NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07574958 4

Digitized by Google
Original from
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

Original from
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

RY ASSOC
CITY

SINGh

Digitized by Google
Original from
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

Original from
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Digitized by Google
Original from
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

Original from
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

LOST SIR MASSINGBERD.

A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"CARLYON'S YEAR," "ONE OF THE FAMILY," "FOUND DEAD,"
"A BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK; OR, A COUNTY FAMILY,"
"MARRIED BENEATH HIM," "CLYFFORDS OF CLYFFE."

Payn.

"He is the most humorous of the writers of fiction at present, but his fun is always controlled by good taste, and always sympathetic. Also, his tone of feeling is as rational as it is pure. There is no novelist who more thoroughly understands the sanctity and the happiness of the affections in their highest and most virtuous exercise; but there is no sentimentality in his writings—not a touch of that subtle kind of falsehood which would give the heart precedence of the conscience, and exalt passion at the expense of principle."—*Examiner and London Review.*

PHILADELPHIA:
T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS;
306 CHESTNUT STREET.

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

TROLLOPE'S WORKS.

...h work is complete in one large duodecimo volume.

...ONORA CASALONI. THE MARRIAGE SECRET.

"The interest turns upon the marriage secret of a great Roman family, which is adroitly kept in mystery until the concluding pages. This is a story of striking merit—produced in the maturity of its gifted author's mind."—*R. Shelton Mackenzie.*

GEMMA. A TALE OF LOVE AND JEALOUSY.

"Mr. T. A. Trollope gives us in 'Gemma,' one of his novels of Italian private life of the present day. The descriptions of the city of Siena—of the country around—of Savona, the desolate town of Maremma—are wonderfully graphic, and bear witness to their having been done from the life by one who has lived in the places and loved them. We recommend the reader to learn for himself the unravelling of the plot. The story will well repay perusal, and the interest increases as the story proceeds."—*London Athenæum.*

BEPPO; THE CONSCRIPT.

"In 'Beppo the Conscript,' the avarice, the pride, the love, the industry, and the superstition of the *Contadini* of the Romagna; a household of prosperous rustics, their ways and traits; and the subtle and prevailing agency of priestcraft in its secret opposition to the new and liberal Italian government—are all exhibited with a quiet zest and a graphic fidelity which takes us into the heart of the people. The domestic, peasant, and provincial scenes and characters are drawn with fresh and natural colors and faithful outlines."—*Henry T. Tuckerman.*

MARIETTA; OR, LIFE IN TUSCANY.

"Mr. T. A. Trollope, always a favorite of ours, has excelled himself in 'Marietta.' It is a charming book—charming not for its exquisitely graphic and accurate pictures of Italian life in country and city, but more so for its admirable delineations of character." *London Saturday Press.*

DREAM NUMBERS.

"T. Adolphus Trollope ignores the intense school—he describes what he sees, knows, and feels; and does so in a very direct, simple, and candid way. If the reader knows or cares anything about the region or race thus delineated, he will find a refreshing, calm, and grateful flavor of truth and sympathy in the unpretending but significant stories of T. Adolphus Trollope."—*Round Table.*

Price of each above, $1.75 in Cloth; or $1.50 in Paper Cover

Above books are for sale by all Booksellers. Copies of any or all of the above books will be sent to any one, to any place, postage prepaid, on receipt of their price by the Publishers,

T. B. PETERSON & BROTHERS,

306 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

Digitized by Google

Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

'28

I am re-

CONTENTS.

Chapter		Page
	PREFATORY	21
I.	GIANT DESPAIR	25
II.	MY FIRST INTERVIEW	34
III.	THE DREAM BY THE BROOK	44
IV.	THE DUMB WITNESS	51
V.	THE STATE BEDROOM	69
VI.	HEAD OVER HEELS	75
VII.	AT THE DOVECOT	83
VIII.	MEETING HIS MATCH	94
IX.	MR. HARVEY GERARD	102
X.	LOVE THE LIFEGIVER	115
XI.	WOOING BY PROXY	121
XII.	THE COUNCIL OF WAR	130
XIII.	THE GIPSY CAMP	140
XIV.	WHY SIR MASSINGBERD DID NOT MARRY	148
XV.	THE REASON CONTINUED	156
XVI.	I DO SIR MASSINGBERD A LITTLE FAVOR	168
XVII.	OUT OF MIND, OUT OF SIGHT	187
XVIII.	HARLEY STREET	197
XIX.	BEFORE THE BLOW	205
XX.	LOST	214
XXI.	THE STONE GARDEN	226
XXII.	THE SEARCH	233
XXIII.	WHAT WAS IN THE COVERED CART	240

Digitized by Google

Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

CONTENTS.

	Page
[illegible]—THE PROCESSION	250
[illegible]V.—AMONG FRIENDS	256
XXVI.—A DETECTIVE OF HALF A CENTURY AGO	264
XXVII.—THE BANK-NOTES	271
XXVIII.—A BENEVOLENT STRANGER	279
XXIX.—BETTER THAN A BLUNDERBUSS	286
XXX.—THE FALSE SCENT	292
XXXI.—"LET IT BE PETER'S GODCHILD."	297
XXXII.—TAKING THE SEALS OFF	306
XXXIII.—THE FAIRY'S WAND	316
XXXIV.—FOUND	321
XXXV.—L'ENVOI	331

Digitized by Google

Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

I am re-

PREFATORY.

In these days, when every man and woman becomes an author upon the least provocation, it is not necessary to make an apology for appearing in print. Perhaps there was always something affected in those prefatorial justifications; although they did disclaim any literary merit, it is probable that the writers would have been indignant enough had the critics taken them at their word; and perhaps the publication was not entirely owing to "the warmly-expressed wishes of numerous friends." But, at all events, we have done with all such excuses now. Not to have written anything for the press, is no small claim to being an Original. Neither sex nor age seems to exempt from the universal passion for authorship. My niece Jessie (*ætat.* sixteen), writes heartrending narratives for the "Liliputian Magazine;" her brother, whom I have always looked upon as a violent, healthy hobbledehoy, whose highest virtue was Endurance, and whose darkest experience was Skittles, produces the most thrilling romances for the "Home Companion." Even my housekeeper makes no secret of forwarding

Digitized by Google

Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

most admired recipes to the "Family Intelli-
ncer;" while my stable-boy, it is well known, is a prominent poetical contributor to the "Turf Times," having also the gift of prophecy with reference to the winner of all the racing events of any importance. And yet, I believe, my household is not more addicted to publication than those of my neighbors.

What becomes of authors by profession in such a state of things literary as this, I shudder to think; I feel it almost a sin to add one more to the long list of competitors with whom they have to struggle; but still, if I do not now set down the story which I have in my mind, I am certain that, sooner or later, my nephew will do so for me, and very likely spoil it in the telling. He writes in a snappy, jerky, pyrotechnic way, which they tell me is now popular, but which is not suited to my old-fashioned taste; and although he dare not make, at present, what he calls "copy" of the stories with which I am perhaps too much accustomed to regale his ears, he keeps a note-book, and a new terror is added to Death from that circumstance. When I am gone, he will publish my best things, under some such title as "After-Dinner Tales," I feel certain; and they will appear at the railway book-stalls in a yellow cover bordered with red, or with even a frontispiece displaying a counterfeit and libellous presentment of his departed relative in the very act of narration. The gem of that collec-

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

tion would undoubtedly be the story which I am now about to anticipate the young gentleman by relating myself. If I am somewhat old-world in my style, perhaps it may be forgiven me, in consideration of the reality of the circumstances narrated, and the very strong interest which I do not doubt they will arouse.

It is not necessary to state the exact locality where they occurred, nor the number of years which have elapsed since their occurrence; it is enough to premise that what I tell is true, and that some of the principal personages in the—well, the melodrama, if you will—are yet alive, and will peruse these words before they meet the public eye. If nothing therein offends *them*, therefore it need not, upon the score of indiscreet revelation at least, offend my readers.

Digitized by Google

Original from
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

Original from
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

LOST SIR MASSINGBERD.

CHAPTER I.

GIANT DESPAIR.

In a midland county, not as yet scarred by factories, there stands a village called Fairburn, which, at the time I knew it first — many, many years ago—had for its squire, its lord, its despot, one Sir Massingberd Heath. Its rector, at that date, was the Rev. Matthew Long; and at the Rectory, when my story commences, there was in pupilage to the said rector a youth, one Peter Meredith, who has since grown up to be the present writer. When we are small, all things seem vast to our young minds; good men are saints, and evil ones are demons. I loved Mr. Long, therefore, although he was my tutor; and oh, how I feared and hated Sir Massingberd! It was not, however, my boyhood alone that caused me to hold this man as a monster of iniquity; it was the opinion which the whole county entertained of him, more or less. The people of Fairburn trembled before him, as a ship's company before some cruel captain

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

of fifteen years back—I mean, of fifteen years before the period of which I write. Press-gangs had not very long ceased to do their cruel mission; there were old men in our village who had served their time in his Majesty's ships, very much against their will; there were gaps in poor families still, which might or might not be filled up; empty chairs that had so stood for a score of years perhaps, waiting for still expected occupiers; fathers of families, or the props of families, in sons and brothers, had been spirited away from Fairburn (even a little while ago), and had not come back again yet. They had been poachers, or radicals, or sectaries (as Dissenters were then called), or something else distasteful to Sir Massingberd's father, and they had been carried off to sea at his command. Let not my young readers imagine that I am exaggerating matters; I write of a state of things of which they have not the remotest conception, but which I remember perfectly well. They have reason to thank Heaven that they did not live in those times, if they happen to belong to those unprosperous classes which were then termed collectively "the mob;" there were no such things as "skilled workmen," or "respectable artisans," in those days. The "people" were "the Great Unwashed." To build a Crystal Palace for such as they were held to be, would have seemed to be the height of folly; they would have taken no other pleasure in it than to smash every pane with brickbats, for were they not "the dangerous classes"? Such opinions were beginning to die out, indeed; but they were held still by many great people, and Sir Massingberd Heath was one of them. Reared in a clergyman's

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

family, and a clergyman myself, I have been a Conservative in politics all my life, and in that belief I shall die; but rank and power are no excuse with me for evil deeds. In the chamber of my nephew John, who "takes in everything," as the phrase goes, I once discovered a democratic magazine, edited by a gentleman whose surname I forget, but who had a great multitude of initials. All the poor people described in this work were pious and moral, and all the rich people were infidel and profligate; but for the noblemen—and there were a good many persons of high rank in the various stories—were reserved all the choicest invectives and most superlative abuse. Nothing, of course, can be more unfair than this treatment of a class of persons who, considering their temptations, are really more than respectable. As a general rule the portraits were extravagantly malicious, but they had this attraction for me—they were all exceedingly like Sir Massingberd Heath. He was the very type of that bloated aristocracy that is held up in scarecrow fashion by republican writers. There were not many living specimens to be met with even at the date of my tale; and the old baronet, perhaps himself perceiving that he was one of the last of them, determined that he should not be the least in infamy. Like the Unjust Judge, he neither feared God nor regarded man; and, worse than he, he would not perform a good action on account of the importunity of any person. She must have been a brave woman who importuned Sir Massingberd Heath, and could scarcely have been brought up in Fairburn.

Whether George IV. was king or not, at the

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

period of which I write, it matters not, for his connection with our squire had terminated years before; but at one time they had been fast, very fast friends. When a king and a baronet run a race of extravagance the king generally wins; and so it had been in this case. His Majesty, or rather His Royal Highness the Regent, had *distanced* Sir Massingberd and they were not now even upon speaking terms. Friendships of this sort do not last when one of the parties has spent all his money. What was the use of a poor man at White's, who could only look on while his old friends played whist for one hundred pound points, and five hundred pounds upon the rubber? What business, let alone pleasure could one have in London, when Howard and Gibbs would not lend one fifty pounds even at fifty per cent.? Sir Massingberd had left that gay, wicked world for good, that is to say for ever, and was obliged to live at his beautiful country-seat in spite of himself. He was irretrievably ruined, so far as his court prospects were concerned, for he had no ready money. He owned all Fairburn, and many hundreds of rich acres about it, beside the Park and the river; he had the great tithes of the place, and manorial rights (which he exercised, too) innumerable. Nobody quite knew —he did not know himself—what privileges he had or had not, what pathways he could close at pleasure, what heriots he could demand, or what precise property he had in Fairburn gravel-pits, but in all cases he gave himself the benefit of the doubt. It was a very foolish thing to leave any disputed point to the sense of justice, or the good feeling of our squire, and yet this was generally done. Where it

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

was not done, where some honest fellow had ventured to oppose his high prerogative, even though he gained his end, he was always, as the village people said, "paid out" for it. I don't mean to say Sir Massingberd murdered him—although he would have done that, I am confident, without the slightest scruple, if it could have been effected with safety to himself—but he took his revenge of him, sooner or later, in a very simple way. He caught his children trespassing—having caused them to be enticed upon his land—and committed them to prison; or he broke down his fences, and spoiled his corn in the night; for he had dependents devoted to his wicked will, and upon whose false witness he could always rely.

And yet, with all this power, the baronet, as I have said, was a poor man; he had borrowed all the money he could, and was even said to have overreached the London Jews in these transactions; and it was all gone—absolutely all. It was seldom that this great lord of acres had a ten-pound note in his pocket, for his house and land were all entailed upon his nephew Marmaduke, and he had only a life-interest in anything. Poverty perhaps made him bitterer and more savage than he would otherwise have been; but, for my part, I cannot imagine him to have been agreeable under any circumstances. I have heard, however, that at Carleton House he was once the first favorite—after Brummel—and that, of course, made him sought after by many people. He had a wicked wit, which was doubtless acceptable in some circles, and his tongue, it may be, was not quite so coarse in those days of prosperity. He took a delight in his old age in retailing his infamous experiences, before women,

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

if possible, and if not, before clergymen or boys. I remember to have heard of Mr. Long once venturing to reprove his squire upon an occasion of this very kind. The rector had been dining at the Hall—an exceptional occurrence, and under exceptional circumstances—when, after dinner, the host began one of his disgraceful reminiscences, whereupon my tutor rose and said, "Sir Massingberd, you should be ashamed, to talk of such matters to me; but before this boy, it is infamous. I thank you for your hospitality; but I shall go home."

"Very well; go, and be hanged!" replied the baronet; "and Marmaduke and I will make a jolly night of it."

Marmaduke Heath was Mr. Long's pupil as well as myself, and he resided with his uncle at the Hall. He would very much rather have retired with his tutor on that occasion, and indeed have resided at the Rectory, for he dreaded his relative beyond measure. All the pretended frankness with which the old man sometimes treated the boy was unable to hide the hate with which Sir Massingberd really regarded him; but for this heir-presumptive to the entail, this milk-and-water lad of seventeen, the baronet might raise money to any extent, nay, sell all Fairburn, if he chose, and so might once more take his rightful station in the world, rejoin the Four-in-hand Club, and demand his "revenge" from my Lord Thanet at écarté. He could still drink, for the cellars of Fairburn Hall were well-nigh inexhaustible; but if that chit of a lad was but carried-off, he might have the best in the land to drink with him. It is true that a ruined man in Sir Massingberd's position can still afford a good table; game is

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

plentiful with him, and fish, and he grows his own mutton and venison, so that neither himself nor his friends need starve; but servants must be maintained to wait upon these, and a great country-house without a carriage, is as a lobster without a claw. Consequently, except in the shooting season, there were no guests at Fairburn Hall. The folks that did come were men of a certain stamp, current indeed in good society, but only in that of males. A real lady had not set foot in the Park, far less the house, for the last twelve years, the manner in which Sir Massingberd lived forbade such a thing. A few bachelors of the County Hunt, and half a dozen roués from town, were all the company that could be enticed to Fairburn in September and October. All the rest of the year the grass grew in the avenue untouched by wheel or hoof, and even sprang up among the stone steps that led to the front door. Somehow or other I never saw it thus without thinking of the parable of the Sower and the Seed, with some distant and uncharitable reference to our squire! I wonder whether it was possible that in any far-back time any good seed of any sort had found its way into the crannies of his stony heart, and if so, what had become of it. I used to try and picture that violent wicked man as a child in his cot, or saying his prayers at his mother's knee. I believe she had died soon after her marriage; and that, short as her wedded life had been, it was a very unhappy one.

Fairburn Hall had never been a house for tender, honest women. The Heaths, who are celebrated, like another noble race of the same sort, for their hard hearts and excellent digestions, had never been good

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

husbands. Fortunately, daughters were rare in the family. How Sir Massingberd would have brought up a daughter, I shudder to think. One son had been the sole offspring vouchsafed to the baronets of this line for many generations, except the last; and in the present case, there was no such direct heir. Some said Sir Massingberd had married secretly, but was separated from his wife, and some said he had not; but it seemed somehow certain that with him the immediate successor from father to son would cease. His brother Gilbert had married young in Italy, and had died in that country within the same year. His widow had brought his posthumous child when a few months old to the Hall, at the invitation of Sir Massingberd, and had remained there for some time. The villagers still spoke of the dark foreign lady as being the most beautiful creature they had ever beheld; the Park keepers used to come upon her in solitary glades, singing sweetly, but ah! so sorrowfully, to her child in a tongue that they did not understand. The baronet himself was absent, not yet cast out of the court whirlpool, and the lonely vastness of the place was not displeasing to the young widow, wishing, perhaps, to be left undisturbed with her grief; but after Sir Massingberd came down, she remained but a very few days. It was said that she fled with her babe in a winter's night, and that her little footprints were traced in the snow to the cross-roads where the mail went by, by which she had arrived. She was not rich, and had come down in a manner quite different from that of her brother-in-law, who, broken and ruined though he was, had posted with four horses. That was how

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

all gentlefolks of the county travelled in those days. Even the very barristers on circuit indulged, and were obliged to do so, in a chaise and a pair. The mother of Marmaduke Heath, however, who was heir-presumptive to the largest landed property in Midshire, was very poor. Whether the late baronet had omitted to make a proper provision for his younger son, or whether Gilbert had made away with it after the usual manner of the Heaths, I do not know; but his widow and child betook themselves into Devonshire — selected, perhaps, from its climate approaching nearer than any other part of England to that of her native land—and there lived in a very humble fashion. How Marmaduke ever got into his uncle's hands, I never could clearly understand. His mother had died suddenly, whereupon the family lawyer, Mr. Clint of Russell Square, who had the entire management of the Heath property, had in the first instance taken possession of the lad; but Sir Massingberd had claimed his right to be the guardian of his nephew, and it could not be disallowed.

Such were mainly the circumstances, I believe. But all sorts of stories were in circulation concerning "Giant Despair," as the savage old baronet was called, and his nephew, the general opinion agreeing only upon one point — that no sane person would change places with Master Marmaduke Heath at Doubting Castle, notwithstanding the greatness of his expectations.

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

CHAPTER II.

MY FIRST INTERVIEW.

My own history has little or nothing to do with the present narrative, and therefore I will not allude to it except where it is absolutely necessary. Suffice it to say that my parents were in India, and that for many years Fairburn Rectory was my home. I had no vacations, in the sense that the word is generally understood to mean; I had nowhere else to go to, nor did I wish to go anywhere. No father could have been kinder, or have done his duty better by me, than did Mr. Long. How poor Marmaduke used to envy me my wardship to that good man! I well remember the first day I came to Fairburn. It was early summer, its great woods were in all their glory, and to me, fresh from shipboard and the vast waste of sea, the place seemed a bower of bliss. First, the grey old church tower upon the hill; and then the turrets of the Hall, half-hidden in oak; and last, the low-roofed, blossom-entangled cottage where I found so bright a welcome—that was the order in which Fairburn was introduced to visitors in town. The Church, and the Hall, and the Rectory, all lay together; the churchyard, dark with yews, encroached upon the Rectory garden; and that bright spot, so trimly kept that one was moved to pick up a fallen leaf, if such were on its lawn, sloped down into the heart of the Park. A light iron railing, with wires to prevent the hares and rabbits from entering in and nibbling the flowers, alone divided the great man's

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

land from Mr. Long's trim demesne. The deer came up, and pushed their velvet horns against it. In copse and fern, twinkled the innumerable ear and tail. I had never seen such animals before, and they delighted me hugely. After dinner, on the very day that I arrived, I fed them through the rails, and they ate the bread from my open hand.

"They take you for Marmaduke," said Mr. Long, smilingly; "for otherwise, they would be shy of a stranger."

"And who is Marmaduke, sir?"

"He is your fellow pupil, and I make no doubt will be your friend. I wish that he was resident with me, like yourself; but his uncle, who lives at the Hall yonder, will not part with him. He reads with me morning and afternoon, however."

"Does he like reading, sir?" inquired I with hesitation, for I for my part did not. My education, such as it was, had been fitful, incomplete, and in a word, Indian; and I had come back much older than most European boys have to come home, a sad dunce.

"Yes, Marmaduke is very fond of reading," pursued my tutor; "that is, reading of a certain sort. He always does his work well with me, so I must not be hard on him, but he is certainly too fond of novels. And yonder he comes, see, with a book in his hand even as he walks." My tutor pointed to the Park; and there, coming slowly down a long, broad "ride," with his eyes fixed upon a volume he held in his hand, was a youth of seventeen years old or so, which was about my own age. As he came nearer, I began to see why the deer had mistaken me for him; not indeed, because he was very handsome (which was

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

not at all the case with me), but inasmuch as his complexion was as olive as my own.

"Why, he has been to India too!" whispered I to my tutor, rather disappointed than otherwise, for I had had enough of Indian playmates, and to spare.

"No," returned he in the same low voice; "his mother was an Italian."

Then he introduced us, and I began to hang my head, and play with the buttons of my waistcoat as is the graceful manner of hobbledehoys upon such a ceremony; but Marmaduke, completely self-possessed, asked about my journey, and particularly what I had seen at sea. He knew so much about sharks and porpoises that I thought he must have made some long voyage himself, but he told me that such was not the case.

"Though I should like to go to sea of all things," said he; "and I would cruise about that cape—what's its name?—until I met with the 'Flying Dutchman,' that is the vessel which I wish to see."

"I have never heard of her," said I, proud of that nautical use of the feminine. "Is she one of the Company's ships?"

At this my tutor began to rub his hands and chuckle inwardly, as was his wont when vastly amused; but perceiving that the color came into my cheeks, he laid his hand upon my shoulder kindly, and said that he was glad to find *my* head, at least, was not stuck full of foolish stories, as some people's heads were; while Marmaduke, without triumphing in the least over my ignorance, explained to me all about that Phantom Ship which glides full sail upon

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

the astonished voyager, and passes through his vessel without shock or noise. He told the tale exactly as if he had heard it straight from the lips of an eye-witness, and believed it himself; he never laughed, and if he smiled he seemed to be sorry that he had done so directly afterwards. Some melancholy thought appeared to occupy his mind at all times; and if a bright fancy crossed it, it was but for an instant, like lightning through the cloud. I am not describing an "interesting" youth, after the manner of romance-writers; no "secret sorrow" obscured the young existence of Marmaduke Heath, but simply, as I subsequently discovered, vulgar, abject terror. His whole being was oppressed by reason of one man. The shadow of Sir Massingberd cast itself over him alike when he went out from his hated presence and when he was about to return to it. He was never free from its nightmare influence—never. His passion for reading was not so much a love of books, as a desire to escape in them from the circumstances of his actual life. If he ever forgot him in earnest talk—and he was the most earnest talker, as a boy, I ever knew—the mention of his uncle's name was a Medusa's Head to turn him into stony silence on the instant. If Marmaduke Heath could only have got away from Fairburn Hall when I first knew him, his mind might have regained its natural vigor and elasticity; but as it was, it grew more sombre and morbid every day. His hungry intellect was nourished upon what associations happened to be at hand, and they were very unhealthy food. The wickedness of Sir Massingberd was, of course, sufficiently present to him, like some hateful picture hung at a bed's foot,

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

which the eyes of a sleepless man cannot avoid; while every tongue about the Hall was ready to tell him of the evil deeds of his forefathers. At first, I thought my young friend's constant allusion to his family was the result of aristocratic pride, although, indeed, there was nothing to be proud of in what he told me, but very much the reverse; but I soon found that this was not the case. The history of the Heaths was what interested him most of all histories, and he favored me with extracts from it solely upon that account. As for the fact of their noble blood running in his own veins, he would, I am confident, have far rather been the son of Mrs. Myrtle, the kind old housekeeper at the Rectory.

"We are a doomed race, Peter," he once said to me, not long after we had made friendship with one another. "Generation after generation of us have sinned and sinned. The Corsicans have their family feuds transmitted to them, but they are hostile only to their fellow men; the Heaths have ever fought against Heaven itself. Each successor to the title seems to have said, like the descendants of Tubal Cain—

'We will not hear, we will not know,
The God that was our father's foe.'

There is the Church," said he, pointing to that glorious pile, which, at Fairburn, was almost a cathedral in magnitude and beauty, "and there is the Hall. They are antagonistic; they are devoted to opposite purposes. I tell you, yes; our family residence is consecrated to the devil."

I am afraid I could not help laughing at this singular notion.

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

"Nay," cried he, looking round him furtively, "but you shall see that it is so." We were in the Rectory garden, which communicated with the churchyard by a wicket. He led the way into it; and in a distant corner, upon the north side of the chancel, he showed me a sombre burying place, separated from the rest of the God's acre, and imprisoned in dark purgatorial rails. "Do you know why we are all put there," asked he, "instead of with the other—Christian—folks?"

"You are too proud to lie with the poor, perhaps," returned I, who had still that idea in my mind with regard to Marmaduke himself.

"No," said he; "it is not that, it is because the Heaths will not be buried in consecrated ground."

"But you have a family vault underneath the chancel, have you not?"

"Yes; but it is not 'snug lying.' None of us have been put there since old Sir Hugh, in Queen Anne's time. When they opened the vault for him, they found his father's coffin with its plate to the ground. It had turned over. The witty parson would have it that it was only natural that it should have done so, since its tenant during life had fought alternately for Parliament and King, and was addicted to changing sides. But when Sir Hugh's successor demanded lodging in the place in his turn, they found Sir Hugh's coffin had turned over likewise. The circumstance so terrified the dead man's heir—who had not been on the best terms with him during life, and perhaps thought he owed him some amends—that he swore his father should not lie in such restless company; and as the late baronet had been at feud with the then rector, he determined to dispense with any assis-

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

tance from the church at all, and buried him in an adjoining field, which was subsequently made the last resting-place of all our race, as you perceive. The burial service is dispensed with, of course. It would be mere mockery to address such words as Hope and Faith to the corpse of a Heath of Fairburn."

"My dear Marmaduke," said I, "you make my very blood run cold. But surely you exaggerate these things. Some of your people have been Catholics, and been buried in their own chapel at the Hall, have they not?"

"Only one of them," replied the boy with bitterness. "My great-grandfather, Sir Nicholas, abjured his infidelity and became a Papist, in order to secure his bride. He turned the chapel into a banqueting hall, however, and used the sacramental plate in his unholy revels; but after death the priests got hold of him at last, and 'Nick the Younger,' as he was called, now lies under the altar which he so often profaned. The beginning of his funeral ceremonies was not conducted so decently as the last rites. He had got outlawed, I believe, or at all events was driven abroad in his latter days, and died there. Nobody at Fairburn had heard of him for many months, when one October night, as Oliver Bradford, who is now the head-keeper, but was then a very young man, was watching in the home-preserves, he heard a terrible noise in the high-road, and making his way out, came upon this spectacle. Two men in black, and upon black horses, rode by him at full speed, and close behind them came a hearse and four, likewise at the gallop. The plumes upon it waved backwards, he says, like corn, and all the black trappings of the

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

thing fluttered and flapped as it went by. Another man on horseback, singing to himself a drunken song, closed this horrid procession. It moved up towards the village, and Oliver listened to it until the noise seemed to cease about opposite to the Park gates. The solitary witness, frightened enough before, was now doubly terrified; for he made sure that what he had seen was the news of Sir Nicholas's decease, brought over in this ghastly and characteristic fashion. He did not for a single moment imagine that it was a palpable vision, and yet he had seen a veritable funeral pass by. The old baronet had died in France, leaving directions, and the money to carry them out, that his corpse should be taken at night, and at full gallop, through every town that lay between Dover and Fairburn. Alive or dead," added Marmaduke grimly, "the Heaths are a charming family."

"At all events, my dear fellow," said I, laying my hand on his arm, "you will have nothing to fear from comparison with your forefathers, you may make a good reputation, at a cheap price.* A very little virtue will go a great way with the next tenant of Fairburn Hall, if half the tales we hear be true."

"And what tales are those?" inquired a deep, low voice at my very elbow.

* I am told by an able friend, who is good enough to revise for me this manuscript, that it is not likely that a mere boy, as I then was would have made such an observation as the above. I do not doubt that this remark is altogether just; but I am afraid it will apply to so much else in this narrative, that it is scarcely worth while to make, an alteration. I am not used to literary composition; I cannot weigh whether this or that is characteristic of a speaker. I am merely a garrulous person, who has, however, such a striking story to tell, that I trust the matter will atone for the manner.

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

I believe I jumped a foot or two in the air myself, so great was my alarm. But as for my companion, if those grass-grown tombs which we were contemplating had given up their wicked skeletons before his eyes, he could not have exhibited a greater excess of terror.

Beside me stood a man of Herculean proportions, who, by his dress, might have been taken for an under-gamekeeper, but for a very massive gold chain which hung from the top button-hole of his waistcoat down to its deep-flapped pocket. What is now, I believe, called an "Albert guard," resembles it on a smaller scale; but at the time I speak of, such an ornament was altogether unique. His face, too, evidently belonged to one who was used to command. On the forehead was a curious indented curve like the letter U, while his lips curled contemptuously upwards also, in somewhat the same shape. The two together gave him a weird, and, indeed, a demoniacal look, which his white beard, although long and flowing, had not enough of dignity to do away with. I had never heard Sir Massingberd's personal appearance described; but even if I had not had before me his shrinking nephew, I should have recognized at once the features of Giant Despair.

"And what tales are those which are told against the present tenant of Fairburn Hall?" reiterated the baronet, scanning me from head to foot with his cold, glittering eyes. "And who is this young gentleman who comes to listen to them from the lips of my loving ward?"

"Sir," said I, "your nephew was saying nothing whatever against you, I do assure you. I was merely

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

referring to the gossip of the village, which, indeed, does not make you out to be entirely a saint." I was angry at having been frightened by this man, who, after all, could not hurt *me*. I had been accustomed, too, to Indian life; which, without making one bolder than other people, indisposes one to submit to dictation, which is only the duty of the natives.

Sir Massingberd reached forth one iron finger, and rocked me with it to and fro, though I stood as firm as I could. "Take care, young gentleman, take care," said he; "that spirit of yours will not do down at Fairburn. Mr. Long does not seem to have taught you humility, I think. Marmaduke, go home." He spoke these last words exactly as a man speaks to his dog who has injudiciously followed him to church on Sunday, in the hope that he was bent on partridge shooting.

The boy instantly obeyed. He shrank away, passing as closely to the churchyard railing as he could, as though he almost feared a blow from his uncle.

"There is humility, there is docility!" sneered the baronet, looking after him. "And if I had *you* up at the Hall, my young bantam, for four and twenty hours or so, I'd make you docile too." He strode away with a laugh like the creaking of an iron hinge for he saw that I did not dare to answer him. He strode away over the humble graves, setting his foot deep into their daisied mounds as though in scorn; and his laugh echoed again and again from the sepulchral walls, for it was joy to Sir Massingberd Heath to know that he was feared.

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

CHAPTER III.

THE DREAM BY THE BROOK.

ALTHOUGH my story must needs be sombre wherever it has to do with that person whose name it bears, yet I hope there will be found some sunny spots in it. During the first few months after my arrival at Fairburn, there was nothing to sadden life there that I knew of. I passed my days under green leaves, and not only in a metaphorical sense; for every fine afternoon, immediately after study was over, I betook myself to the Park. The whole place was watched as zealously, even in summer, as the gardens of the Hesperides, but Mr. Long had obtained permission for me to roam at large therein. To me, vexed from childhood by Indian suns, Fairburn Chase—as that part of the demesne most remote from the Hall was called—was far more delightful than it could have been to any mere English boy. Its stately avenues of oaks, tapering into infinite distance, with their checker work of beam and shade, was the realization of my dreams of forest beauty. Nor was its delicious coolness marred by the broad strips of sunlight, at long but equal distances, like the golden stairs of the Angels' Ladder; for those, I knew, marked the interlacing of "the Rides," themselves as fair, and leading, not as the avenue did, to the outer world, but into secret bowers known only to the deer and me.

When Marmaduke was not with me, which often enough happened, poor fellow, and particularly after that unfortunate meeting with his uncle in the church-

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

yard—the whole Chase seemed abandoned to myself. I dare say it was not really so, and that if I had not been a privileged person I should soon have found out my mistake, but for days and days I never saw any human being there. Now and then the figure of a gamekeeper, dwarfed by distance, would make its appearance for a moment, to be lost the next in some leafy glade. But the sense of solitude was thereby rather increased than otherwise, just as the poet tells us in a case where the ear and not the eye was concerned, "the busy woodpecker *made stiller* by his sound the inviolable quietness." Lying couched in fern, in that lordly pleasure-place, I have myself entertained some poetic thoughts, although they never found expression. Even now, as I shut my eyes, I make an inward picture of some such resting-place; nothing to be seen but the long green feathery stems which the summer air just stirs about my brow, and the broad branches of the oak that stretch themselves motionless between me and the sun; nothing to be heard but the coo of the ring-dove, and the swift stealthy bite of the dappled deer. Nor did Fairburn Chase lack water to complete its beauty. In front of the Hall itself moved a broad slow stream, which presently slid rather than fell down ledges of mossy stone into a wilderness of trees and shrubs, through which it wandered on like one who has lost his way, but singing blithely nevertheless. Another stream, which was my favorite, burst spring-like from the very heart of the Chase, having been artificially conveyed beneath the avenue, and ran quite a little river, and at a great rate, to form the island where the herons lived; after which, as though it

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

had done its work, it went its way tranquilly enough. If it had nothing to boast of but the heronry it might have been a proud little brook, for never did colony of those solemn birds take their sad pleasure in a more lovely spot; but besides it had a certain bend in it—essential to the beauty of a brook as straightness is to that of a tree—which I have never seen rivalled elsewhere. Its right bank rose there, though not abruptly, and left half its bed of brown sand and loose tinkling shingle bare to the sunlight, save so much of it as the shade of a cluster of lime trees could cover. Here the bee and the bird brought their songs, and the dragon-flies the glory of their turquoise armor and glittering wings throughout the summer noons. The cool fragrant smell of the limes, and the drowsy music of the insects that haunted them, were inexpressibly pleasant to me, who, I am afraid, had not a little of the Asiatic indolence in my nature. Sometimes a group of swans sailed by on the unruffled stream, themselves a slumbrous pageant fit enough to herald sleep; but at all events, swans or no swans, I often did sleep there. One July afternoon, in particular, when the heat was almost as intense as at Calcutta, and no punkahs to cool one, I went to this place with malice prepense to lie there and do nothing, which, from my youth up, has always been synonymous with a *siesta*. I cannot do absolutely nothing, and yet keep awake. I very much admire the people whom I often meet in railway carriages, who endure, without books or newspapers, hundreds of miles of weary travel, and who do it with their eyes open. I wonder they do not break out into a melody, or at least a whistle. They cannot possibly be thinking

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

all that time, and indeed they have no appearance of employing themselves in that way, but "stare right on with calm eternal eyes," with no more speculation in them than those of the Sphinx herself. I envy, but I cannot imitate those happy persons. There is no such state of coma with me; I either wake or sleep.

I lay, then, beneath the limes by the brook in Fairburn Chase, half-buried in the soft brown sand; and even while I looked upon the glancing stream, with the grand old willow opposite, that bent its hoary honors half-way o'er, the scene dissolved and changed; the brook became a river, and the willow a palm-tree, and the Chase a sandy tract, and the fir-clump on the distant hill the snow-capped Himalaya. I saw, too—and alas! I was never more to see them, except, as then, in dreams — my father and my mother: but they passed by me with pitiful, loving looks, and went their way. Then the ayah, the black nurse who was watching over me—for I was once more a child—stole down to the river-brink, and drew a fluted dagger from her bosom, and dipped it in the sacred flood, and I felt that I was to die. I knew her well; we two had loved one another as nurse and child do love, where the nurse perforce takes half the mother's part; as the child grows up, his affection, at the best, congeals to gratitude; but not so with the breast that suckled him—God forgive us men; and the pain of my dream was sharpest because it was my own dear ayah who was about to slay me. I had offended Vishnu, or else she would not have done it; her gods demanded my life of her; but she was sorry; I felt her cold lips upon my brow, and then a large round tear fell upon my

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

cheek like icy hail, and I awoke. There was a tumult of sounds in the air; the birds, and the bees, and the bubbling wave, silent while I had slept, seemed to have burst out together in chorus at my waking. I was bewildered, and knew not where I was. My dream was more distinct at first than the realities about me. If I had but closed my eyes again, I knew that it would be continued at the spot where it had left off, that the fluted dagger would have drunk my life-blood; and therefore I made an effort to rouse myself. Woudrous are dreams, and wondrous the border-land 'twixt life and sleep! If my existence had depended upon it, I could not, for some seconds, have told for certain whether I was in England or in India. Then reason began to re-assume her sway, and the vague mysterious powers, of whom we shall one day perhaps have a more certain knowledge, withdrew reluctant from their usurped dominion over me. I remembered, however, most distinctly, every incident that they had brought about, and I placed my hand mechanically upon my left cheek—I had been lying upon my right—upon which the tear had seemed to fall. Great Heaven, *it was still wet!* I was really startled. The cloudless sky forbade the idea of a drop of rain having fallen; I had shed no tear myself while dreaming, for my eyes were dry, and even if I had, it could scarcely have dropped as it did, making a cool round spot in the centre of the cheek—it would have slid down and left a little frigid line: there were no stones for the stream to splash against and thus besprinkle me.

It was very odd. Still, I did not imagine for a moment that my poor black nurse had really come

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

across the seas to drop the tributary tear upon her sleeping boy; moreover, she could scarcely have got away so suddenly without leaving some trace of her departure, some —— My heart all of a sudden ceased to beat; a shiver ran through me, as runs from stem to stern through a doomed ship that comes end on at speed upon a sunken rock; my eyes had fallen—while I thus reasoned with myself—upon a sight to terrify an older man than I, after such a dream, *the print of a woman's bare feet in the sand.* Had there been any footprints—those of a keeper or watcher, for instance—I should have been startled to know that some one had passed by while I slumbered, for most certainly the sand had been untrodden up to the moment I had lost consciousness; but that a woman with naked feet had been really present while I dreamed that horrible dream, was something more than startling. In Scotland such a circumstance would have been less remarkable, but in Fairburn I had not yet seen any person without shoes. There were a considerable number of footprints, but only of one individual: she had stood beside me for some time, for they were deeper close to the place where I had lain, and there was also one impression there which looked as though the mysterious visitor had knelt. They had come and returned the same way, which was not the one that I had come myself, and they began and ended at the streamside a few yards beyond, and out of sight of the bend which was my favorite haunt. The woman had doubtless crossed and recrossed by means of some natural stepping-stones that showed their heads above water; there was no path on the other side, but only a tangled

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

thicket, through which it would have been impossible to track her, even had I been so disposed, which I was not. To say truth, I was terribly discomposed. For a minute or two I clung to the notion that the footprints were my own, made, perhaps, under the influence of somnambulism. I took off my shoes, and measured the tracks with my own feet, but I found, boy as I was, that mine effaced them. They were certainly the marks of a woman; smaller than those of a grown male, yet firmer set than those of a child. Never since the days of Robinson Crusoe was ever man so panic-struck by footprints in the sand as I. Although it was broad daylight, and the air was alive with sounds, I fairly trembled. The many evil stories which, during my short stay at Fairburn, I had already heard of the old Hall, a corner of which I could discern from where I stood, crowded in upon my brain! the whole demesne seemed under a malign influence—enchanted ground. I turned from the spot, whose lonely beauty had once so won my soul, with fear and loathing; and as I turned, there rang out—it may have been from the thicket, across the stream, but the echoes took it up so suddenly, that it seemed to ring all around me — a laugh so terrible, so demoniacally mocking, that I could scarcely believe it came from mortal throat. Again and again it rose, and circled about, as though it would have headed my fleeing steps, and driven me back upon some dreadful Thing, while I fled through the fern towards home at my topmost speed, and the white-tailed rabbits scampered to left and right, less frightened than I.

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUMB WITNESS.

A SENTIMENT of shame prevented my mentioning the affair of the footprints to my tutor; and as for Marmaduke, although we were by this time very intimate, I would not have furnished him with a new occasion for detesting Fairburn Chase upon any account. Not only, however, was my favorite haunt by the brook become an object of aversion to me, but I confess I took much less delight in any part of the Heath demesne. I kept my eyes about me, even in the great avenue, and upon the whole preferred the rector's little garden, if at any time I had a mind for sleeping out of doors.

"Meredith," observed Mr. Long to me one morning—he called me "Peter" generally, but when he had anything serious to say it was "Meredith"—"it appears to me you don't take nearly so much exercise as you used to do. Your appetite is failing. I am really concerned about you."

"Thank you, sir, I am pretty well."

"Nonsense, Peter, no boy should be 'pretty well;' he should be in the rudest, vulgarest health, or else he is in a bad way. Your good father advised me that if you seemed the least to need it, I should get you a nag. It is Crittenden Fair next week. What say you to my buying you a horse?"

"Thank you, sir, that is just what I should like," cried I. "I am certainly getting tired of walking about alone." And then I began to blush a little, for

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

of late rather than go into the Chase I had been accompanying my tutor in his favorite diversion of fishing, which I cared nothing about, or else in his parochial expeditions.

"Don't be afraid to speak out, my boy," said Mr. Long, with a kind smile, "you will not hurt my feelings. You and I are very good friends, but you want somebody of your own age to be your companion. Isn't that it? And very natural too. No young gentleman, except in story-books, enjoys the society of his tutors. Even Sandford and Merton got a little tired of good Mr. Barlow, I fancy, he was so desperately full of information. You want a fellow who can shy stones and climb trees."

"No, sir, indeed I don't," said I, a little indignantly; for I was getting too old, I flattered myself, for any boyish escapades of that sort. "But I do wish that Marmaduke was allowed to come out with me a little more. Would not Sir Massingberd let him have a horse also?"

Mr. Long shook his head, and was silent for a little; then, as if in continuation of his thought, he added, "And yet, I don't know, we'll go over to the Hall and see about it this very morning."

"*I*, sir?" inquired I, in astonishment; for I had never set foot in Doubting Castle, or seen it from any nearer spot than the Heronry.

"Did I say 'we?'" said Mr. Long, reflectively. "I didn't mean to do so, but I really see no reason why you shouldn't come. You would wait a considerable time, if you waited for an invitation from Sir Massingberd, but—— Tush, if poor Marmaduke lives there, and yet remains a good boy, half an

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

hour's visit will not be the ruin of the lad." The latter part of this remark was uttered aloud, although intended to be strictly private, which was not an uncommon occurrence with my worthy tutor, and I have noticed the same peculiarity in other persons of studious habits. He led the way into the road at once, pursuing which, under the park wall, we presently came upon a little door, which my tutor opened with a private key. This admitted us into the wall-garden, or, as it was sometimes called, from the quantities of that fruit which it contained, the peach-garden. An enormous area was here entirely given up to the cultivation of fruits; in the centre were strawberry-beds, gooseberries, melon-beds, the glasses of which dazzled you to behold; and raspberries upon trellis-work, on so extensive a scale that it looked like a maze. The northern end was occupied by an enormous green-house, which, in those days was rather a rare adjunct, even to a rich man's garden. But the most surprising sight was that of the walls covered with spread-eagled fruit-trees, or, as school-boys then called them, "Lawk-a-daisies," laden with the most exquisite dainties — peaches, nectarines, apricots, and bloomy plums. A number of men were busily employed about this teeming scene.

"Why do they say Sir Massingberd is poor?" inquired I. "Is not all this his?"

"Yes; it is all his."

"Well, but what valuable fruit, and what enormous quantities of it! Why, he would make a large income, even if he was to sell it."

"He does sell it," replied my tutor, smiling.

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

"Nineteen out of twenty of all these peaches will find their way to Covent Garden. Why, how could he eat them, you foolish boy? Even if he gave them away to all Fairburn, he would introduce the cholera."

"A baronet and a market-gardener!" exclaimed I. "Well, that seems very odd."

Mr. Long did not choose to inform me at that time that almost all the income Sir Massingberd had was drawn from this source, and from the selling of game, with which his great preserves were overflowing. The staff of gardeners and of keepers was retained mainly upon this account. In the interest of Marmaduke, Mr. Clint, the family lawyer, did, I believe, contribute a certain annual sum for keeping up the gardens and the Chase; but this was by private arrangement, and at his own risk and responsibility. Thus it was that while some parts of the Fairburn demesne were as admirably maintained as possible, others were suffered to fall into decay. Just as we emerged from the wall-garden, for instance, there was a small artificial hollow planted with trees, and within it, peering above ground, a thatched roof covered with moss and mildew, and with great gaps and holes in it. This was the ice-house—in these Wenham Lake and Refrigerator days an almost obsolete building, but in the time I write of considered a necessary appendage to every country seat. Next we entered an arcade of immense length, which the noonday rays would have striven in vain to penetrate, but for the spaces where the trellis-work had given way through age and neglect, and the ivy trailed down from rusted nails and obstructed the way. Seats were placed in niches at unequal intervals upon one side of this arcade; but

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

they looked very unattractive, damp, worm-eaten, cracked, and here and there with a slug upon them, making slimy paths. Yet from one of these alcoves there started up, while we were still a long way off, a female figure, and stood for a moment looking at us in great surprise. Above her happened to be one of those broken portions of the leafy roof, and through it the sunlight poured right down in a golden flood, as a glory sometimes does in ancient pictures. A tall, dark woman, who must have been exquisitely beautiful in her youth, and even now retained considerable attractions; her eyes were large and lustrous, and her hair—never even in India had I seen hair more dark, or so luxuriant. It was not rolled tight at the back in a great pillow, as was then the fashion, or, indeed, confined in any way, but streamed down over her shoulders, and far below that place where it was the pleasure of our ancestresses to consider that their waists occurred. She cast upon us at first a glance haughty and almost defiant, but upon recognizing my companion, quenched her fiery looks.

"Stop here, my lad," whispered Mr. Long, laying his hand firmly upon my shoulder; "wait till she has gone away."

The woman saw the gesture, although she could not have heard the words. "I shall not bite the boy, Mr. Long," cried she, with a shrill laugh; "however, I will make myself scarce." She took a few rapid steps to an opening on the right of the arcade, which led to the lawn and flower-garden, and was lost to us in a moment.

"I did not know there were any ladies at the Hall," said I.

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

My tutor did not answer, but walked on muttering to himself as if annoyed. I did not repeat the remark, for I was wondering within myself whether it could be this woman who had watched my sleep and knelt by me, dagger in hand, according to my dream. She looked just the sort of female to drive such an instrument home, if she entertained that fancy — a Judith, equal to the slaying of any Holofernes, and far more of a slight-built, overgrown Indian lad like me. There was certainly something uncanny about her, and I thought it very strange that Marmaduke had never spoken to me of her existence.

The arcade brought us out into a sunk garden, which was a rosary, on to which opened the tall windows of a noble-looking room. The walls, I could see, were lined with books, and on the numerous tables lay portfolios and volumes that gave promise of great store of plates. This was the library where Marmaduke had told me he passed his only happy hours at Fairburn. His uncle rarely so much as entered it, although he was not without some reputation for learning. In particular, it was said that he was well acquainted with divinity, and could quote chapter and verse of the Bible against the parson. I have since had reason to believe, that his talents in this way were greatly exaggerated. What he had ever read he doubtless recollected, if his memory served him as well in literary matters as when he had a grudge to pay; but I cannot think that he ever studied divinity. If he had any knowledge of the Bible at all it doubtless astonished all who knew him, and they made the most of it.

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

A few steps further brought us to the north face of the mansion, in which was the principal entrance. Notwithstanding the broad sweep in front of the steps, and the avenue branching right and left, there did not seem space enough as contrasted with the vast mass of trees. The scene was like a clearing in a forest, where the openings are artificial, and the wood comes by nature rather than the converse, and even in that September day the air struck chill. The griffins that guarded the great stone steps had lost, the one an ear, and the other a wing, and the steps themselves were chipped and cracked. The grass which grew there unchecked at other seasons had, however, been scraped out, because Sir Massingberd's guests were expected immediately for the shooting. None of them, however, had as yet arrived. The great bell which answered our summons clanged through the place, as though there had been neither furniture nor people within it. The vast door was opened long before its echoes ceased, and indeed with marvellous quickness. When the man saw who we were, he looked vexed at having put himself in a flurry without necessity. He thought, doubtless, it was his master, who demanded admittance, and had come post haste from the pantry, it being very dangerous to keep the baronet waiting. We were ushered into the great hall, and left there while the man went to seek Sir Massingberd. This huge apartment was evidently used as a sitting-room. There were couches and comfortable chairs in profusion, and a fine aroma of tobacco pervaded everything. The walls were ornamented with antlers and the heads of foxes; a number of fishing-rods stood in one corner; in an-

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

other, lay some of those clubs that are used for exercising the muscles. On the table was an open pocket-book, stuck full of gorgeous artificial flies. Presently, the man reappeared. Sir Massingberd would see us in his private sitting-room. We walked over polished oak, on which I could with difficulty keep my footing, down a long passage hung with grim portraits of the Heath family "all dead and judged," as Marmaduke subsequently informed me, until we came to a short flight of steps on the left hand. These we descended, and following the footsteps of our conductor in almost perfect darkness came upon double doors, the inner of which, a baize one, admitted us into the presence of the proprietor. The baronet was in his shirt-sleeves, cleaning a double-barrelled gun.

"This is my pupil, Peter Meredith," said Mr. Long.

"*I* know the young gentleman," replied Sir Massingberd, curtly, and the horse-shoe upon his brow contracted as he spoke. "What makes you bring him here?"

"Well, Sir Massingberd," observed my tutor, forcing a laugh, "that is scarcely a hospitable observation. I bring this friend of your nephew's because what I have to propose concerns them both. It is good for these boys to be together, not to live solitary lives; and to keep them mewed up at home, as they are now, is a positive cruelty. Marmaduke is getting thinner and paler every day; and Meredith———"

"Do *you really* think so, parson?" asked the baronet, eagerly, omitting for a moment to use the dirty-looking piece of oiled flannel which had previously monopolized his attention.

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

"I do, indeed, Sir Massingberd. I believe that if a doctor was to give his opinion about that boy——"

"The Heaths never send for doctors, or for clergymen," interrupted the baronet, with a sneer.

"And yet they have often needed advice, both spiritual and temporal," quoth my tutor, stoutly. "I say you should get a horse for your nephew's riding; it need be no trouble to you whatever. I am going over to Crittenden Fair next week myself to purchase one for my pupil; now, let me get one for your nephew also."

At first Sir Massingberd's countenance expressed nothing but angry impatience, but presently he began to rub the gun-barrel less and less violently. "And who is to find the money?" inquired he.

"I think that can be managed, Sir Massingberd. Mr. Clint will doubtless listen to such an application on behalf of Marmaduke; he will risk advancing a few pounds——"

"For thirty-five guineas one can get a very good pony," observed the baronet, reflectively.

"Or even for less," returned Mr. Long, drily; and then, to my excessive terror, he added in quite as loud a key, "He wants to keep the difference; that's his plan."

"And he means to do it, too," observed Sir Massingberd, grimly. "No, you needn't apologize, parson, for your thinking aloud; you don't suppose I am going to do anything without being paid for it, do you? Then there's the keep of the animal. Now, what will Mr. Clint allow me for that, do you suppose? Oats and beans are very expensive, and you wouldn't have me feed my dear nephew's pony upon hay!"

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Sir Massingberd was a formidable object at all times, but I really think he inspired more fear when he was pleased—when some wicked notion tickled him—than even when he was in wrath.

"I think, Sir Massingberd, the question of expense can be managed to your satisfaction," said my tutor, not a little overwhelmed by having thus involuntarily expressed his suspicion of the baronet; "and, as I have said, I will save you all trouble by selecting the horse myself."

"Certainly not, sir," exclaimed Sir Massingberd, savagely; "I suffer no man to choose my horses for me."

"Very good," replied Mr. Long, biting his lip. "I have only to stipulate, then, that if your nephew gets the horse, he is to ride it. I shall have to make myself answerable for that much to Mr. Clint."

"Oh, he shall ride it," quoth the baronet, with a horrid imprecation; "you may take your oath of that. And, by the by, since you are here, parson, I want to have some talk with you about that same fellow Clint, who has been behaving devilish ill to me, I think. You may go away young gentleman, *you* may. You'll find your future riding companion — he has about as much notion of riding as old Grimjaw yonder — sulking in his own room, I dare say. Grimjaw, show the young gentleman up to Marmaduke's room."

At these words a dog of horrible aspect came out from under the very sofa on which I sat, and trotted off towards the door. He was the oldest and ugliest dog I ever beheld. He had only one eye, which was green; he had no teeth, and was therefore not to be feared as a combatant; but his aspect was loathsome

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

and repulsive to the last degree. The people of Fairburn imagined this animal to be Sir Massingberd's familiar demon, and, until of late years, when the creature had become incapacitated by age from accompanying him much, the two were scarcely ever seen apart. Old as he was, however, the hideous Grimjaw had some instinct left, which, after the word "Marmaduke" had been once more shrieked at him, caused him painfully to precede me up the oak staircase, and along another gallery to a chamber door, at which he sat and whined. This was immediately opened by his young master, who, with a "Come in. Grim," was only giving sufficient space for the entrance of the dog, when I cried out, laughing: "What, have you no welcome for your friend? Like uncle, like nephew! What a pair of curmudgeons inhabit Fairburn Hall!"

The astonishment of Marmaduke at hearing my voice was excessive. Notwithstanding his pleasure, his first thought, as usual, was: "Did Sir Massingberd know?"

"Yes," said I coolly; "of course he knows. He received me down-stairs with his usual politeness. Mr. Long and he are conversing upon some private matters, so I came up here to see you. It is arranged that each of us is to have a horse, and that we are to go out riding together."

"A horse! Oh, impossible!" exclaimed Marmaduke, clapping his hands. "How did the good parson ever persuade my uncle? What *did* he give him?"

I could not help laughing at this naïve inquiry, which my friend had made in perfect seriousness.

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

I told him all that had occurred, including our tutor's *vivâ-voce* soliloquy, at which Marmaduke cried "Heavens!" in terror.

"It is marvellous, notwithstanding, that my uncle should have consented," observed my companion, musing. "He told me, indeed, that I should be a great nuisance in the house this month, while his friends were down here shooting; but that he should have entered into an arrangement which gives me pleasure as well as gets rid of me, that seems so very strange."

"He has doubtless some base motive," returned I, smiling; "let us console ourselves with that reflection. But what have we here? Water-color paintings! Why have you never told me you were an artist?"

"I merely amuse myself with the paint-brush. I have had no lessons, of course, so that my perspective is quite Chinese."

"Nay, but I recognize almost all these scenes!"

"Well, you know, I have been nowhere else but at Fairburn, so that it is from thence I must take my subjects. The one you have there is taken from the bend in the stream beyond the Heronry."

"It is admirable," said I; and indeed it was so like the scene of my dream, that it gave me a shudder.

"Would you like to have it," replied Marmaduke, carelessly. "You may take any that the portfolio contains. I only wish they were more worth your acceptance."

"Thank you," said I, nervously, "I will certainly take this one, then;" and I rolled the sketch tightly

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

up, and placed it in my pocket. "But here is a pretty face! Why, Master Marmaduke, you have your secrets, I see; you have never mentioned to me this young lady. What beautiful hair! The eyes, too, how glorious, and yet how tender! It is surely not the lady whom we just met in the ar——"

"Silence, sir!" cried Marmaduke, in a voice of thunder. His face was lurid with rage, and for the first time I remarked upon his forehead a faint reflection of the horse-shoe that made so terrible the brow of his uncle. "Do not speak of that wretched woman in the same breath with, with——" He did not complete the sentence, but added in his usual soft musical tones: "Pardon me, my friend; I am sorry to have been so hasty; but that picture is the portrait of my mother."

"It was stupid in me not to have known that at once," said I. "The likeness is most remarkable."

"But not the expression," returned he, sadly, "I know that just now I looked like one of my own race. She was always an angel, even when she was upon earth." And the boy looked up with his hands clasped, as though he beheld her, through his tears, in heaven.

"Did you paint that from a picture, Marmaduke?"

"No, from memory. Sleeping or waking, I often see her sweet face."

I had evidently raised by my thoughtlessness a long train of melancholy thoughts in my companion. The situation was embarrassing, and I did not know how to escape from it. As often happens with well-intentioned but blundering persons, I made the most

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

inopportune remark that could be framed. Forgetting what I had heard of the infamous treatment which Mrs. Heath had received while under her brother-in-law's roof, I observed: "Your mother was once at Fairburn, was she not? That should at least make the Hall more endurable to you."

Again Marmaduke's handsome face was disfigured with concentrated passion. "Yes, she was here," returned he, speaking through his teeth. "For what she suffered alone, the place would be cursed. Coward, scoundrel! Why does God suffer such men to live?" It was terrible to see how like this young lad grew to the man he was execrating. He went on using such language as I could not have conceived him capable of employing.

"Marmaduke," said I, soothingly, "for Heaven's sake, be calm. Providence will one day reward this man; it is not for you to curse him. Come, now that I pay you a visit for the first time, you should play the host, and show me over the mansion. Why, that queer old dog seems to understand what one says; he rises as though he were the châtelain, and kept the keys of Doubting Castle. He brought me here as true as a blind man's cur. I cannot say, however, that he is beautiful; he is hideous, weird."

"It would be strange, indeed, if he were like other dogs," returned Marmaduke, gravely. "He is the sole living repository of a most frightful secret. If he could but speak, he could perhaps send a man to the gallows."

"What man?" exclaimed I. "Pray explain to me this mystery."

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

"I do not know what man," returned my companion, solemnly; "I only conjecture. I will relate to you what is known of the matter, and you shall judge for yourself."

Marmaduke opened the door to see that no one was in the passage without, and then seating himself close beside me, commenced as follows:—"My grandfather and the present baronet, lived on bad terms with one another. For the last ten years of his life Sir Wentworth and his eldest son never met but once, if they met at all. He had been very profligate and extravagant in his young days, but in his old age he grew miserly. When my father saw him last it was in a small house in Bedford Place, in London, where he lived in a couple of ill-furnished rooms, and without a servant. Grimjaw and he slept there alone, but a charwoman came in every morning for a few hours. Sir Wentworth then gave it as his reason for this kind of life that he was retrenching, in order to leave some suitable provision for his second son. 'Look here, Gilbert,' said he upon one occasion to my father, 'I have begun to lay by for you already;' and he showed him a quantity of bank-notes, amounting to several thousand pounds. He had never been an affectionate parent, or exhibited any self-denial for the benefit of his sons, and my father did not believe him. He thanked him, of course; but he came away without any idea that he would be really better off at Sir Wentworth's death. This was fortunate for him, for he never received a farthing; but I am not so certain, as he was, that the baronet did not intend to do what he promised. While the old man was living in this sordid fashion, his son Massingberd was pass-

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

ing his time very gaily at court. He played high, and there were few who could beat him with the cards, but there were some. It is no use being a good player, you see, unless, you are the best; you only win from those whom you can beat, to lose it in your turn to the man who can beat you. Thus it was with my uncle, who played, as I say, high with everybody; but highest, as is often the case, with his superiors in skill. However, he paid his debts of honor with money raised at an enormous sacrifice. He lived well, but it was upon his future prospects. At last, being harder pressed than usual, he wrote to his father—the first letter he had penned to him for years—and demanded pecuniary help.

"Sir Wentworth wrote back a cynical, harsh reply, a copy of which I have seen—for all these details came out in the course of the inquest. He bade his son come to call upon him, and judge from his style of living whether he was in a condition to comply with his request. He appointed a day and an hour—about five o'clock. It was in December, and quite dark, of course, by that time. `At six o'clock on the appointed day Sir Massingberd—for he had got his title by that time, whether he knew it or not—called at the police station near Bedford Place, and gave information that the house which his father occupied was shut up, and that he could not obtain admittance, although he had arrived there by appointment. The house was always shut up, they told him, although not untenanted. They could not explain why his summons had not been answered. A couple of policemen accompanied him to break open the door. While they were thus engaged, a

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

dog howled at them from inside. My uncle had made no mention of having heard this before. There was only one lock to force, the door being neither bolted nor chained, and they soon got in. The only two furnished rooms in the house opened upon the hall. In the sleeping-room they found my grandfather dressed, but lying on the bed quite dead—suffocated, as the surgeons subsequently averred. In the sitting-room with which it communicated, they found this dog here, crouching on the top of the mantel-piece, which was very lofty. How he got there, nobody could tell; if he leaped thither, even from a chair, it must have been in an agony of terror. He was whining pitifully when they entered; but upon seeing my uncle he ceased to whimper, and absolutely seemed to shrink into himself with fear. Poor Grimjaw could give no witness at the inquest, however, so the jury returned an open verdict. It was probable that Sir Wentworth had had a fit of apoplexy, which carried him off."

"Well," remarked I, "and is not that probable enough?"

"Yes; but it could not have carried off the bank-notes — which were all gone — likewise. Could it, Grimjaw?"

Thus appealed to, the ancient dog set up a quavering howl, which might easily have been mistaken for the cry of an accusing spirit.

"Good Heavens! this is too horrible," cried I. "Be careful, Marmaduke, that you do not mention this to others. It is a frightful slander."

"Slander!" returned my companion, calmly. "It is you who slander, if you suspect anybody. I have

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

only told you what everybody knew at the time the mur——well, then, when Sir Wentworth had his fit. The thing strikes you as it does me, that is all."

"But is it not inconceivable," urged I, "if the crime was committed by the person we are thinking of, that he should retain this dumb witness of his atrocity, that he should let it live, far less should keep it in his private sitting-room——"

"No!" interrupted Marmaduke, firmly. "On the contrary, it strengthens my suspicions. You do not know the man as I do. It gives him gratification to subdue even a dog. This creature has no love for my uncle; but its excessive terror of him, which endured for months, nay, years, has gradually worn off. He obeys him now; whereas, as I have been told, it was long before it could do anything but shiver at the sound of his voice. After dinner, when I have been sitting with Sir Massingberd alone, he will sometimes give the dog a biscuit, saying with an awful smile: "Here, Grimjaw; you and I know something that nobody else knows; don't we?"

"Great Heavens!" cried I, in horror; "and what does he do that for?"

"Because," replied Marmaduke, bitterly "he loves to see me tremble."

Digitized by Google

Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

CHAPTER V.

THE STATE BEDROOM.

MARMADUKE had scarcely concluded his narration, when steps were heard in the passage. I daresay I turned pale at the thought of seeing the man of whom I had just heard such frightful things, for my companion observed, as if to reassure me, "It is only Mr. Long."

"Are you quite sure?" said I.

Marmaduke smiled sadly.

"Do you think that I do not know my uncle's step? I should recognize it amongst a score of others. If he overtook me in a crowded street, I should feel that he was coming, and shudder as he passed beside me—— Pray, come in, sir."

"Well," cried my tutor, entering, radiant with his good news, "no more moping at home, my lads; you are to be henceforth cavaliers—you are to scour the country. Boot and saddle! boot and saddle! Your uncle will not trust me to get you a steed, Marmaduke; there are none good enough for you, it seems, at Crittenden; he is going to send to London for an animal worthy of you. But never mind, Peter; you shall have the best mount that can be got in Midshire, and we will pit the country nag against the town."

My tutor's voice revived me like a cordial: after the morbid horrors I had been listening to, his cheery talk was inexpressibly grateful, as the dawn and ordinary sounds of waking life are welcome to one who has suffered from a nightmare.

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

"I was just about to show Meredith the Hall," said Marmaduke.

"Well, it is time that we should be at our work, like good boys," observed Mr. Long, consulting his watch; "but still, for one morning, it does not matter, if you would like to stay, Peter."

"I would rather go home, sir," cried I, with involuntary eagerness. I was sorry the next moment, even before I saw the pained expression of my young companion.

"He has had enough of Fairburn Hall already," said he, bitterly. Then his face softened sadly, as though he would have said: "Am I not, therefore, to be pitied, who pass every day and night under this accursed roof?"

"Come," exclaimed Mr. Long, gaily, "I do not believe, Master Meredith, in this new-born devotion to your books. Let us go over the house first. I will accompany you as cicerone, for I once knew every hole and corner of it—a great deal better, I will venture to affirm, than the heir himself here."

With these words he led the way into the passage.

"Every chamber on this floor is the fac-simile of its neighbor," said Marmaduke: "since you have seen mine, you have seen all—an immense bed, a piece of carpet islanded amid a black sea of oak, a cupboard or two large enough to live in, and shepherdesses, with swains in ruffles, occupying the walls." There was, indeed, no appreciable difference in any of the rooms, except with regard to their aspect.

"When I first came to Fairburn, I slept here," continued Marmaduke, as we entered an apartment

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

looking to the north, "and had that long illness, which you doubtless remember, sir. Heavens, what dreams I have had in this room! I have seen people standing by my bedside at night as clearly as I see you now. They called me delirious, but I believe I was stark mad."

"I remember it well," said Mr. Long, "although I did not recollect that you occupied this room. How was it that you came to change your quarters?"

"Oh, the doctor recommended the removal very strongly. Sir Massingberd said it was all nonsense about the look-out from my window, and that the east was as bad as the north for a baby in a fever; but he was obliged to give way. And I certainly benefited by the change. The park is a much more cheerful sight than that forest of firs, and one is glad to see the sun, even when one cannot get out of doors. At all events, I had no such evil dreams."

"Yet this is what always used to be held the state-chamber," replied my tutor. "Charles I. occupied that bed while he was yet king; and before your ancestor, Sir Hugh, turned Puritan—a part he was very unfitted to play—it is said he used to swear through his nose. Peter the Great, too, is said to have passed a night here. Your dreams, therefore, should have been historical and noteworthy. I forget which of these smiling Phyllises is so complaisant as to make way when you would leave the room without using the door."

Two full-length female portraits were painted in panel, one on either side of the huge chimney-piece; a circlet of roses carved in oak surrounded each by way of frame. Mr. Long advanced towards the one

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

on the right, and touched the bottom rose; it did not move. He went to the other, and did likewise; the rose revolved in his fingers, and presently, with a creak and a groan, the whole picture slid sideways over the wall, disclosing a narrow flight of wooden stairs.

"That is charming," cried I. "That is the 'Mysteries of Udolpho' realized. Where does it lead to, Marmaduke?" There was no answer. Mr. Long and I looked round simultaneously. The lad was ghastly pale. He stared into the dusty, gaping aperture, as though it had been a grave's mouth.

"I do not know," he gasped, with difficulty.

"Not know?" cried my tutor. "Do you mean to say that you have never been told of Jacob's Ladder? The foot of it is in the third bookcase on the left of the library door; the spring is somewhere in the index to 'Josephus.' It is evident you never attempted to take down that interesting work, which in this case is solid wood. The idea of your not knowing that! And yet Sir Massingberd is so reticent that, with the exception of Gilmore, the butler, I dare say nobody *does* know it now. It is twenty years ago since I made Phyllis move aside, to the astonishment of Mr. Clint, who came down here on business with poor Sir Wentworth. I dare say nobody has moved her since."

"Yes, yes," cried Marmaduke passionately; "my uncle has moved her. Those visions were not dreams. I see it all now. He wanted to frighten me to death, or to make me mad. When I knew the door was fast locked, he would come and stand by my bedside, and stare at me. Cruel, cruel coward!"

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

"Hush, hush, Marmaduke; this is monstrous — this is impossible!" cried Mr. Long, endeavoring to pacify the boy,(who was rocking himself to and fro in an agony of distress and rage.) "See how you terrify Peter! Be calm, for Heaven's sake! Your uncle will hear you presently, and you know how he hates to be disturbed."

At the mention of his uncle, Marmaduke subdued his cries by a great effort, but he still sobbed and panted, as if for breath.

"Oh," moaned he, "consider how I came hither from my dead mother's arms to this man's house — my only living relative, my father's brother — and was taken ill here, a mere child; then this wretch, this demon, my host, my —— Oh, Mr. Long, could you conceive it even of a Heath? He came up to my lonely room by that secret way, and stood without speaking by my pillow, while I lay speechless, powerless, imagining myself to be out of my mind."

"I do remember now," said my tutor, gravely, "how you harped upon that theme of your evil dreams, and how the doctor thought you were in reality losing your reason. Let us be thankful, however, that you were preserved from so sad a fate; you are no longer a child now; Sir Massingberd can frighten you no more, even if he had the wish. It was a wicked, hateful act, whatever was the motive. But let us forget it. In a few years you will be of age; then you will leave the Hall; and in the meantime your uncle will annoy you no more. It will be his interest to make a friend of you. Even now, you see, he provides you with the means of enjoyment. You will ride out with your friend

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

whenever you please; and I will take measures so that you shall be more with us at the Rectory, and less at this melancholy place, which is totally unfit for you. Mr. Clint shall be spoken with, if necessary. Yes, yes," added Mr. Long, reversing the rose, and thereby replacing the shepherdess, but quite unaware that he was still speaking aloud, "there must be a limit to the power of such a guardian; the Chancellor shall interfere, and Sir Massingberd be taught——"

"Nay, sir," cried Marmaduke in turn; "for Heaven's sake, let no complaint be made against my uncle upon my account; perhaps, as you say, I may now meet with better treatment. I will be patient. Say nothing of this, I pray you, Meredith, Mr. Long, you know——"

"Yes, I know all," interrupted my tutor, with excitement. "You have a friend in me, Marmaduke, remember, who will stick by you. I have shut my eyes and my ears long enough, and perhaps too long. If things get worse with you, my lad, do not forget that you have a home at the Rectory. Once there, you will not return to this house again. I will give evidence myself;—I will——"

"Thank you, thank you," replied Marmaduke, hurriedly. "All will now be well, doubtless; but my uncle will wonder at your long delay — he will suspect something. I think it will be better if you left."

He led the way down the great staircase, throwing an involuntary glance over his shoulder, as we crossed the mouth of the dark passage leading to the baronet's room. "This is a wretched welcome,

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Meredith; some day, perhaps, I may take your hand at this Hall door under different circumstances. Good-bye, good-bye."

And so we parted, between the two grim griffins.

"Peter," said my tutor gravely, as we went our way, "whatever you may think of what has passed to-day, say nothing. I am not so ignorant of the wrongs of that poor boy as I appear to be; but there is nothing for it but patience."

CHAPTER VI.

HEAD OVER HEELS.

I OBEYED my tutor and my friend in keeping all I knew regarding Sir Massingberd to myself; but the knowledge weighed heavily upon my spirits for several days. Soon, however, my mind recovered its youthful elasticity. I began to think that Marmaduke's morbid disposition had perhaps exaggerated matters; that the baronet was not so black as was painted; that my friend would soon be his own master; and, in short, I laid all that flattering unction to my soul which is so abundant in the case of the misfortunes of others, and so difficult to be procured when the calamity is our own. Moreover, in a few days I was in possession of an excellent horse, and there is nothing more antagonistic to melancholy —especially when it is vicarious—than a good gallop. Nay, more, after a little, Marmaduke had a horse also. He came to call for me, that we should go out

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

for a ride together the first day, and I shall not easily, forget it. How handsome and happy he looked! As if the high-conditioned animal he bestrode had imparted to him some of his own fire and freedom, he wore scarcely any trace of his habitual depression. "This is our 4th of July," said he, gaily; "my day of independence, as the rebels say!"

It happened to be his birthday also, he was seventeen, so that all things conspired to make a gala-day. My tutor, who was a judge of horseflesh, examined the new steed with great attention. "He is superb," said he, "and you sit him, Marmaduke, considering your scanty experience, like a young centaur. No one could imagine that your equestrianism had been heretofore limited to a keeper's pony; and, moreover, Oliver's ponies are not apt to be very high-couraged. But what a tight curb has this Bucephalus! He will not give you much trouble to hold him. So-ho, so-ho, my nag! Are you a hypocrite, then, that you need be so alarmed at being inspected?" The sleek bay plunged and curveted, so that my own sober brown began to dance in rivalry. "By the by," continued Mr. Long, as though a sudden thought had struck him, "I have occasion to visit Mr. Jervis of the farm at Staplehurst some day this week: if it is the same to you, let us go there to-day; it will be an object for your ride, while I shall have the pleasure of your company."

In a few minutes, my tutor's old white mare was brought round to the Rectory door by the gardener, who was groom and butler also, and we set out together at a foot's pace. Mr. Long never took his eyes off the bay, and therefore did not observe Sir

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Massingberd, who, with his huge arms resting on a gate by the roadside, watched us pass with a grim smile. "Well, parson," exclaimed he — and at the sound of his voice I perceived my tutor start in his saddle — "what think you of the little Londoner?"

"I cannot say at present, Sir Massingberd," returned my tutor with deliberation. "He is a beauty to look at; and if he has no vice, is a bargain at five-and-thirty pounds."

"Vice! Why should he have vice, man? A child might ride him for that matter. I got him with the best of characters. But you'll never teach those lads to ride if you are always at their stirrup-leather, like this. Let them ride alone, and race together. Don't treat them like a brace of mollycoddles. Why, at their age, I could have backed any horse in Christendom without a saddle. I wonder you don't give Miss Marmaduke a leading-rein."

The color, which had faded from the lad's cheeks, returned to them again at this sneer; but Mr. Long only remarked: "If you had had a leading-rein yourself, Sir Massingberd, at seventeen, it would have been a great deal better for you," and rode on without the least consciousness, as I believe, of having made any such observation.

When we had advanced about a mile, and had left the village quite behind us, my tutor expressed a wish to change horses with Marmaduke.

"I want to try his paces," said he; and certainly, if he had been a horsebreaker by profession, he could not have taken more pains with the animal. He trotted, he cantered, he galloped; he took him into

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

a field, and over some fences; he forced him by a windmill in full work; and, in short, he left no means untried to test his temper. In the end, he expressed himself highly satisfied. Really," said he, "Sir Massingberd has got you a first-rate steed, with plenty of courage, yet without vice; he makes me quite dissatisfied with my poor old mare."

The next day, and the next, we rode again without my tutor; and on the fourth day it was agreed that we should take an expedition as far as Crittenden, some ten miles away, where Mr. Long wished us to do some commissions for him. By this time, Marmaduke was quite accustomed to his recent acquisition; enjoyed the exercise greatly; and since Sir Massingberd was much engaged with his guests, passed altogether more agreeable days. On the afternoon in question, the Hall party were out shooting, and had taken with them all the stable domestics, except a raw lad who scarcely knew how to saddle a horse.

"I cannot think what is the matter this afternoon with 'Panther'" (we so called his skittish animal), exclaimed Marmaduke, as he rode up to the Rectory door. "I could scarcely get him to start from the yard, and he came here mostly on his hind-legs. Is there anything wrong with his girths, think you? Ned did not know where to lay his hands on anything, and my uncle has taken William with him to 'mark.'"

"Nay," said I, "I see nothing the matter. We will soon take off his superfluous energy over Crittenden Common."

Long, however, before we reached that spot, we

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

had had galloping enough and to spare. Twice had Panther fairly taken the bit between his teeth (as the romance writers term it, and Heaven forbid that a mere sportsman should correct them), and sped along the hard high-road at racing pace; and twice had Marmaduke, by patience and hard pulling, recovered the mastery, albeit with split gloves and blistered hands. It was not enjoyment to ride in this fashion, of course; and had it not been for the commissions which had been entrusted to us, it is probable that we should have returned home. It puzzled us beyond measure, to account for the change of conduct in the bay. The difference was as decided as that between a high-spirited child who requires, as we say, "careful treatment," and a vicious dwarf. Heretofore he had been frisky, now he was positively fiendish. He shied and started, not only at every object on the roadside, but before he arrived at them. At the end of the high-table land, which is called Crittenden Common, and descends into the quiet little market-town of the same name, there really was something to shy at. A gipsy encampment, with fire, and caldron, and tethered donkey, which had been concealed in a hollow, came suddenly into view as we cantered by; an old crone, with a yellow handkerchief in lieu of a bonnet, and shading her beady eyes with her hand, watched with malicious enjoyment the struggle between man and horse, which her own appearance had gone far to excite. In a very few moments Marmaduke's already overtaxed muscles gave way, and the bay, maddened with resistance, and released from all control, rushed at headlong speed down the steep chalk-road that led by many a

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

turn and zigzag into Crittenden. It was frightful to watch from the summit of this tamed precipice—this cliff compelled into a road—the descent of that doomed pair. No mule could be surer footed than was Panther, but the laws of gravitation had nevertheless to be obeyed. At the second turning the bay, after one vain effort to follow the winding of the road, pitched head first down the grassy wall which everywhere separated the zigzags from one another; over and over rolled horse and rider to the hard road below, and there lay, their horrible and abnormal movements exchanged for a stony quiet. I jumped off my horse and ran down the two steep slopes, which at another time I should have descended hand over hand. Yet on my way I had time to think with what sorrow this news would be received at Fairburn Rectory, with what joy at the Hall! Marmaduke's hand still held the rein, which I disentangled from it with feverish haste, lest that four-footed fiend, which snorted yet through its fiery nostrils, and glared defiance from its glazing eyes, should arise and drag the dear lad's corpse among the cruel stones. After what I had seen of his fall, I had scarcely a hope that he was alive. There was blood at his mouth, blood at his ears, blood everywhere upon the white and dazzling road. "Marmaduke, Marmaduke," cried I, "speak, speak, if it be but a single word! Great Heaven, he is dead!"

"Dead! no, not he," answered a hoarse, cracked voice at my ear. "He'll live to do a power of mischief yet to woman and man. The devil would never suffer a Heath of Fairburn to die at his age."

"Woman," cried I, for it was the old gipsy crone,

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

who had somehow transported herself to the spot with incredible speed, "for God's sake go for help! There is a house yonder among those trees."

"And why should I stir a foot," replied she, fiercely, "for the child of a race that has ever treated me and mine as though we were dogs."

"Because," said I, at a venture, "you have children yourself."

"You are right," exclaimed she, clapping her skinny hands together, and seating herself calmly on the turf. "It is well that you have mentioned my kith and kin. One lad is across the seas, and will never see the green lanes and breezy commons of England more; another lies caged in yonder jail, and both for taking the wild creatures of the earth and air to which such men as Massingberd Heath lay claim; while my little sister—ah, my Sinnamenta, my fair pearl!—may the lightning strike him in his wickedest hour! nay, let him perish, inch by inch, within reach of the aid that shall never come, ere the God of the Poor takes him into his hand! Boy, you may talk to that flintstone, and it will rise up and get you help for that lad there—bonny as he is, and the bonnier the worse for them he sets his wilful eyes on—before you get this hand to wag a finger for him."

"Woman," said I, despairingly, "if you hate Massingberd Heath, and want to do him the worst service that lies in your power, flee, flee to that house, and bid them save this boy's life, which alone stands between his beggared uncle and untold riches."

"Is it so?" cried the old woman, rising up with

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

an agility for which no one would have given her credit, and looking at me with furious eyes. "Is it indeed so, boy?"

"Yes, woman, upon my soul!"

Revenge accomplished what pity had failed to work. In an instant, she was with me down by Marmaduke's side; from her pocket she produced a spirit-flask in a leathern case, and applied it to his lips: after a painful attempt to swallow, he succeeded; his eyelids began tremulously to move, and the color to return to his pallid lips.

"Keep his head up," cried she, "and give him another drop of this, if assistance does not arrive within five minutes."

Before she had finished speaking, she had lifted the latch of the gate that opened from the road into the grounds of the house in question, and in another instant I was alone—alone with what I believed to be a dying man, and surrounded with the blood that had flowed in a mingled stream from him and the dead horse, for Panther had ceased to move—alone with recollections and anticipations scarcely less horrible than the visible scene; and yet, so strangely constituted is the human mind, that I could not forbear to glance with some sort of curiosity at the flask the gipsy had left with me, and to wonder exceedingly that its worn and tarnished top of silver bore upon it a fac-simile of one of those identical griffins which guarded each side of the broad stone steps that led to Fairburn Hall.

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE DOVECOT.

After an interval, which doubtless appeared much longer than it really was, there issued from the gate a groom and butler, bearing between them a small sofa, and accompanied by a young and lovely girl. The scene that presented itself was enough to shock persons even of strong nerves, and I hastily exclaimed, "The young lady had better not see this." But she came on nevertheless.

"I am not afraid of blood," said she, "and perhaps I may be of use." Then she directed her servants how to handle the wounded man; and when he was gently lifted on to the couch, she applied a handkerchief dipped in Eau-de-Colonge to his forehead, and walked by his side regulating the pace of his bearers, like some Miss Nightingale of a generation and a half ago. "Let him be placed in your master's room, James: and then take my pony, Thomas, and ride as fast as you can for Dr. Sitwell; and as you come back—but think of nothing but bringing the doctor first—call at the nursery-garden for your master; he said he should go there about those roses." And some other directions she gave, as the men moved on with their ghastly burden, like one who knew the value of time. Notwithstanding this presence of mind, her anxious eyes betrayed that she was not wanting in sensibility, and with every groan which the motion of the litter extracted from the sufferer, her own lip quivered. I dare say that I saw

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

nothing of her exceeding beauty at that dreadful time; but while I write of Lucy Gerard now, a vision of surpassing loveliness perforce presents itself before me. A tall, lithe, graceful form; a face, nay, rather a soft, sad smile overspreading and pervading every feature — a smile that I never saw surpassed save on her own fair countenance after Love had taken her sweet soul captive — a smile the reflex of all good and kindly thoughts that dwelt within. There are some so great and noble that they smile, where other good folks can only weep and wail; the true sympathizer with human griefs wears no lugubrious aspect; the angels smile when they weep over human wretchedness — they know that it is only for a little while, for that the gates of heaven are standing open very, very near; and some such knowledge, or happy faith, seems to influence the best of mortals, or how should they go smiling through this world?

So Marmaduke was carried along the gravel-drive, and across a little flower-studded lawn, to the room in Mr. Gerard's house which was called the master's room, it being half a sleeping-chamber, and half a library, which Lucy's father used both night and day. This was so evident from the appearance of the place, that when I had, with James' help, put Marmaduke to bed there, where he lay breathing heavily, but quite unconscious, I went to the young lady of the house, and expressed my apprehension that my poor friend, being in that apartment, would cause additional inconvenience in the household.

"I understand," said I, "that it is Mr. Gerard's room."

"Ah, sir," said she, with a glance of pride more be-

Digitized by Google Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

coming, if that were possible, than even her ordinary modest look, "you do not know my father. When I say that it will give him the greatest pleasure to find that his favorite room has been of service to your friend, I use a conventional phrase which literally expresses what he will feel. Please to forget that there is anybody in this house but yourselves; it is only right that sickness should be considered before health; though, alas! every room to those who are ill is but an hospital. This little drawing-room, which your glance tells me you think pretty, with its conservatory and fountain, and the rest, my poor young sister was very, very weary of, before she died, on yonder sofa, after fourteen months of the gay prison."

Her voice trembled as she spoke, and I thought I detected in it that shade of bitterness with which some affectionate persons speak of the sufferings of those they love, as though they would almost arraign that Providence for unnecessary harshness, which might inflict any misery upon themselves without evoking one impatient thought.

"Then you are left all alone here, Miss Gerard. With such a sad reminiscence, this spot must——"

"Alone!" interrupted she, with astonishment. "What! when I have my father? See, he is coming through the shrubbery now, and Dr. Sitwell with him. Let us meet them. How glad I am that he has lost no time."

It was easy to distinguish the doctor, with his cane, his ruffles, and stiff professional appearance, a little impaired, however, by hot haste; moreover, his companion indicated him with his finger as we

Digitized by Google
Original from NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY