which had likewise evidently been planted with an eye to the effect and the beauty of skilful groupings of trees.

It was there, then, that the whole of the band of Captain Heron assembled on that morning; and it was there that Daisy browsed on the young herbage, and uttered her usual short sound of pleasure at the sight of her master.

The high-road through the forest ran at about two hundred yards from this glade; so that, should any vehicle or horsemen pass along it, they could not fail to be heard by the band, although the thickly-intervening bushes and trees would cut off all sight in that direction.

One of those half-suppressed cheers to which Captain Heron was accustomed from his men, greeted his arrival on the spot, and they gathered round him to learn his wishes and orders.

"All here?" he said.

"Yes, Captain, all but two scouts

—one to the north and one to the south."

Captain Heron ran his eye over the nine faces that were around him, and then he said, "I want you all—scouts as well—to go with me to London."

One of the band then blew a peculiar call, which had a prolonged sound with it, and the two scouts soon made their appearance and joined the rest.

"I am going," added Captain Heron, "on an expedition of some danger; but it is one which may be of benefit to us all. At least, I will take care that, if it be of benefit to me, it shall be equally so to all of you."

"We know that, Captain," said one.

"Hurrah for the Captain!" said another.

"The only thing I have not quite yet made up my mind about, is the mode by which you shall all come with me or follow me."

A low, distant jingling sound of small, half-cracked bells came at this moment on the ears of the party, and awakened pleasant echoes, in the wood.

They all listened intently.

The pleasant jingling sound evidently came nearer.

"What is it?" said Captain Heron.

"The Hertford wagon," said Ogle; "I know it well, and the very sound of the horses' heels. I came from Hertford."

"Ah, yes, it must be that," said Captain Heron; "and it gives me the idea I want. Comrades, you will go to London in the Hertford wagon."

The band smiled and nodded their heads, for they saw in a moment the advantages of the plan, although they had not the most distant idea of what Captain Heron had in view.

"Listen to me, all of you," he added. "We will stop and take possession of the wagon. Those who may be in it, and the drivers, can be stowed away in one of the caverns till it is convenient to set them free in the latter part of the day. You, Ogle, can drive?"

"Certainly, Captain."

"The rest of us can play the parts of passengers and carters easily—some out, and some in."

"But Daisy, Captain!" said Ogle; "Daisy! will not she be known?"

"She would be; but Daisy shall be an inside passenger, with me. Now to our work, for I think the wagon is close at hand."

The jingling of the bells at the horses' heads became now each moment, more and more distinct; and the heavy tramp of their feet could be heard likewise on the road.

Captain Heron sprung into the saddle and led the way, mounted on Daisy, who curveted and pranced with pleasure in the clear vital morning air.

They all reached some low bushes close to the roadway, but as those bushes grew on a sort of bank, they were some height from the road. There was a gate and the remains of one which shut out a narrow sort of gully or alley that led from the road into the wood; and it was through this gateway that Captain Heron quietly rode.

"Keep back!" he said to his men. "Keep back, until, you hear my call."

The moment Captain Heron got into the road he saw the wagon coming lumbering slowly along. It was a large affair, and drawn by four huge horses. The covering looked as big as a hay-stack, and a couple of half sleepy-looking men trudged on in the dusty road by the horses' heads.

Captain Heron waited quietly by the hedge side until the foremost horses were very close to him, and then he cried out in those clear piercing tones which generally begat prompt attention, "Halt! halt!"

"Woa!" cried the men who were at the horses' heads; and then one said, "Who be ye?"

"A highwayman!"

"Murder! Woa!"

A scream burst from some one inside the wagon, which was soon echoed by others.

"A highwayman!" added Captain Heron in a loud voice; "and one who will put a couple of bullets in the brains of anybody who makes the least resistance, or even who makes too much noise."

Another scream came from inside the wagon.

"Silence!" cried Captain Heron.

The canvas was violently agitated from within, but the screams were silenced.

One of the wagoners dropped on to his knees in the middle of the road and howled out, "Spare my life, good Mr. Highwayman, and take my bread and bacon!"

This alluded to a small and not very inviting packet of those articles that he had been about to open for breakfast.

The other wagoner made an attempt to run off at speed.

"Come back!" said Captain Heron.

"Danged if I do," cried the man. "If I has to run all the ways to Hoddesdon, I'm off! Ha! ha! Maister Highwayman, you haven't been and gone and cotched I yet, by a goodish bit!"

Captain Heron dismounted quickly.

"Daisy, lass! After him—after him! Off and away, lass! Bring in! Hoy! Bring in! Away—away!"

Captain Heron had looped up the stirrups as he spoke, and then off went Daisy at her long and alarming-looking hand gallop, after the man.

The race was a short one.

The wagoner uttered a yell of terror as Daisy caught him by the neck portion of his smock-frock at the back of his head.

"Murder!—murder! I'm a dead man!"

Daisy gave him a quiet shake, as much as to say, "Hold your tongue," and then twisting him round, she trotted back to Captain Heron.

The wagoner howled, swore, raved, and entreated, but Daisy held him fast; although, when they arrived at the wagon again, the smock-frock was half over his head, and he was nearly smothered.

"That's it, my brave Daisy!" said Captain Heron, as he patted her neck. "That's it."

She let the man loose, and he rolled down by the side of the hedge.

"My friend," said Captain Heron, "you were by far too precipitate!"

"Murder!"

Be quiet! If either of you stir from here now, I will send her after you, with orders to bring you back by a good clutch at your throats, and she will do it!"

A violent commotion was now evidently being made in the inside of the wagon, and several voices could be heard expostulating, lamenting, and advising. Above them all there arose that of a female in shrill contentious strains.

"Go at once! Go out at once, Mr. Moody—go at once, and knock him down, Mr. Moody!"

"My dear!" expostulated a mild voice;—"my dear!"

"Don't 'my dear' me! Thieves! murder! Oh, you wretch!—go at once, Mr. Moody! and seize the highwayman, I command you, Mr. Moody!"

"But really," expostulated the mild voice; "really now, my dear! Now, there is a military gentleman here in the wagon; I heard him——"

"No—no!" cried another voice.

"My dear sir, I heard you at the ten mile stone whisper to that lady by your side that you were a captain!"

"No—no!"

"He did," said another female voice. "He said he was Captain Whiffles!"

"No, no! Mr. Daniel Whiffles!"

"Captain, I'll swear!"

"What is all this?" said Captain Heron, appearing at the tail of the

wagon, and holding aside a large flapping piece of canvas, which enabled him to look into the interior. "What is all this?"

Mrs. Moody screamed.

Mr. Moody tried to hide in the straw.

Captain Daniel Whiffles shook fearfully, and the lady who sat next him went off at once into hysterics.

Several other passengers called out "Murder!"

One shouted "Fire!"

Peace! peace!" cried Captain Heron. "What in the name of wonder, is all this disturbance about?"

"I'm Daniel, sir!" squeaked a small voice. "I'm only plain Daniel, sir!"

"And in the lion's den, I think!" said Heron.

"Kill him at once, John Moody!" cried Mrs. Moody. "Kill him at once, and I'll forgive you!"

"But I won't, madam! Where is the man who is to kill me? Come out, sir!"

"The Lord have mercy upon me, my dear Mr. a—a—what's-your-name? Bless you, sir! Quite glad to see you! It's my wife, sir—not me that talks of killing! I'm a peaceable man, sir!"

"Come out!"

"Yes, sir! If you please, sir! A fine morning, my dear sir—very fine! I hope you are quite well!"

"Come out, all of you!"

As he spoke, Captain Heron placed his whistle to his lips, and chirped a few notes; when his band came over the hedge, and appeared in the road.

"Secure these people!"

There were now cries and shrieks again; and Captain Heron had to raise his voice, saying, "Bring a large sack; and the one who makes the most noise must be put into it!"

All was still in a moment.

It was a ludicrous thing, then, to see the different aspects and expressions of face with which the passengers come out of the wagon.

There were nine passengers in all, and although some of them undoubtedly had adopted that mode of conveyance, on account of their own poverty not permitting them to take the stage-coach, yet, as, in the present day, people of ample means travel by the third class on a railway, there were some who went their journey by the wagon from motives of parsimony.

The evidently needy, Captain Heron said not a word to; nor did they exhibit any signs of fear of him.

But there were others who belonged to quite a different desrciption.

"Now, sir," said Captain Heron to a stout, burly-looking man, with a very red face, who stepped out of the vehicle, trying, as he did so, to look as meek as possible—"now, sir, your money!"

"Money? Bless me—I—a—I am a poor man! Quite a poor man, my dear sir!"

"A poor man, indeed!" screamed a female voice, "Why, he is Mr. Clacks, the rich miller of Bishop's Storford; and I ought to know him well!"

"No, no!" cried the burly man; "it's not true!"

"Who are you, then?" said Captain Heron.

"Why—I—well, my name is Clarks!"

"Your money!"

"I have none!"

"Numbers Two and Three! Take this man over to the other side of the hedge, and see if you can shake any money out of him!"

"Yes, Captain! Come on!"

"Murder!" cried Mr. Clarks. "Here is my purse—take it! It would have been cheaper to me to ride post!"

"Of course it would!"

"But I can tell you what," added Mr. Clarks; "since you Mrs. Brown, have been so handy as to speak for me, I will take care that you repent of it!"

"You have done your worst to me and mine, Mr. Clarks," said a poor, miserable-looking woman; "you sold up our little home, and I am now going to London to join my poor husband, who is trying to get work there. So you have done your worst!"

Captain Heron turned his back on Mr. Clarks, and, as he put his purse in his pocket with his left hand, he drew out of his other pocket, with his right, a number of guineas, and gave them to the poor woman.

"Be off now to London," he said, "as soon as you can, and don't think hardly of Captain Heron!"

"Oh, sir! but——"

"Nay, you need not hesitate—it is not his money. Now, sir!"

A little wizen-faced man got out of the wagon, and fell on his knees in the roadway at once; so Captain Heron merely pushed him aside.

And so the vehicle was emptied of its passengers; and then Captain Heron whispered directions to two of his men, and the nine passengers, with the exception of poor Mrs. Brown and the two carters, were marched off.

Not that they went quite quietly or quite contentedly, for there was much vociferation now on the part of several of them; but they were hurried into the wood.

Captain Heron and the rest of his men remained by the wagon.

CHAPTER XIV.

JUSTICE IN THE FOREST.—THE HIGHWAYMAN AND THE DESERTER.

Hardly had the cries and shouts of the passengers, and of the two carters, died away in the recesses of the forest or in the cavernous obscurity of the old foundations of the religious house, than the scout who had been placed on the London side of the wood came in, and gave the peculiar whistle which implied, if not actual danger, yet the approach of some one.

Captain Heron stepped forward.

"Who is it?" he said.

"A man on horseback, Captain."

"A traveller merely?"

"He looks like it."

The rapid sound of approaching horses' feet now put the matter beyond a doubt that some one was about to pass that way.

"To the wagon, all of you, and keep close!" said Captain Heron.

"Yes, Captain!" said Ogle; "but Daisy?"

"Get you behind the hedge with her, Thirteen!"

"Eh?"

"You are Number Thirteen now!"

"To be sure—to be sure, Captain Heron! Come on, Daisy!"

Daisy seemed to have struck up quite a sort of acquaintanceship with Ogle, and went with him more willingly than she would have gone with any other member of the band.

Probably Daisy was aware that Ogle thought a great deal of her; and, indeed, he spoke to her more as if, to use a common expression, she were a Christian than a dumb creature.

Just, then, as the horseman turned the angle of the road through the forest, which would bring him in sight of the wagon, all the band was hidden, and Captain Heron stood alone in the roadway.

The horseman drew rein.

"Hoy! hoy!" he cried.

"Well, sir," said Captain Heron, "what is it?"

The man was a stout fellow enough, and young and active, to all appearance. He was rather shabbily attired, and had a heavy riding-whip with him.

The horse he rode was a good-looking hackney, although rather rough.

"If you please, sir," said this man, "is this Epping Forest?"

"It is."

"Oh, I am glad of that—very glad of that! Woa!"

He dismounted at once; and flinging the bridle of his horse over his arm, he laughed in a quiet sort of way to himself.

"May one, without impertinence," said Captain Heron, "ask you where you are you going?"

"Nowhere!"

"Indeed!"

"Oh, dear, no! Now that I am in Epping Forest, I am where I came to be,—that's all!"

"And your business here?"

"A wager!"

"A what?"

"A wager—a bet! I have bet a hundred pounds to one that I will capture the celebrated Captain Heron, who, I understand, has his headquarters somewhere in this wood."

"You are a bold man!"

"Always was!"

"There is only one thing that you need beware of in the matter."

"What may that be?"

"Why, the possibility of the process being reversed, and Captain Heron capturing you!"

"Ha, ha! Oh dear, no!"

"Nay, it is probable!"

"Not a bit—not a bit! I am too tough a customer for such a Jimmy Jessamy fellow as Captain Heron, the highwayman! All I want is a fair chance to get hold of him—that's all! What's that?"

Loud cries now came from some one approaching the wood. The cries were of distress and pursuit.

"Stop him—stop him! Anybody stop him! He has robbed me of all I had! Stop him! Thieves! Stop him!"

A man, with a green smock-frock and leather gaiters, came into sight.

"Confound him!" said the man who had laid the wager to capture Captain Heron.

As he spoke, he made an effort to mount his horse; but Captain Heron interposed.

"No—not yet!"

"What?"

"You don't mount yet! Who knows but it is you this countryman wants!"

"Let me go!"

"No!"

"That's the villain!" cried the countryman in the smock-frock. "Oh, you rogue—you villain—you robber! My money—my money!"

The countryman flew at the man with the horse, and they were in a moment rolling over each other in the road.

Captain Heron then stooped over them, and got hold of the collar of the horseman, and dragged him to his feet.

"Let him be!" he said to the countryman. "Let him be! What has he robbed you of?"

"That horse and a purse of money—a steel purse, made of small rings."

"It's not true!" said the other. "He gave it to me!"

Captain Heron smiled.

"Take it again, if you can get it," he said to the countryman, who commenced a vigorous search of the other's pockets, and soon triumphantly produced his steel purse.

"Here's my money! here's my money! Why, you be a bad one, surely, you be!"

The horseman looked confused, and then, with a jerk of his head, he said, "Well, the money was not yours!"

"It was—it was!"

"Nay, your name is Jasper; and you know right well, you took those twenty guineas as a bounty to go for a soldier in lieu of young Squire Hawkins, who, after a quarrel with his father, had listed. You ought to be at the Tower, in London."

The countryman looked blank.

Captain Heron smiled, and blew one faint note on his whistle.

His men darted in a moment from the wagon.

Lord Warringdale made a furious attack upon Captain Heron, and then his sword suddenly flew from his hand, and struck the chandelier that hung from the ceiling. "Murder! Help!" he cried.

[See page 107.]

"Secure that man!" he said, as he pointed to the first comer on horseback.

The fellow made a rush to escape, but he was soon securely tied by the elbows.

"Now, you Jasper," said Captain Heron, "if that be your name, take your horse, and go!"

The countryman shook his head.

"Yes, I will go," he said; "but I don't know where. They will hue-and-cry after me. Father be dead, and mother be dead, long ago; and I be like a straw in high wind, that be not in its right mind to know where to bide!"

There was a touch of pathos in the way in which these words were spoken, that had all its effect upon Captain Heron.

"Do you mean to say," he said, "that you are quite alone in the world?"

"I be—I be!"

"And you are in truth, then, a deserter from the army?"

"I be—I be! They never had I

properly, you see, to make a sojer of I; but they will try to catch I."

"You are a stout, strong young fellow."

"I be!"

"Can you groom a horse well?"

"Lord save you, yes!"

"Did you ever hear of Captain Heron?"

"What! he as be a highwayman?"

"The same."

"To be sure I have! Why, I seed him once on a time, though it was only in a bit of moonlight, like. He came along a bit of a lane, by old Gaffer's mill, and some one looked over a stile, and he says, says he, 'Why, that's Captain Heron!' and then, no sooner he says that, but four men a horseback comes on out of the highway, like; and one say, says he, 'Which way,' says he, 'did a chap on a black mare,' says he, 'go?' And then the chap as looked over the stile was a-going to open his mouth; but I flung a brick at he and it knocked out never so many of his teeth, and he couldn't speak; and I says, says I, a-pointing quite t'other way, says I 'That's the way chap on the black mare has gone!' and off they four went as hard as they could go!"

"Then you, perhaps, would not be averse to joining Captain Heron!"

The country fellow shook his head.

"No such luck for I!"

"Yes—I am Captain Heron!"

"You—you be he?"

"I am indeed; and if you like to make one of my men, we will find a place for you; but remember, it is faithful service or death!"

"To be sure! to be sure! Only let them sojers catch I, and they will shoot I!"

"Take care of him," said Heron to his men. "Ah! is all well?"

The two of the band who had gone away with the prisoners came back at this moment.

"Yes, Captain, they are all secure."

"Then this is a new associate, I fancy; but he must not come with us just yet. Jasper, I believe, is your name?"

"It be."

"You must consent then, to be taken care of until the morning."

"Oh, yes—yes!"

"Take him away, then, and this prisoner likewise. They must be both secured, but seperately, or they may disagree."

This was done, and soon the whole band was assembled around the wagon. A couple of them had assumed the smock frocks and hats of the carters, liberally garnished round the sides, as were those hats, with turnpike tickets.

Then Captain Heron spoke to his men in that clear, decided tone which they so well comprehended, and which they were accustomed so implicitly to obey.

"My men, it is possible that there may be some danger in what we are now going about; but, in proportion to that danger, we must show that we have courage to face it."

The band gave one of those strange, faint cheers, with which they were in the habit of meeting any sentiment on the part of their captain in which they fully agreed.

"In the first place," continued Heron, "I am going to call on the Earl of Whitcombe, the Prime Minister, with whom I have some business!"

There was a visible sensation among the band.

"A part of that business will be for the advantage of you all, you may depend."

A murmur of satisfaction followed these words.

"Then, it is possible that I may call on Sir John Tarleton."

"The hanging Judge!" cried one.

A groan of execration burst from every throat.

"Yes, the hanging Judge Tarleton!—the Judge who ever goes out of his

way when on the bench to import his own prejudices and passions into the case before him. I say it is possible that I may have to go to him; and if so, it will be to rescue one from his power whom he would oppress."

"Edith?"

"Yes, Edith! His fair daughter Edith!" added Captain Heron. "If we can save that fair girl from an union she detests——"

The feelings of Captain Heron would not allow him to say more, and he turned aside and walked to and fro for a few moments in silence.

Then in a loud voice, he cried, "Daisy! Daisy! Ho, Daisy, my gallant friend and companion! Hither, lass! hither!"

Daisy leaped the hedge at the sound of his voice, and then Captain Heron sprung upon his back.

"How now," he cried, "forward to London! To London at once! You two are the drivers of the wagon, and you all, my faithful men, are its passengers! Forward! forward!"

The horses were set in motion; the bells jingled over their heads; and the wagon began to leave a long trail of dust behind it as it slowly emerged from Epping Forest.

The eleven members of the band who were to enact the parts of passengers by the wagon marched in the roadway as yet, for it was not necessary to get in until they should arrive near London.

Captain Heron, mounted on Daisy, followed at about a hundred paces distance.

It was well that he did so.

They had not proceeded above a couple of miles, when a cloud of dust, and the clatter of horses' feet, announced the approach of a party of mounted men.

On nearer approach, these turned out to be a whipper-in and some huntsmen going to some "meet," and certainly not at all likely to be good booty for Captain Heron.

As they approached, Heron now but in practice an expedient, for the express purpose of which he had kept in the rear of the wagon.

He gave Daisy a gentle pat on the side of the neck as he said, "A leap and away, my Daisy! Now, lass! now!"

There was a rush, and then a leap, and Daisy and Captain Heron went between the flapping ends of canvass at the tail of the wagon, and alighted on the straw within the vehicle.

The height inside was not sufficient for Captain Heron to sit on Daisy's back; but as the creature alighted on the deep straw, he swung himself off, and, patting the neck of Daisy, who was a little startled at the unusual character of the place she was in, whispered to her, "Gently, my gallant Daisy! All is well! Down, Daisy! down!"

Daisy doubled her feet under her, and lay down in the straw at the bottom of the wagon. Captain Heron flung some of it over her, and then composed himself as if to sleep near the tilt end of the vehicle.

"Hilloa!" shouted the whipper-in, as he and the huntsmen approached the wagon. "Hilloa! What wagon, eh?"

"Woa!" said one of the sham carters.

"Woa!" said the other.

The horses came willingly enough to a standstill.

"What wagon, I ask, is this?"

"Hoddesdon wagon, sir."

"Did you see a black horse?"

"Anan!"

"I say, did you see a man on a black horse? As we were on the hill yonder, we saw him quite plainly?"

The sham carters shook their heads.

"You did not see him?"

"No. Did you see him, Bill?"

"No, Bob."

"Then you must be both blind; or we see what there is not to see! What do you say now, Mears?"

"Why, I say, I saw him quite

plainly! I was riding postilion with Sir John Tarleton when I saw that black mare last; and it's Captain Heron's the highwayman, I'll take my oath any day! He's lurking about somewhere now, I feel sure!"

"You don't say so?"

"Yes; and he is worth a thousand pounds to catch; and the mare is worth another thousand to sell!"

"It's very odd!"

"Come up!" said one of the carters.

"Come up!" said the other.

The horses' bells jingled again, and the train was in motion. They both looked so incorrigibly stupid, that the whipper-in, and the huntsmen and grooms, despaired of getting any further information from them, and trotted on.

"Safe!" said Captain Heron. "I don't want a squabble on the highway for no good."

No sooner had he spoken, than one of the men turned his horse's head, and came back at a trot.

"Hoy! Woa!"

"Anan!" said one of the carters, looking stupidder than ever.

"Who have you in the wagon?"

"Passengers."

The horseman went to the back of the vehicle, and held aside one-half of the canvass that shut it up, and looked in.

The whole of Captain Heron's band had got in when they first saw the party of horsemen approaching, and that the Captain and Daisy were inside.

"Oh?" said the man, as he looked into the wagon; "you are all in the dark here!"

The interior of the wagon seemed dark indeed to one just looking from the broad, open daylight into it.

"Yes, we are," said Captain Heron.

"Who are you, my good man?"

"Nicholas Flam, sir!"

"An odd name, that!"

"Very, sir!"

"Well, Nicholas Flam, did you happen, as you were nearest the tail of the wagon, to see a man on a black horse?"

"Yes; oh, yes!"

"You did?"

"To be sure, I did!"

"Fifty pounds for you, if you can say which way he went!"

"Over Jobus's hedge, by Willis' lime pit."

"How do I know Jobus and Willis?"

"Why, any fool knows them!"

"Pho! pho! Did he leap the hedge?"

"Yes, he did; and he knows how to get his horse to lie down when he likes. And I tell you what it is! if you don't see his horse, you may depend on it he is lying down flat somewhere and he has his hand on its head to keep it quiet."

Captain Heron patted Daisy quietly on the neck as he spoke.

"Thank you for that idea, Nicholas Flam. We will scour this bit of country at once. If you will say where you can be found, you shall have something, provided we catch the rascal, for it is no other than Captain Heron, the higwayman."

"I know that."

"You do?"

"Yes, I saw him once before. You'll always find me at No. 1, Newgate Street."

"Why, that is Jonathan Wild's!"

"Just so! He knows me."

"Very good."

The man went off, and the wagon went on its way, the bells jingling at the horses' heads, and the usual cloud of dust following its progress,

"I think my men," said Captain Heron, "that we had better now remain as we all are, since we are liable any moment to meet with passengers on the open road."

"Yes, Captain," said Ogle. "And, after all, Daisy is resting, and quite comfortable." "She is! she is!"

CHAPTER XIV.

FATHER AND SON.—REMORSE.—THE DEATH OF THE EARL.

It was about a quarter to one o'clock in the day that the wagon in which was Captain Heron, Daisy, and the eleven of Captain Heron's band, slowly turned into St. James's Street.

From a small valise that had been brought him by his directions from his room at Hinchcliffe Manor House, and placed in the wagon, Captain Heron had taken a dark brown suit of clothes trimmed with silver lace.

That suit he had put on in the wagon, in lieu of his ordinary dashing apparel; but he took good care to place in the ample pocket of the brown coat the important papers he took from the Spanish Ambassador.

The pair of pistols, too, on which he knew he could so well depend, Captain Heron hid in the breast of his apparel.

Then he stepped from the wagon, and stood in all the bustle of St. James's Street, close to the town house of the Earl of Whitcombe.

He made a sign to the two of the band who played the part of carters to draw the wagon close to the kerbstone, and then he sauntered carelessly towards the Prime Minister's house.

But before he reached it, he heard something in the shape of an altercation, and he looked back to see what it was.

A constable, or street-keeper, was protesting against the wagon halting in the street.

There was an old inn round the corner, by the Palace—opposite to the entrance in fact, very nearly—which was called the Flag of Brunswick, and Captain Heron put an end to the dispute by saying, as though he were a stranger, "My good man, why don't you take your wagon round the corner, there, to the Flag of Brunswick Inn? It will be safe enough there."

"To be sure, sir," said the street-keeper.

The band took the hint, and the wagon slowly moved off.

Captain Heron then went once more towards the door of the Earl of Whitcombe's house, and as he was about to place his foot on the step, the door was flung open and some one stepped out.

"The Lord Warringdale!" said Captain Heron; and he had but just time to turn his back, when that dissolute personage came out into St. James's Street.

"Well met, my lord!" said a voice.

A thrill ran through the heart of Captain Heron, for that voice was only too well known to him.

It was the voice of Jonathan Wild.

"What, Mr. Wild!—you here?" said Lord Warringdale.

"Yes, my lord, I have been to your own house over the way; and they said you were here with your illustrious father. Hem!"

"You want me?"

"Why, no! Ha! ha! not exactly that! Not yet! But I wish to speak to your lordship, that is all; so I just came over the road, and looked at Mr. Riches's caricatures, till your lordship came out!"

"What is it?"

"Not a subject for the open street, my lord?"

"Come with me, then!"

"I follow your lordship!"

Jonathan and Lord Warringdale walked over the way; and as this conversation had happened within four paces of Capain Heron's back, it may well be supposed how keenly he felt the danger of his situation, and how deeply interested he was in catching every word of it.

"A narrow escape, that!" he said, as he went up the two steps of Lord Whitcombe's house. "Surely, Jona-

than Wild, had he seen my face, would have known me!"

Captain Heron knew that in calling upon such a personage as the Earl of Whitcombe, the more assuming were the manners he put on, the more respect he would get from his servants, so he knocked loudly.

The door was flung open in a moment.

"Is the Earl within?"

"Yes, sir—my lord!"

There was something so noble and attractive about the appearance of Captain Heron, that the hall porter instinctively gave him a title.

"I wish to see him!"

"What name?—title!"

"The Baron de Hawkesley!"

"Yes, Baron. This way if you please, Baron!"

Captain Heron was shown into a reception-room, and then he felt sure that his difficulties in seeing the Prime Minister began.

And Heron soon found that to call upon a minister of state was one thing, but to see him was quite another.

A small, meek-looking, white-faced young man, with very gentlemanly manners, entered the room in a few moments.

"You wanted to see the Earl of Whitcombe, sir?" he said, addressing Captain Heron.

"Yes."

"The earl regrets exceedingly that he has not the honor of recollecting you."

"He will recollect me when he sees me."

"Nor is your title at all familiar to him as that of any one accredited here from any European court."

"I am afraid not, sir; but if you will be so good as to say that I have private business of great importance with his lordship, you will much oblige me."

"I am afraid that his lordship is too busy to see any one whom he does not know."

"But suppose, sir, that some one whom his lordship does not know should happen to have a something of the greatest consequence to communicate—of consequence, not so much to himself as to the earl?"

"Then, baron, I fancy the communication would have to be made through me."

Captain Heron shook his head.

"Or in writing."

Captain Heron shook his head again.

"No, sir—no! It may not be! Let me think a moment. Yes, yes!"

"Sir!"

"That will do."

Captain Heron said these words with so much sharpness and precision that they seemed to affect the nerves of the polite young secretary almost as much as if a pistol-shot had suddenly gone past his eyes.

"What will do, sir? I warn you!"

"Warn me? Of what?"

"We have always assistance at hand!"

"It is not required, sir!"

Captain Heron took from his pocket the packet of letters he had procured from his Excellency the Spanish Ambassador, and tore a triangular piece off one of them, which was in the handwriting of the Earl of Whitcombe.

Folding, then, that triangular piece of paper many times, until it occupied a very small compass, he said to the secretary, as he handed it to him, "Sir, I trust to your honor not to open this paper, but to deliver it, just as it is, to the Earl of Whitcombe, and say that the gentleman with the remainder of that letter wishes to see him at once."

The secretary seemed to hesitate whether he should take hold of the folded paper or not; and Captain Heron added, with a smile, "It is not explosive, sir!"

A faint blush came over the white face of the secretary, and he took it, with a bow, and left the room at once.

"He will see me now!" said Captain Heron to himself.

The highwayman was right. In the course of two minutes, the secretary came back, looking flushed in the face. He made a low bow, as he said, "Sir, if you will follow me, I have orders to conduct you to his lordship."

The heart of Captain Heron, beat quickly, as he followed the secretary, for he thought to himself, "Is it, indeed, my father whom I am about to meet?"

Every circumstance had a direct tendency to make him believe that such was the case; and he, who would not have been agitated in the midst of any danger, felt that the warm blood was deserting his cheeks, and that he must be deathly pale, as the secretary flung open a door, and said, in a low tone, "Walk in, sir! You will find his lordship in the inner room."

For a moment, Captain Heron saw nothing. A kind of mist seemed to be over his eyes; but then he made an effort, and brought back some of his composure.

"Courage! courage!" he said, faintly. "After all, it is not I who should feel agitation!"

He found himself in a splendidly-furnished apartment. The hangings at the windows were of crimson velvet, looped up with bullion cords and tassels.

The chairs all massive, and with arms, were gilt, and covered with the same material as the hangings.

There was an air of repose and richness in and about the place which struck sensibly upon the senses of Captain Heron.

A door was partially open, leading to an inner room; and standing a few paces from that door, with the triangular piece of the letter in his hand, was the Earl of Whitcombe.

The Earl was ghastly pale; and, by his attitude, it would seem as if he had only paused on the point of going into the outer room. His eyes were fixed on Heron.

The highwayman advanced three steps.

The threshold of the inner room only separated them, and they stood for a few moments gazing at each other in silence.

The father and the son!

The father, the Prime Minister of England!

The son, a highwayman—a felon with a price upon his head!

"My Lord Whitcombe!" said Captain Heron in a low tone in which there was much emotion.

The earl started, and held out the triangular piece of the letter as though he would ask some question concerning it; and then the sunlight, which up to that moment had been obscured by a mass of slaty clouds, so common in our climate, peeped through a crevice in them, and a broad beam made its way into the room in which the Earl of Whitcombe was standing.

The sunbeam passed him, only lightly tinting his white hair and the side of his face, and it fell full on the youthful features of Captain Heron.

"Good heaven!" said the earl.

"My lord!"

"Again! again!"

"You recollect me, my Lord Whitcombe?"

"Speak again! again! The voice!"

"We have met before."

The earl staggered back, and sunk on a chair. He placed one hand over his eyes as he spoke.

"Tell me who and what you are, or tell me I am mad!"

"I am not mad."

"Touch my hand."

Captain Heron stepped forward a pace, and touched the hand of the earl: it was very cold.

By a great effort, Captain Heron at the moment prevented himself from uttering the name of father; and the effort was so great, that it died away

in a low sound which resembled a sob.

"What was that? what was that?" said the earl.

"My lord, hear me! I have come to say things to you, which, if you have a heart, will stir it to its utmost; which, if you have feeling, if you have affections, will so stir them into action, that perchance, along with much suffering, you may achieve sensations of happiness such as you cannot have known for many a long and weary year!"

"Long and weary year!" echoed the earl.

"My lord, I——"

"Stop! tell me first! We have met before! Where? where?"

"On the open heath."

"Ah! I know! Impostor! I know you now!"

"No, your lordship may suspect much, but you do not know me yet."

The earl had made a determination, and he sprang to his feet.

"A highwayman!" he cried. "Yes, I recollect you now; and I have allowed my feelings to be played upon because of an accidental likeness—a trick of expression given you by nature. I am myself again. Speak, sir! What can you want with me? What can you say, why I should not at once hand you over to the authorities?"

"In the first place, my Lord Whitcombe, I am not an easy person to hand over!"

"But—but——"

"Hear me out! I perceive that your lordship's hand is near the handle of a bell. Doubtless it would summon assistance, and I might have some trouble; but I advise you to abstain!"

Lord Whitcombe drew back his hand, and outstretched it, with another purpose, as if he would grasp at the letters that Captain Heron now produced.

Captain Heron placed the letters on the writing-table before the earl, as he added, gently:

"These are what I have to sell."

"To—to sell?"

"Yes, my lord; and the price——"

"Ah, the price?"

"Two words would pay for them—two little words, my lord!"

Captain Heron did not then add that those two words were "my son," although they almost shaped themselves upon his lips.

"Not money?"

"My Lord Whitcombe, I would not touch one farthing of your gold if it lay in heaps at my feet!"

"What, then, on earth do you want for—for—those papers? Not that they are of any consequence."

"In that case, I take them away again; for they are curious, to say the least, inasmuch as they show that an English minister is in the pay of a foreign court."

"No, no!"

"I say, yes, my lord!"

"They are forgeries."

"Then it will be as well to send for the Spanish Ambassador."

"You had them from him?"

"From him!"

"He—he—gave—no—he sold——. Bah!"

"Cease your conjectures, Lord Whitcombe; I am a highwayman, and I took them from him."

"Ah, I comprehend you now! You will sell those papers to me for a free pardon under the sign-manual for all past offences. I will add a thousand pounds, and you are a made man."

"No, no!"

"What on earth, then?"

"Justice!"

"Justice?"

"Yes—to the dead as well as to the living! I will sell you, my lord, the whole of these letters for one small scrap of ancient paper."

"You rave!"

"On which," continued Captain Heron, "shall be the entry of the marriage of your lordship with Amelia Staunton, at the old church at Barnes!"

"False!" screamed the Earl. "It is false as ——Well, well; there is no need—no occasion for such asseverations! It is false, I say! I defy you —defy you!"

Captain Heron advanced one step, and tears stood in his eyes as he looked in the face of the Earl.

"Father! father!"

The Earl uttered a cry.

"Father!"

A fit of trembling came over the Earl, and he tried in vain to speak.

"I am your son! My mother—my poor, dear mother, now in heaven—was your wife! Father! father! do not deny me!"

The Earl uttered an inarticulate sound deep in his throat.

"Rest on my arm, father! You are better now. Come, come! all will be well—all well yet! There is ever a door opened by providence for those who repent, at which an angel sits. Father, speak to me!"

A strange color came over the face of the Earl of Whitcombe. A flood of tears then poured from his eyes.

He spoke.

"Amelia! Amelia! Amelia!"

"My mother!"

"Forgive—wife! wife!"

The Earl's head sunk on to the breast of Captain Heron: there was a long-drawn sigh—the flaccid cheeks puffed out for an instant—and then, commencing from the brow, a fearful change crept down the face of the Earl.

It was death!

Captain Heron held in his arms the dead body of his father.

CHAPTER XV.

A HUNT THROUGH ST. JAMES'S.—DAISY'S HEROISM.—AN ESCAPE.

Oh, what pencil shall paint, what pen describe, the agony of that moment to Captain Heron? He called frantically upon the Earl. He assured him of his forgiveness for all the past—of heaven's forgiveness —of his mother's, who, he told him, was even then looking down from heaven upon them.

All was in vain.

Still and senseless as the clod of the valley was that man who, but a few short hours before, with all the keenness of diplomatic craft, believed that he was almost capable of "circumventing heaven."

The Earl of Whitcombe was dead.

And what a situation for Captain Heron.

Alone there with the dead minister, in that house which was no doubt to him full of dangers, what should he say? what should he do?

Could he bear to walk forth apparently in calmness and peace, and then possibly be accused of the murder of the Earl?

Oh! where were now all his hopes? where all the dawning-day dreams of his heart? All vanished into thin air, for the only voice that could do him justice was hushed for ever.

The only hand that could take his, and bring him into the world as what he really was, was cold and still, and soon to mingle with the elements.

What was he to do?

A small clock—one of those Louis Quatorze combinations of Sevres and gilding—which was on the chimney-piece, struck half-past two.

The clock then played a few lively bars of some pretty French dance.

Captain Heron laid his father's body reverently on a couch that was in the room.

He knelt down beside it and prayed.

Calmer, although pale and wan, he now rose up, and collecting the papers that he had taken from his pocket, he went to the fire-place with them.

A small smouldering fire of cedar-wood was burning in the grate, and Captain Heron placed the papers upon it.

A flickering light began to play upon them.

"So perish," he said, "all record of this political offence! Father! father! You and I will meet again, where there shall be no tears and no death."

One sad kiss he pressed upon the cold brow of the dead, and then he turned towards the door of the room.

A startling knock at the street door at this moment sounded through the house.

Captain Heron paused a moment.

He heard the opening and shutting of doors, and then the sound of footsteps.

Some one was evidently approaching those rooms. Captain Heron stepped into the outer apartment—that splendid chamber, with all its crimson and velvet hangings and all its gilding—and he closed the door of the inner room.

No sooner had he done so, than the door of the crimson and gold apartment was flung open, and Lord Warringdale walked in.

"Who is it you say, Mr. Bruce? who is with the Earl? The—the Baron who?"

The voice of the secretary said something from the corridor, and then the door swung shut upon its hinges, that were set to make it do so.

Captain Heron stood with his back to the door of the inner room.

Lord Warringdale had got about five steps into the apartment, before he saw him. Then he recoiled a step as he exclaimed, "Ah! who is this? Good heavens!"

"Sir!" said Captain Heron.

"Hilloa! Help, here! I have seen this man before!"

Captain Heron sprang forward, and was between the Lord Warringdale and the door in a moment.

"Peace!" he said,—"peace! You know not where you are!"

"I—I know not where I am?"

"No, sir."

"Why, I know you quite well now! You are the highwayman——"

"I am!"

"Who carried off Edith!"

"The same!"

"Who attacked me near Epping!"

"I am that man!"

"And you have had the assurance to come here, and see my father?"

"I have! I think your name is Philip?"

"Sir!"

"Philip, I don't know your mother's name."

"Insolence!"

Lord Warringdale tore, rather than drew, the court sword that he wore out of the scabbard, and made a lunge at Captain Heron, that would have at once put an end to his career with his life, but that the Captain stepped back towards one corner of the room, in which there were several gold-headed canes and walking-sticks, and possessing himself of one, he parried the thrust, and stood on the defensive.

"You shall escape the hangman, villain that you are!" said Warringdale.

"I will not say so much for you," responded Captain Heron, "for I will not kill you."

The sword of Lord Warringdale and the walking-cane rang together.

Presently Heron found what the cane was, for the sheath flew off, and he held in his hand a sword-stick, the long polished blue blade of which closely resembled the three-cornered sword which Lord Warringdale had drawn.

"This is chance!" said Captain Heron.

"Not the least," cried Lord Warringdale. "No doubt you knew it."

"How could I?"

"The gold handles would tempt a thief to examine the canes."

There was for a moment a flashing look about the eyes of Captain Heron, but it subsided, and he said, "No, no, I will not kill him!"

"You are mighty considerate, sir! Are you aware that with this weapon I am a master?"

"No!"

"Then defend yourself; it is about my time in the day to exercise, and I may as well take my lesson upon you. I warn you now that your last moments have come!"

Captain Heron did not stir an inch from the spot where he stood, and the thin bright blades of the swords crossed each other, and clashed, and seemed now and then to twine round each other, like snakes.

"You fence well, you rascal!" said Warringdale.

"I do!"

"But yet I will kill you!"

Lord Warringdale made a furious attack upon Captain Heron, and then his sword suddenly flew from his hand, and struck the chandelier that hung from the ceiling.

A shower of glass splinters fell to the floor, and the sword lay at Lord Warringdale's feet.

"Murder! help!" he cried.

Captain Heron moved towards the door.

"Peace, Philip!" he said. "You have tried to kill me but could not. I, who could have killed you twenty times if I had chosen, have spared you! Peace, I say! We shall meet again!"

With the sword in his hand, Captain Heron reached the corridor. He descended the staircase, and was in the hall.

"Open—open!" he cried to the hall porter.

"Yes, my lord baron—yes, I——"

"Police! help! murder! A highwayman! Seize him! A thousand pounds reward!" shouted a voice from one of the front windows of the house.

It was the voice of the Lord Warringdale.

"A coward, after all!" said Captain Heron, as he himself opened the street door and sallied out on to the steps of the Earl of Whitcombe's house.

"Help, help! Secure him! There he is! A thousand pounds reward! There—without a hat—in a brown suit, trimmed with lace! Police, police! Watch, watch! A thousand pounds reward for that man!"

The head of Lord Warringdale and a good portion of his shoulders were projected from the window, and Captain Heron looked up and saw him.

"Treacherous coward!" he said.

Captain Heron dived one hand into the breast of his apparel, and produced one of his pistols.

Lord Warringdale withdrew from the window in a moment.

A street porter then made a dash at Captain Heron, calling out as he did so:

"I have him, my lord—I have him!"

"Get out of the way!" said Heron; and with one blow of the hand in which he held the pistol he sent the man prostrate into the roadway.

But a thorough alarm had been given. The street was in commotion.

That confused, murmuring sound which arises from the admixture of many voices in alarm, wonder, and anger, began to fill the air.

Captain Heron comprehended all his danger.

He was in the heart of West-End, London. He had enemies who knew him well. Lord Warringdale would offer any sum, in reason or out of reason, for his capture. It was a populous time of the day, and, go which way he might, he would be sure to encounter crowds of people.

And he was without his hat.

This last circumstance, trivial as it sounds, was a very important one to Captain Heron. It pointed him out; it ticketed him, so to speak, as the person who was to be pursued—to be hunted.

It was, indeed, some few minutes before Captain Heron fully comprehended how important it was to him to get a hat.

"There he is! That's the man! Stop! him! Seize him!"

A volley of such shouts as these showed the highwayman that he was a prominent object, and then one called out, "There he goes, without a hat!"

This cry aroused Captain Heron to the great importance of looking like the rest of the population as soon as he could, as regarded a covering for his head.

There was no difficulty about it.

From out of a bookseller's shop, near to the corner of Pall Mall, there stepped, with a smile of self satisfaction, an accurately dressed personage, who held perpendicularly, in advance of him—no doubt in order that the world should not miss seeing it—an amber and gold-headed cane.

No sooner had this personage fairly emerged into the open air, than he met with Captain Heron, face to face.

"Thank you!" said Heron; "I think this will just do!"

He lifted the hat, trimmed with gold lace as it was, from the head of the personage, and put it on his own.

"Gad's life!" said the personage; "what's that?"

Captain Heron was over the roadway in a moment.

Then there arose a terrible shout from the doorstep of Lord Whitcombe's house.

"Murder — murder — murder! Stop the murderer! Seize him! He has killed the Earl of Whitcombe! Stop him—stop him—stop him!"

"Ah!" said Captain Heron to himself, with a sigh; "it wanted but that! I am now accused of the murder of my own father!"

Now, all these cries and shouts could not but reach the ears of the band from Epping Forest, who had charge of the wagon in the inn-yard opposite St. James's Palace.

They had, indeed, almost begun to feel their position in that inn-yard untenable; for the curiosity of the people of the place to look into the wagon, since they could not but perceive they were not wanted to do so, was great.

Now, if a right line had been drawn from where Captain Heron stood to the wagon in which Daisy still reposed, it would not have measured above one hundred feet; but, then, it would have passed through a house.

In order to get to the inn-yard, however, Captain Heron had to turn a wide corner.

His object was most unquestionably to reach Daisy.

Once mounted, he knew he could defy pursuit.

But there was just the difficulty.

There was a rush of people on his heels; and it was only by turning round each moment, and facing them, that he kept them off.

No one seemed on the spot with sufficient courage actually to close with him. If some one had done so, the whole mob would have been upon him in a moment.

Then, capture would have been inevitable.

Had Captain Heron taken actually to flight, too, it is probable that the crowd would have lost their fear of him.

But, as it was, he only had walked across the way, and he was only at a walk on the point of turning the corner which would have led him to the inn-yard.

The cries and shouts after him increased each moment, and amid all arose the one loud voice, shouting, "Stop the murderer!"

The voice was Lord Warringdale's.

And now, instead of himself closing with Captain Heron, and attempting his capture, which he might have done, Lord Warringdale, when he ran out of Whitcombe House, took his way down the centre of the carriageway towards St. James's Palace.

He passed Captain Heron, and

dashed through the gateway towards the guard-room.

Lord Warringdale held a captain's commission in the Foot Guards, and he was well known.

"Guard—guard!" he cried, as he reached the guard-room door. "Guard—guard!"

Some dozen soldiers sprang to their feet. They had been lolling about idly in the guard-room, as they were off duty.

"This way—this way? No muskets! This way! Follow me!"

The men rushed out.

"There! that man in the brown suit with the silver lace! That is your man? Secure him! At once secure him!"

"Yes, your honor!"

"Without a hat? No, a gold-laced hat! He has a hat! Secure him!"

The soldiers made a rush across the roadway. A carriage just crossed them at the moment as it came from Pall Mall, at a rapid pace.

Captain Heron saw his danger.

It was too late to reach the inn-yard. He could not get round the corner without inevitably falling among the soldiers, and a contest with a dozen men was not to be thought of.

Captain Heron recoiled a step, and then blew two long, wailing notes on the whistle he had round his neck.

Those notes reached his band in the inn-yard; and they at once set the wagon in motion to leave it.

But it was too late. Captain Heron was flying up St. James's Street like a hunted hare.

The soldiers and a straggling crowd of civilians were in full pursuit.

"Shoot him—shoot him!" shouted Lord Warringdale.

This cry terrified many people, who thought, not unnaturally, that a stray shot might miss its mark, and hit some innocent person.

Many people, therefore, darted into shop-doors, and up the steps of private houses; so that by this indiscreet cry of Lord Warringdale's, the street was left much clearer.

But this acted in two ways. It enabled Heron to get on quicker; but it, at the same time, pointed him out more to general observation, and prevented him from shaking off his enemies by losing himself in a crowd.

And now the highwayman had reached the top of St. James's Street, and shouts and the cries of the people behind him had created a commotion in Piccadilly, so that there was a pause on the part of its passengers, and several arms were outstretched to clutch at him as he reached that thoroughfare.

"Who hinders me is a dead man!" cried Captain Heron.

The people saw the bright barrel of the pistol in his hand, and they fell back. For one moment, then, Captain Heron glanced behind him, and he saw, right down at the bottom of St. James's Street, a black object, in the midst of a dense crowd.

"Daisy! It is Daisy!" he cried.

The hue and cry came fast and furious on his heels, and he turned to the left.

A man darted out of a shop, and seized him by the breast of his clothing.

"I have him!—I have him!"

Captain Heron twined his legs round those of this man, and pressed him backwards. They both fell; but the highwayman was uppermost. The back of the man's head rang again on the flagstones; he lay insensible.

With a yell and shout, however, twenty hands were now grappling with the highwayman. He found himself in the midst of a sea of angry foes. He fought madly. Showers of blows were rained upon him, and he fell twice, and rose again; and still he fought.

His strength, great as it was, was failing him. He stood on the back of one of his prostrate foes to fight, but his capture appeared certain.

Then with a wild, loud cry, he

shouted, above all other sounds, "Daisy! Ho, Daisy! Daisy!"

Screams of terror arose from the crowd.

"A mad horse!—a mad horse!"

Daisy was in the midst of them. With feet and teeth she fought her way to her master. With mane erect, with dilated nostrils, uttering fierce, strange cries, she cleared the crowd before her in a few moments, and the cry still rose of "A mad horse!—a mad horse!"

Mingled with that cry was the shrieking, passionate shout from Lord Warringdale.

"Seize him! The murderer!—the murderer!"

Torn, bleeding, pale, and dusty, Captain Heron was reached by Daisy.

The last man that kept a hold of the highwayman by the collar screamed out.

Daisy had seized him with her teeth, and, in another moment, had hurled him into the road.

"I am saved!—I am saved!" cried Captain Heron, and he was on Daisy's back.

"Fire!" cried a voice.

Bang went some fire-arms, and his hat was knocked off his head.

A streak of blood upon Daisy's neck, too, suggested to him that she was wounded.

"A dastard shot!" he said, as he glared around him. "Oh, if I could only return it! Ah, I see!"

Lord Warringdale was at the corner of St. James's Street. A brace of horseman's pistols were in his hands. He it was who had fired at Captain Heron!

"No," said Captain Heron, as he replaced the pistol he was prepared to return the fire with,—"no, not at you, for you may be my brother! Ho, Daisy! off and away now!"

Daisy made a leap forward. Then there was a cry from the crowd, "Bravo! Wilkins the jockey has him yet!"

A man with wonderful agility, had fairly leaped on to the crupper behind Captain Heron, and flung his arms around him, as he said, "Now, my fine fellow, you may ride where you like; but you are my prisoner, and all I ask for reward will be the bit of blood you ride! I will win no end of cups and plate with her!"

Bang! went another pistol-shot at this moment, and the speech of this man, who felt so triumphant, was finished in a scream.

The fact was that Lord Warringdale was so blinded by passion and excitement that he, at the instant that the horse-jockey alighted behind Captain Heron, fired his other pistol.

The bullet hit the jockey in the middle of the back. His hold of Captain Heron relaxed, and he rolled to the ground a corpse.

Daisy went off down Piccadilly at a swinging gallop.

CHAPTER XVI.

DAISY'S WOUND.—MRS. RIPON RECEIVES COMPANY.

The cries and shouts of Captain Heron's followers gradually died away, and by the time he got among the collection of a small streets at the top of the Haymarket he relaxed his speed, for he found that he was not pursued at all.

At least, to all appearance, he was not.

Then Captain Heron's first act was to look attentively at Daisy's neck, from which the blood was trickling, to see if her hurt was serious.

It was but a graze. The bullet that had inflicted it had ploughed up the skin in a furrow of about ten inches in length.

"It is nothing," said Heron, as he patted Daisy, who did not seem to mind the hurt in the smallest degree

But Captain Heron alighted near to the corner of Old Panton Street, and then at a pump he saturated his rich cambric cravat with water, and bound it round Daisy's neck.

A little band of idlers paused to look at him as he did this.

And well might he excite curiosity, for the hard struggle he had had for his life had terribly deranged his apparel.

Moreover it amused the people to see how Daisy, in her way, caressed him by rubbing her head against his arm, and by playfully trying to shake him, by nipping hold, with her teeth, of bits of his clothing.

Then a little girl came quite close to him, and in a hurried way said: "Oh, if you please, there's such an ugly man says he'll have you!"

"Ah, my dear, where?"

"Over there!"

Captain Heron glanced in the direction the little girl pointed, and Captain Heron just saw a face peering from behind the stunted column of a shop door. For the moment, Captain Heron could not recollect where he had seen that face, but then the recollection of it came back to him.

"Mathew, the Judge's son!" he said, "I know him now!"

The shop was a fishmonger's and the moment Mathew saw, by the expression of the highwayman's face, that he was observed, he became so terrified that he scrambled right over all the fish in the open window into the shop and disappeared.

"Thank you, my dear," said Captain Heron to the little girl, as he gave her a guinea. "That will buy you a doll! Now, Daisy!"

He was in the saddle again in a moment, and was about to make his way into what was then called Leicester Fields, when a voice he knew well called out, "Capen! Capen! Capen!"

"Tom?"

"Iss, Capen! Tom's here! One hand! That's him! Daisy knows Tom."

Captain Heron had reached down one hand and lifted up Tom right on to the saddle.

"Why Tom, who would have thought to see you here!"

"All's right! Iss, all's right!"

"What do you mean?"

"'Tand and 'liver! A old Fogey!"

"A what?"

"Tom's a highwayman, Capen. There's ever such a nice field at the back o' old Montague House and Tom saw a Fogey?"

"A Fogey?"

"Yes, a old gentleman a-coming along, so Tom said, 'Tand and 'liver!' and the old gentleman he says 'What?' and then Tom goes back a bit, and stoops down his head, and runs forward a bit, and hits the old gentleman right in the 'tomach, and down he goes, and Tom knows what's time o' day!"

Tom produced from his pocket a handsome gold watch.

Captain Heron shook his head.

"Tom! Tom! you will be hung."

"Some day."

"Soon, Tom, soon! This is dangerous work! Let me beg of you, Tom, never to try such a thing again! If you do, you and I must part for ever and ever!"

Tom began to cry.

"Let me hope, Tom, that you will not imitate me, but take warning by me."

"But Tom wants to be a highwayman, Capen, and to have a Daisy."

Captain Heron sighed.

"I must remove this boy somewhere," he said to himself, "or I shall be his destruction. I will see to him as soon as possible; but now I must back to the wagon, for heaven only knows what difficulties the band may be in."

Captain Heron then trotted quickly in and out of a number of obscure streets, until he reached the wardrobe shop, at the back of Swallow Street, and, then glancing about him he said,

"I dont think we have been followed, Tom?"

"No, Capen."

"You take care of Daisy, then, for me for about an hour. I must go up to the room of which I have the key, and change my clothing."

There was a narrow passage, near the side of the house, which led to a dilapidated yard in the rear, and Tom took charge of Daisy, and prepared to conduct her down the gloomy entry.

Daisy knew Tom so well, that she was always willing to go with him when spoken to and entrusted to him by Captain Heron, who, however, before parting with Tom, now gave him special instructions.

"Should any one come here, Tom, about me, you must set Daisy free. She knows her own way between here and Epping Forest well. See that the stirrups are well looped up, and take the bit out of her mouth, and pat her this way, and say, 'Off, Daisy—off to the greenwood tree!' She is like a dog, and will find her way."

Tom disappeared with Daisy, at the same moment that Captain Heron entered the wardrobe shop.

"Gracious, Captain!" said Mrs. Ripon, "is that you?"

"Yes. Is my Quaker dress upstairs?"

"Bless me, yes, Captain!"

"Very good! Let me have some warm water and a powder-puff."

"To be sure, Captain—to be sure?"

The highwayman had a room in that house that belonged peculiarly to himself, and to that he went; but he was not away more than a quarter of an hour altogether, when he came down in a suit of drab, and with his dark hair just sufficiently powdered to make it look like iron-grey.

A huge pair of beaver, ill-fitting gloves were on his hands; and two lines drawn on each side of his mouth, very much altered the expression of his face.

The reader desirous of learning for what Captain Heron used this disguise—so ill-suiting in its color and quiet cut for the dashing knight of the road—as well as willing to hear further and still more interesting doings of him and his band, with those of Jonathan Wild, Lord Warringdale, and our other characters—have but to peruse the forthcoming volume: "The Hangman of Newgate; or, The Highwayman's Adventure."

THE END.