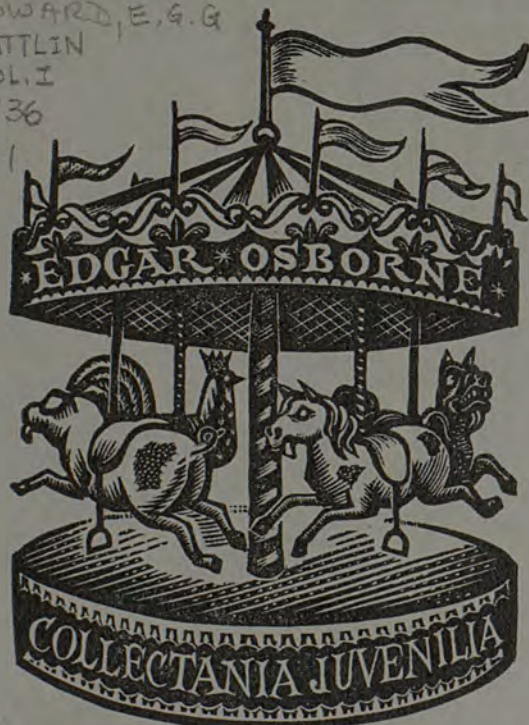


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VOL. I
1836

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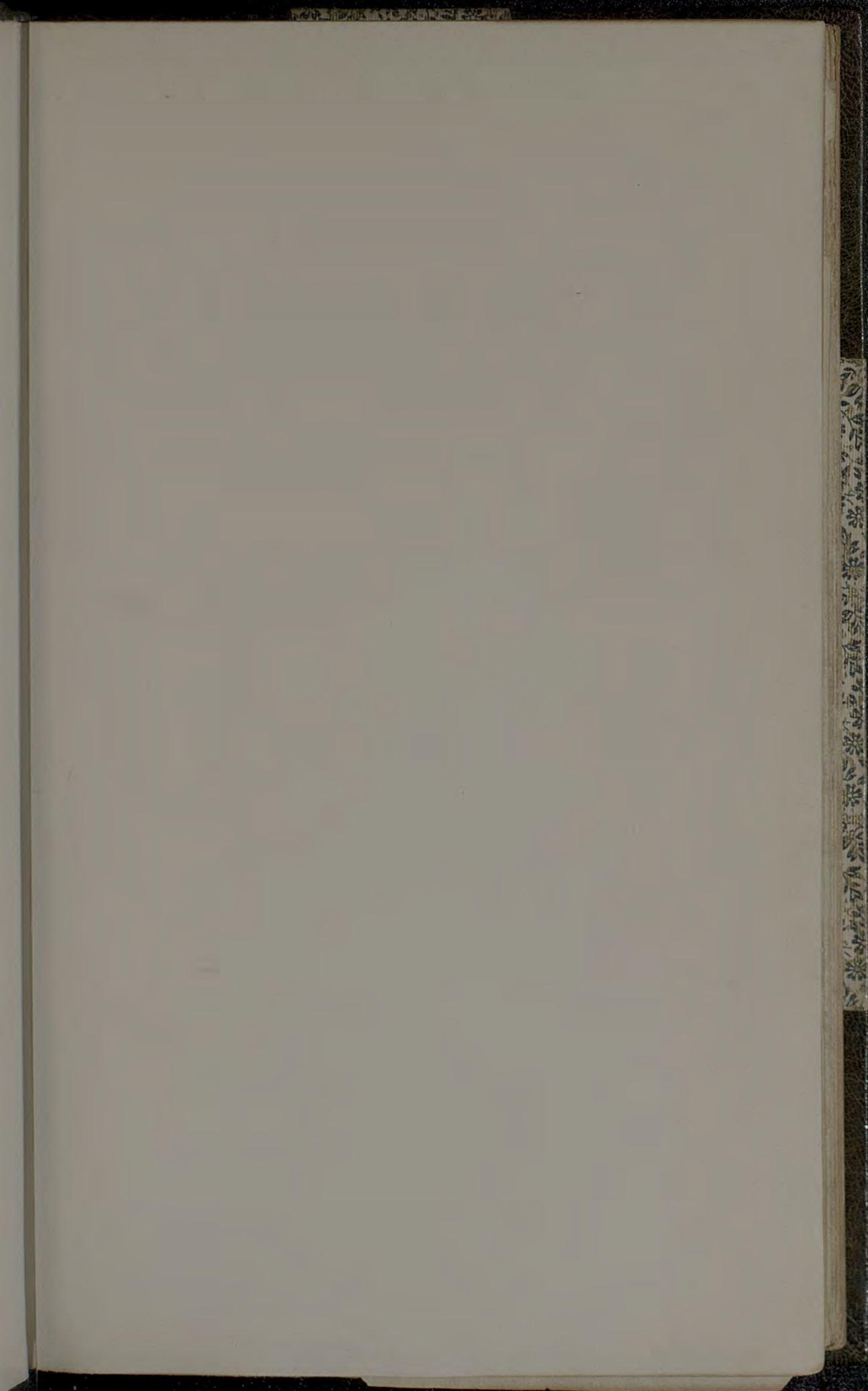


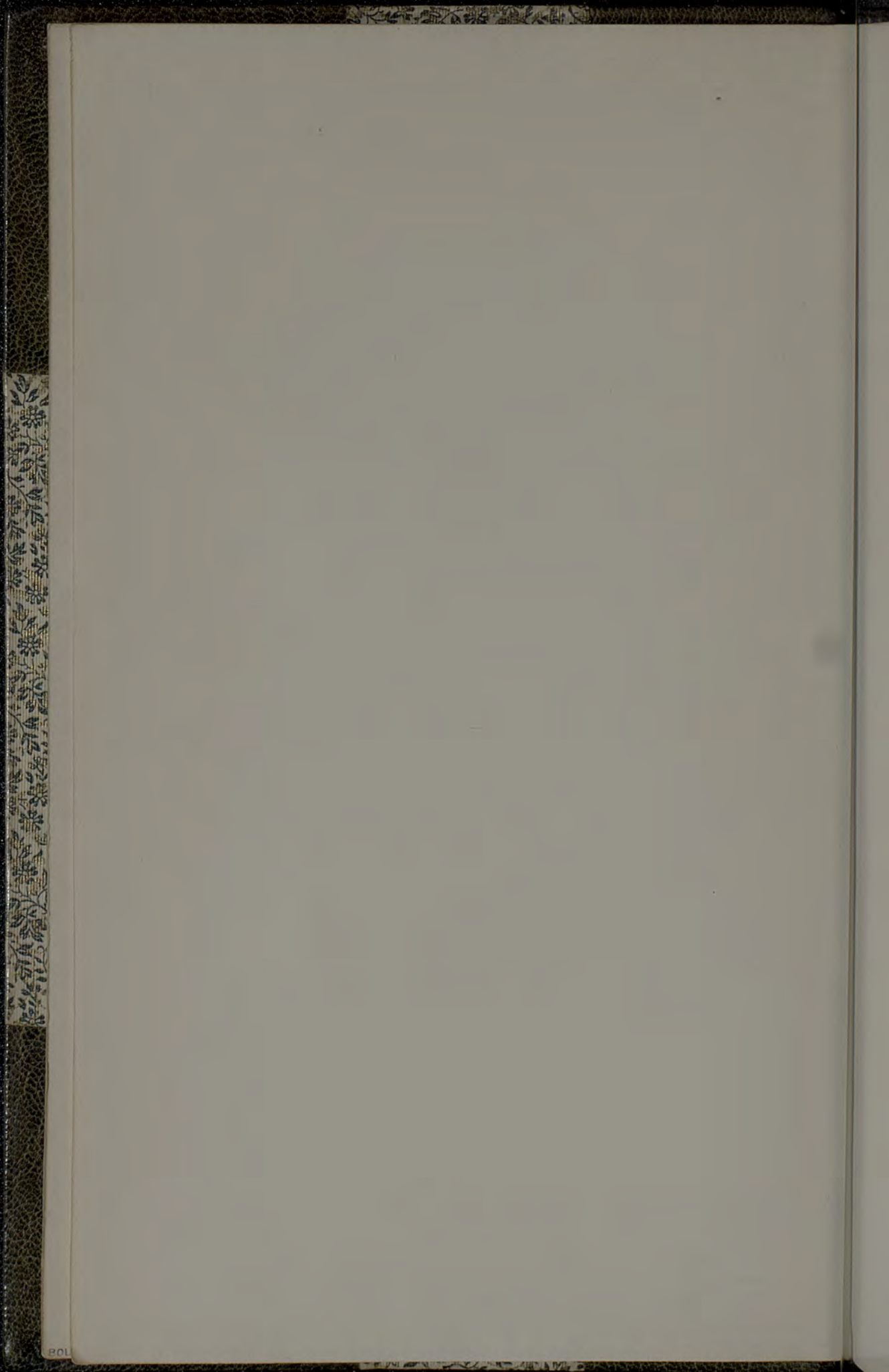
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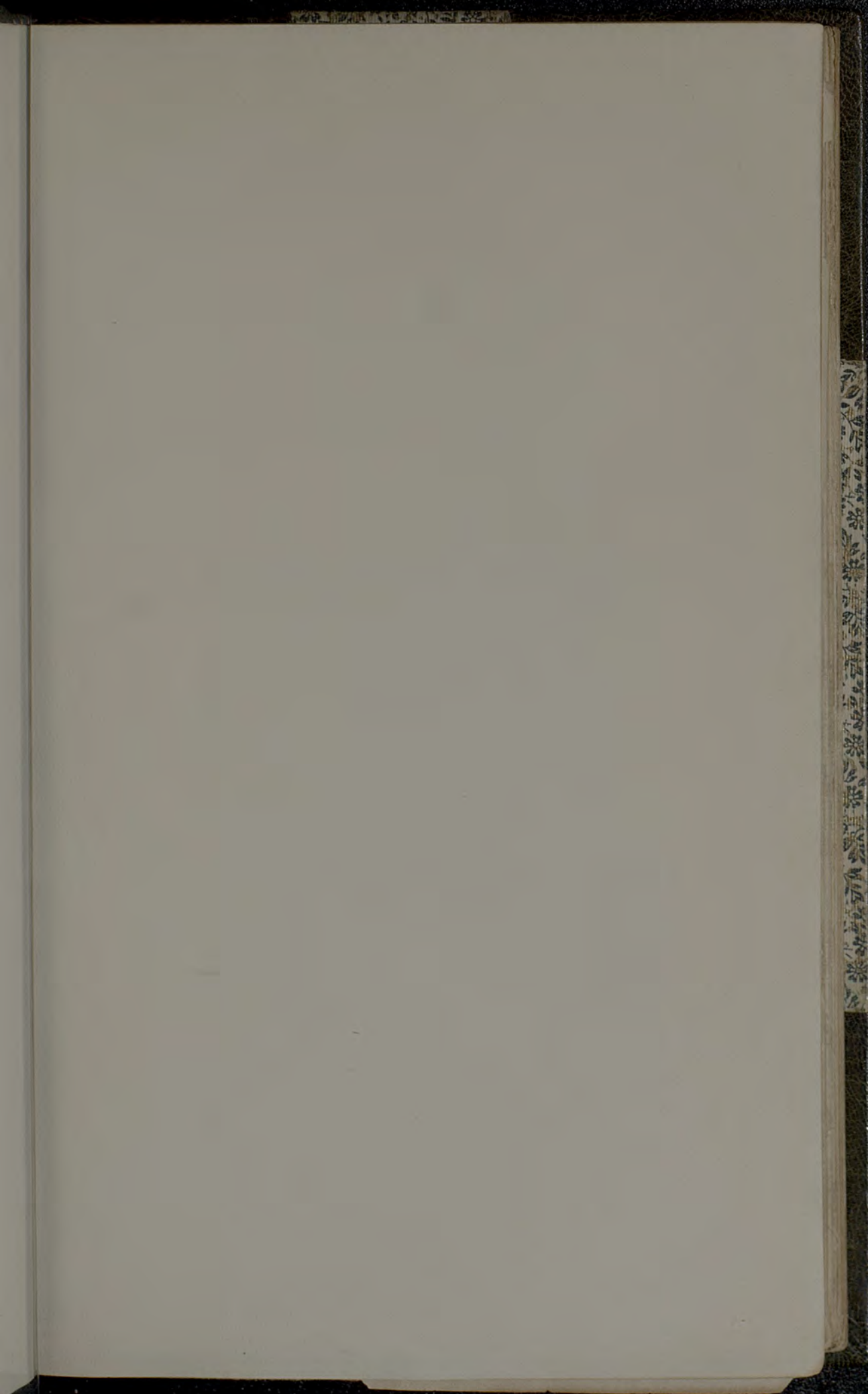
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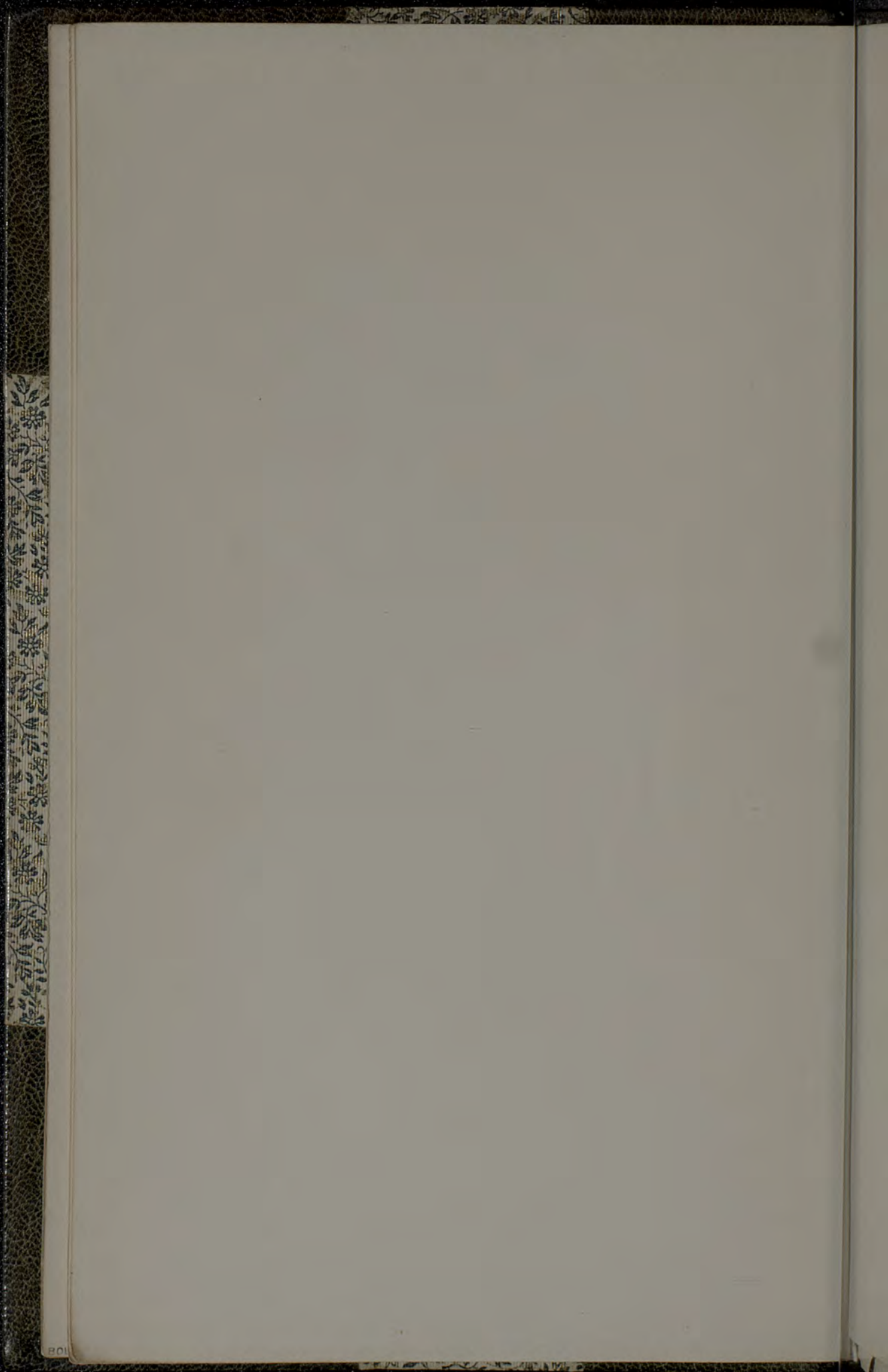
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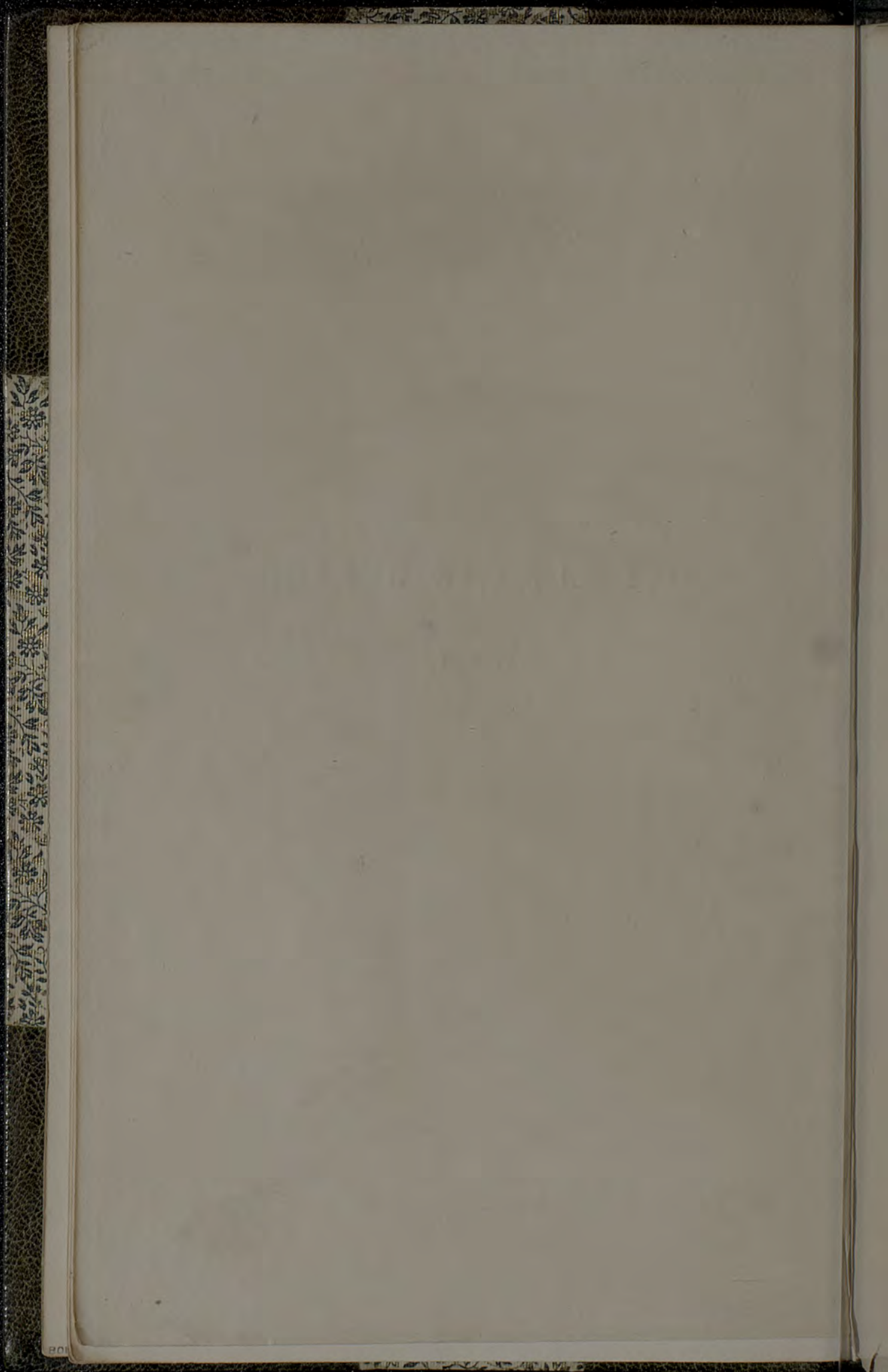


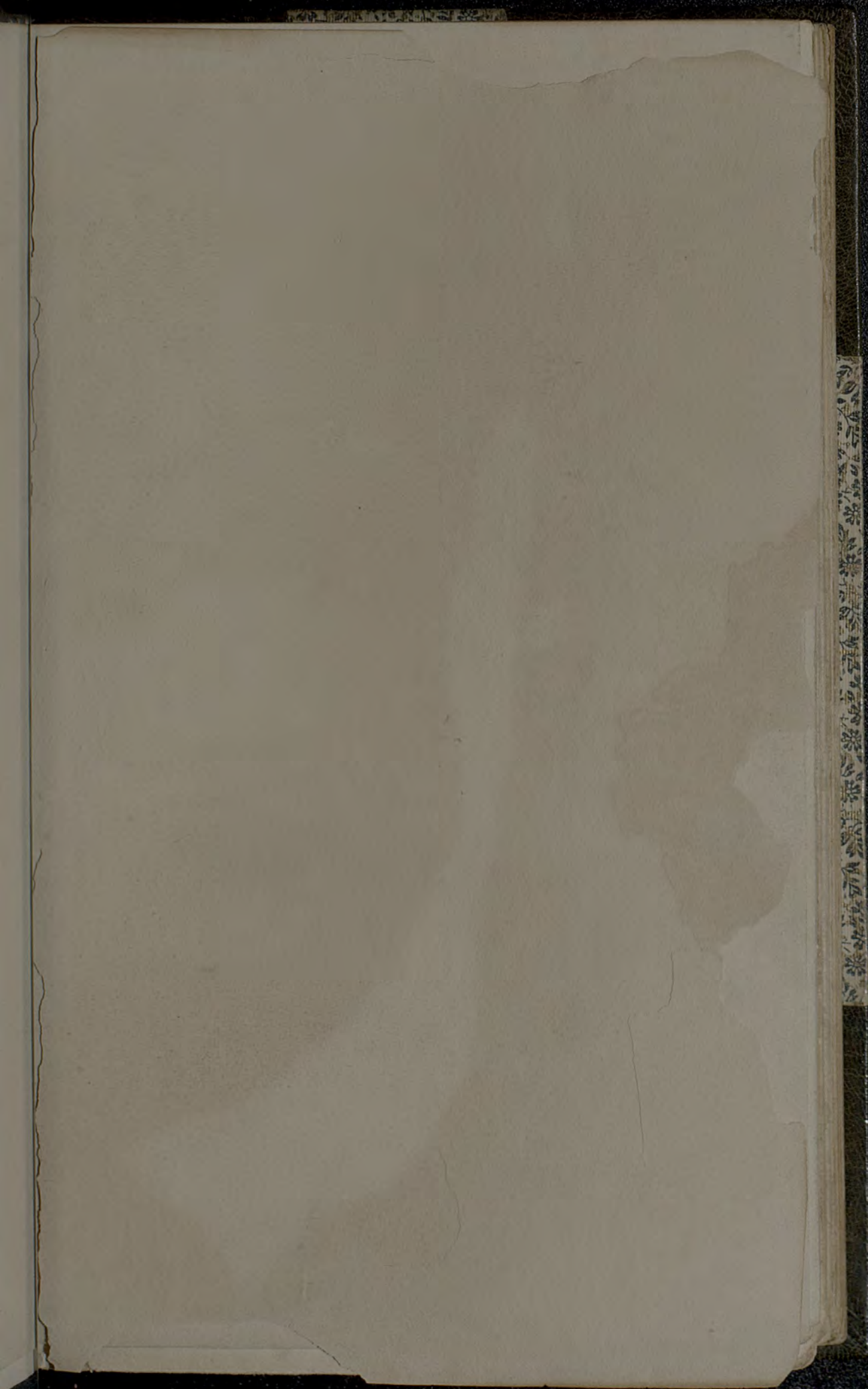




RATTLIN THE REEFER.

VOL. I.







Drawn and Etched by A. Horsman.

RATTLIN,
THE REEFER.

EDITED BY
THE AUTHOR OF "PETER SIMPLE."

"All hands reef topsails—Away, aloft!"

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.
1836.

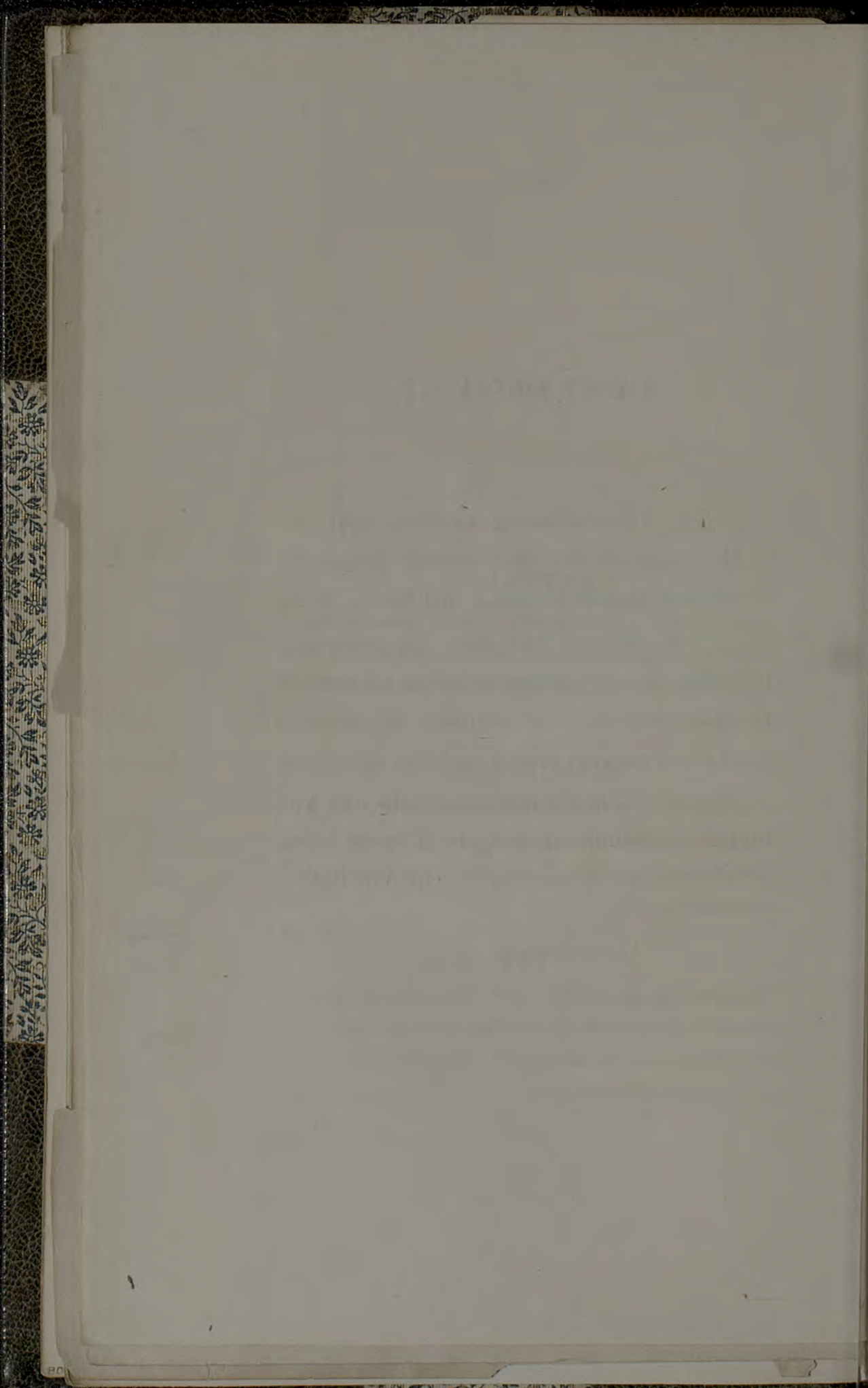
LONDON:
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ADVERTISEMENT.

A portion of the following work has appeared in the pages of the Metropolitan Magazine. It has now been re-arranged, and fiction, in the latter part, blended with fact. In consenting to be the literary sponsor to these volumes, in the shape that they now assume, I am actuated but by one motive; that of enabling the author to appear before the public, and thus to give him an opportunity of being tried by an ordeal by which alone, he must either stand or fall.

F. M

London, May, 1836.



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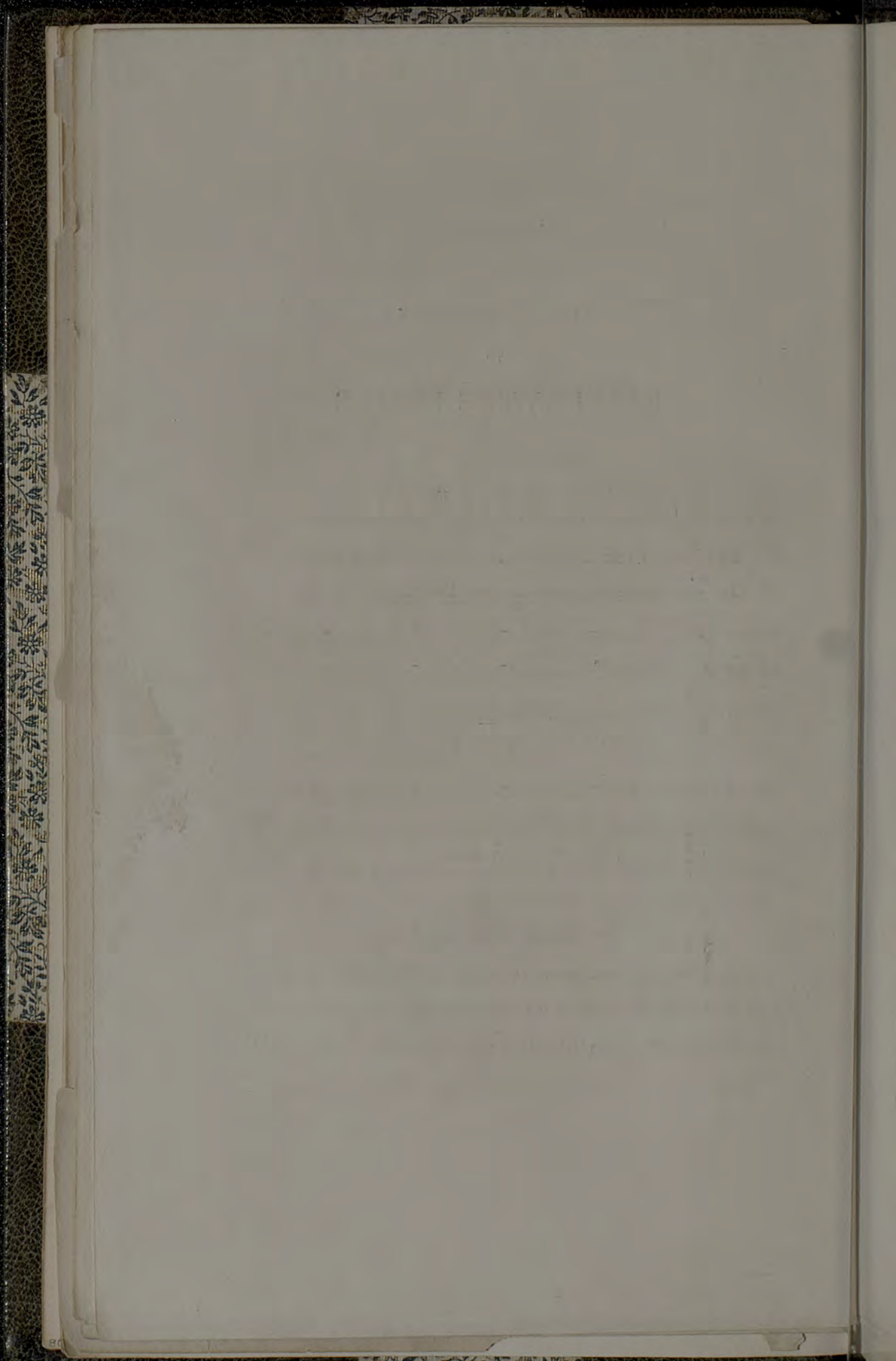
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RATTLIN THE REEFER.

CHAPTER I.

I begin a life without similitude with a simile—Start off with four horses—and finally I make my first appearance on any stage under the protection of the “Crown.”

IN the volumes I am going to write, it is my intention to adhere rigidly to the truth—this will be *bonâ fide* an auto-biography—and, as the public like novelty, an auto-biography without an iota of fiction in the whole of it, will be the greatest novelty yet offered to its fastidiousness. As many of the events which it will be my province to record, are singular and

even startling, I may be permitted to sport a little moral philosophy, drawn from the kennel in Lower Thames Street, which may teach my readers to hesitate ere they condemn as invention mere matters of absolute, though uncommon fact.

Let us stand with that old gentleman under the porch of St. Magnus's church, for the rain is thrashing the streets till they actually look white, and the kennel before us has swelled into a formidable, and hardly fordable brook. That kennel is the stream of life—and a dirty and a weary one it is, if we may judge by the old gentleman's looks. All is hurried into that common sewer, the grave! What bubbles float down it! Every thing that is fairly in the middle of the stream seems to sail with it, steadily and triumphantly—and many a filthy fragment enters the sewer with a pomp and dignity not unlike the funereal obsequies of a great lord. But my business is with that little chip; by some means it has been thrust out of the principal current, and now it is out, see what pranks it is playing. How erratic are its

motions—into what strange holes and corners it is thrust. The same phenomenon will happen in life. Once start a being out of the usual course of existence, and many and strange will be his adventures ere he once more be allowed to regain the common stream, and be permitted to float down, in silent tranquillity, to the grave common to all.

About seven o'clock in the evening of the 20th of February, 17—, a postchaise with four horses drove, with fiery haste, up to the door of the Crown Inn, at Reading. The evening had closed in bitterly. A continuous storm of mingled sleet and rain had driven every being, who had a home, to the shelter it afforded. As the vehicle stopped, with a most consequential jerk, and the steps were flung down with that clatter post-boys will make when they can get four horses before their leathern boxes, the solitary inmate seemed to shrink farther into its dark corner, instead of coming forward eagerly to exchange the comforts of the blazing hearth for the damp confinement of a hired chaise. Thrice had the obsequious landlord bowed his

well-powdered head, and, at each inclination wiped off, with the palm of his hand, the rain drops that had settled on the central baldness of his occiput, ere the traveller seemed to be aware that such a man existed as the landlord of the Crown, or that that landlord was standing at the chaise-door. At length, a female, closely veiled, and buried in shawls like a sultana, tremblingly took the proffered arm, and tottered into the hotel. Shortly after mine host returned, attended by porter, waiter, and stable-boy—and giving, by the lady's orders, a handsome gratuity to each of the post-boys, asked for the traveller's luggage. There was none! At this announcement the landlord, as he afterwards expressed himself, was "struck all of a heap," though what he meant by it was never clearly comprehended, as any alteration in his curiously squat figure must have been an improvement. While he remained in perplexity and in the rain, the latter of which might easily have been avoided, another message arrived from the lady, ordering fresh horses to be procured, and those, with the chaise, to be kept in readi-

ness to start at a moment's warning. More mystery and more perplexity. In fact, if these combined causes had been allowed to remain much longer in operation, the worthy landlord, instead of carrying on his business profitably, would have been carried off peremptorily, by a catarrh, his wife's nursing, and a doctor; but, fortunately, it struck one of the post-boys that rain was not necessary to a conversation, and sleet but a bad solvent of a mystery, so the posse adjourned into the tap, in order that the subject might be discussed more at the ease of the gentlemen who fancied themselves concerned in it.

"And you have not seen her face?" said mine host of the Crown.

"Shouldn't know her from Adam's grandmother," said the post-boy, who had ridden the wheel-horses. "Howsomedever I yeerd her sob and moan like a wheel as wants grease."

"You may say that," said the other post-boy, a little shrivelled old man, a good deal past sixty; "we lads see strange soights. I couldn't a-bear to see her siffer in that ere man-

ner—I did feel for her almost as much as if she'd been an oss."

The landlord gave the two charioteers *force de compliments* for the tenderness of their feelings, the intensity of which he fully comprehended, as he changed for each his guinea, the bounty of the lady. When he found them in proper cue, that is to say, in the middle of their second glass of brandy and water, he proceeded in his cross-examination, and he learned from them, that they had been engaged to wait at a certain spot, on an extensive heath, some twelve miles distant; that they had hardly waited there an hour when a private carriage, containing the lady in question and a gentleman, arrived; that the lady, closely veiled, had been transferred from the one conveyance to the other, and that the post-boys had been ordered to drive with the utmost speed to the destination where they now found themselves.

This account seemed to satisfy the scruples of the landlord, which, of course, were by no means pecuniary, but merely moral, when in bounced the fiery visaged landlady. He was

forced to stand the small shot of his wife. Poor man! he had only powder to reply to it, and that, just now, was woefully damp.

“You lazy, loitering, do-little, much-hindering, prate-apace sot, here’s the lady taken alarmingly ill. The physician has been sent for, and his carriage will be at the door before you blow that ill-looking nose of yours, that my blessed ten commandments are itching to score down—you paltry——ah!”

With a very little voice, and a very great submission, mine host squeaked out, “Have you seen the lady’s face?”

“Face, is it face you want? and ladies’ faces too—hav’n’t I got face enough for you—you apology, you!”

What the good woman said was indubitably true. She had face enough for any two moderately visaged wives, and enough over and above to have supplied any one who might have lost a portion of theirs. However, I will be more polite than the landlady, and acquaint the reader, that no one yet of the establishment had

seen the lady's face, nor was it intended that any one should.

As this squabble was growing into a quarrel the physician arrived; he had not been long alone with the unknown, before he sent for a surgeon, and the surgeon for a nurse. There was so much bustle, alarm, and secrecy, above stairs, that the landlord began to consider which of the two undertakers, his friends, he should favour with the anticipated job, and rubbed his hands as he dwelt on the idea of the coroner's inquest, and the attendant dinner. The landlady was nearly raving mad at being excluded, from what she supposed was the bed of death. Hot flannels and warm water were now eagerly called for—and these demands were looked upon as a sure sign that dissolution approached.

The stairs approaching the lady's chamber were lined with master, mistress, man-servant, and maid-servants, all eagerly listening to the awful bustle within. At length, there is a dead silence of some minutes. The listeners shuddered.

"It is all over with her," ejaculates one tender-hearted manœuverer of the warming-pan, with her apron in the corner of her eye; "Poor lady! it is all over with her!"

It was exactly two in the morning of the 21st, that a shrill cry was heard. Shortly after, the door was flung open by the nurse, and a new edition of an embryo reefer, appeared in her arms, and very manfully did the play of his lungs make every one present aware that *somebody* had made his appearance. The supposed bed of death turned out to be a bed of life, and another being was born to wail, to sin, and to die, as myriads have wailed, and sinned, and died before him.

CHAPTER II.

I am decidedly an incumbrance—Begin life with half a dozen fruitless journeys—Find a home and a foster-father—and talk learnedly of triangles and Archbishops.

WHAT is to be done with the child? It is a fearful question, and has been often asked under every degree of suffering. Of all possible articles, a child is the most difficult to dispose of; a wife may be dispensed with without much heart-breaking—even a friend and rubbish may be shot out of the way, and the bosom remain tranquil, but a helpless, new-born infant!—O there is a pleading eloquence in its feeble wail that goes to the heart and ear of the stranger—

and must act like living fire in the bowels of the mother.

The whole household were immediately sent in quest of a wet-nurse. At length, one was found in the very pretty wife of a reprobate sawyer, of the name of Brandon. He had seen many vicissitudes of life—had been a soldier, a gentleman's servant, had been to sea, and was a shrewd, vicious, and hard man, with a most unquenchable passion for strong beer, and a steady addiction to skittles. His wife was a little gentle being, of an extremely compact and prepossessing figure; her face was ruddy with health, and, as I said before, extremely pretty, and, had it not been for an air of what I fear I must call vulgarity, for want of a more gentle term, she would have merited the term of beautiful. Brandon was a top-sawyer, but, as three out of the six working days of the week he was to be found with a pot of porter by his side, pipe in mouth, and the skittle-ball in his hand, it is not surprising that there was much misery in his home, which he often heightened by his brutality. Yet was he a very pleasant fellow

when he had money to spend, and actually a witty as well as a jovial dog when spending it. His wife had not long given birth to a fine girl, and the mother's bosom bled over the destitution with which her husband's recklessness had now made her so long familiar.

All this time your humble servant was squalling, and none were found, who, under all the strange circumstances, would take upon them the charge of an infant, about to be forsaken immediately by its mother. At length one of the maid-servants at the inn remembered to have heard Mrs. Brandon say, that rather than live on among all her squalidness and penury, she would endeavour to suckle another child besides her own; and, as she was then in redundant health, and had two fine breasts of milk, for, *a* fine breast of milk would not then have served my turn, or rather, Mary and I must have taken it by turns, she was accordingly sent for. Yet, when she understood that I was to be placed immediately under her care, that no references could be given, and no address left in the case of accident, all her wishes to better

herself and babe were not sufficiently strong to make her run the risk. A guinea and-a-half a-week was offered, and the first quarter tendered in advance, but in vain ; at length, an additional ten pound note gave her sufficient courage, and much flannel being in request, I was thus fitted out before I was three hours old, to leave the roof, that I cannot call maternal, and be launched to struggle with the world. The frantic kiss of the distracted mother was impressed on my moaning lips, the agonized blessing was called down upon me from the God that she then thought not of interceding with for herself, and the solemn objurgation given to my foster-mother, to have a religious and motherly care of me, by the love she bore her own child ; and then, lest the distress of this scene should become fatal to her who bore me, I and my nurse were hurried away before the day of my birth had fully dawned.

This day happened to be one in which the top-sawyer had been graciously pleased to toss his arms up and down over the pit—not of destruction but of preservation. He had start-

ed early, and, whilst he was setting the teeth on edge of all within hearing, by setting an edge to his saw, some very officious friend ran to him to tell him, how that his wife was increasing his family, without even his permission having been asked. Instead, therefore, of making a dust in his own pit, he flung down his file, took up his lanthorn, and hurried along to kick up a dust at home. The brute! may he have to sharpen saws with bad files, for half an eternity! He swore—how awfully the fellow swore! that I should be turned from his inhospitable roof immediately—and my gentle nurse, adding her tears to my squalls, through that dismal sleety morning, that was then breaking mistily upon so much wretchedness, was compelled to carry me back to my mother.

The most impassioned intreaties, and an additional five pounds, at length prevailed on Mrs. Brandon to nestle me again in her bosom, and try to excite the sympathy of her husband. She returned to him, but the fellow had now taken to himself two counsellors, a drunken mate that served under him in the pit, and his own

avarice. I am stating mere facts. I may not be believed—I cannot help it—but three times was I carried backwards and forwards, and every transit producing to the sawyer five extra pounds, when, at length, my little head found a resting-place. All these events I have had over and over again from my nurse, and they are most faithfully recorded.

Before noon on that memorable morning, the chaise and four were again at the door, and the veiled and shawl-enveloped lady was lifted in, and the vehicle dashed rapidly through the streets of Reading, in a northerly direction. I pretend not to relate facts of which I have never had an assured knowledge; I cannot state to where that chaise and its desolate occupant proceeded, nor can I give a moving description of feelings that I did not witness. When I afterwards knew that that lady was my mother, I never dared question her upon these points, but, from the strength, the intensity of every good and affectionate feeling that marked her character, I can only conceive, that if that journey was made in the stupor

of weakness and exhaustion, or even in the wanderings of delirium, it must have been, to her, a dispensation of infinite mercy.

She deserted her new-born infant—she flung forth her child from the warmth of her own bosom to the cold, hireling kindness of the stranger. I think I hear some puritanical, world-observing, starched piece of female rigidity exclaim, “And therein she did a great wickedness.” The fact I admit, but the wickedness I deny utterly. Proudly do I range myself by the side of my much-injured parent, and tell the strait-laced that there was more courage, more love, more piety, in that heroic act, than in the feeling and *respectable* fondness of a thousand mothers, whose sole recommendation is a correctness of conduct, correct because untried; and, whose utmost pleasure is sneering at sacrifices that they never could have made, and mocking at a heroism they cannot comprehend.

That there were misery and much suffering inflicted, I do not deny; but of all guilt, even of all blame, I eagerly acquit one, whose prin-

ciples of action were as pure, and the whole tenor of whose life was as upright, as even Virtue herself could have dictated. Let the guilt and the misery attendant upon this desertion of myself be attached to the real sinners; may they lie as a burthen on their bosoms, when they would rise to plead at the last tribunal; and may their deeds cover their faces with the burning blush of shame, at that hour when the world's worshipper shall not dare to countenance the meanness and the villanies of the worldly great, and when man's actions shall be weighed in the balance of an Omniscient justice.

I have before said that Brandon was a *top* sawyer. We must now call him Mr. Brandon—he has purchased a pair of *top* boots, a swell *top* coat, and though now frequently *top* heavy, thinks himself altogether a *topping* gentleman. He is now to be seen more frequently in the skittle-ground, grasping a half gallon, instead of a quart of beer. He decides authoritatively upon foul and fair play, and his voice is potential on almost all matters in debate at the Two

Jolly Sawyers, near Lambeth Walk, just at the top of Cut-throat Lane.

All this is now altered. We look in vain for the 'Two Jolly Sawyers. We may ask, where are they? and not Echo, but the Archbishop of Canterbury, must answer where—for he has most sacerdotally put down all the jollity there, by pulling down the house, and has built up a large wharf, where once stood a very pretty tree-besprinkled walk, leading to the said Jolly Sawyers. Cut-throat Lane is no more, yet, though it bore a villainous name, it was very pretty to walk through; and its many turnstiles were as so many godsend to the little boys, as they enjoyed on them, gratis, some blithe rides that they would have had to pay for at any fair in the kingdom. We can very well understand why the turnstiles were so offensive to the dignitary; in fact, all this building, and leasing of houses, and improvement of property, and destroying of poor people's pleasant walks, is nothing more than an improved reading of the words, "*benefit of clergy.*"

Still, we cannot help regretting the turnstiles: and sorry are we for their sakes, and for ours, that their versatility should be looked upon as an ever-revolving libel, which thus caused their untimely destruction.

CHAPTER III.

My foster-father forsakes the right line of conduct *chalked* out for him—I grow ill—Find Pot-luck and Baptism—Go to Bath, and take my first lessons in the arts of Persuasion.

WHEN I was placed with the Brandons, it was stipulated that they should remove immediately from Reading; and, whilst I was in their family, they should return there no more. For this purpose the necessary expenses were forwarded to them by an unknown hand. To Lambeth they therefore removed, because it abounded in saw-pits; but this advantage was more than destroyed by its abundance of skittle-grounds. Mr. Joseph Brandon had satisfied

his conscience by coming into the neighbourhood of the said saw-pits: it showed a direction towards the paths of industry; but, whilst he had, through his wife for nursing me, 81*l.* 18*s.* per annum, he always preferred knocking down, or seeing knocked down, the nine pins, to the being placed upon a narrow plank, toeing a chalked line. This was not a line of conduct that he actually chalked out for himself; only it so happened, that, when he was settled at Lambeth, on the third day he went out to look after work, and going down Stangate-street, he turned up Cut-throat Lane, and, after passing all the turnstiles, he arrived at the Two Jolly Sawyers, himself making a third. In his search for employment he found it impossible, for the space of a whole month, to get any farther.

But he was not long permitted to be the ascendant spirit among the top and bottom men. Whether it be that Mrs. Brandon over-rated her powers of affording sustenance, or, that I had suffered through the inclemency of the weather in my three journeys on my natal

day, or whether that I was naturally delicate, or perhaps all these cases contributing to it, I fell into a very sickly state, and, before a third month had elapsed, I was forced to another migration.

Though no one appeared, both myself and Mrs. Brandon were continually watched, and a very superior sort of surgeon in the neighbourhood of Lambeth, from the second day of my arrival there, found some pretence or another to get introduced to my nurse, and took a violent liking to the little, puny, wailing piece of mortality, myself. I was about this time so exceedingly small, that at the risk of being puerile, I cannot help recording, that Joseph Brandon immersed me, all excepting my head, in a quart pot. No one but a Joe Brandon, or a top sawyer, could have had so filthy an idea. I have never been told whether the pot contained any drainings, but I must attribute to this ill-advised act, a most plebeian fondness that I have for strong beer, and, which seems to be, even in these days of French manners and French wines, unconquerable.

My health now became so precarious, that a letter arrived, signed simply, E. R., ordering that I should be immediately baptized, and five pounds were enclosed for the expenses. The letter stated that two decent persons should be found by Mrs. Brandon, to be my sponsors, and that a female would appear on such a day, at such an hour, at Lambeth Church, to act as my godmother. That I was to be christened Ralph Rattlin, and, if I survived, I was to pass for their own child till further orders, and Ralph Rattlin Brandon were to be my usual appellations. Two decent persons being required, Joe Brandon, not having done any work for a couple of months, thought, by virtue of idleness, he might surely call himself one, to say nothing of his top boots. The other godfather was a decayed fishmonger, of the name of Ford, a pensioner in the Fishmonger's Company, in whose alms-houses at Newington, he afterwards died. A sad reprobate was old Ford—he was wicked from nature, drunken from habit, and full of repentance, from methodism. Thus his time was

very equally divided between sin, drink, and contrition. His sleep was all sin, for he would keep the house awake all night blaspheming, in his unhealthy slumbers. As I was taken to church in a hackney-coach, my very honoured godfather, Ford, remarked, that "it would be a very pleasant thing to get me into hell before him, as he was sure that I was born to sin, a child of wrath, and an inheritor of the kingdom of the devil." This bitter remark roused the passions even of my gentle nurse, and she actually scored down both sides of his face with her nails, in such a manner as to leave deep scars in his ugliness, that nine years after, he carried to his grave. All this happened in the coach in our way to church. Ford had already prepared himself for the performance of his sponsorial duties, by getting half drunk upon his favourite beverage, gin, and it was now necessary to make him wholly intoxicated to induce him to go through the ceremony. As yet, my nurse had never properly seen my mother's face; at the interview, on my birth, the agitation of

both parties, and the darkened room, though there was no attempt at concealment, prevented Mrs. Brandon from noticing her sufficiently to know her again; when, therefore, as our party alighted at the gate of the churchyard, and a lady deeply veiled, got out of a carriage at some distance, Mrs. Brandon knew not if she had ever seen her before.

I have been very unfortunate in religious ceremonies. Old Ford was a horrid spectacle, his face streaming with blood, violently drunk, and led by Brandon, who certainly was, on that occasion, both decent in appearance and behaviour. The strange lady hurried up to the font before us. When the clergyman saw the state in which Ford was, he refused to proceed in the ceremony. The sexton then answered for him, whilst he was led out of the church. The office went on, and the lady seemed studiously to avoid looking upon her intended godson; I was christened simply, Ralph Rattl'in. The lady wrote her name in the book the last, and it was instantly removed by the clerk. She thrust a guinea into his

hand, and then, for the first time, bent her veiled face over me. I must have been a miserable looking object, for no sooner had she seen me, than she gave a bitter shriek, and laying hold of the woodwork of the pews, she slowly assisted herself out of the church. Two or three persons who happened to be present, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Brandon, stepped forward to support her, but the clergyman, who seemed to have had a previous conversation with her, signed them to desist. It was altogether a most melancholy affair. Old Ford, when we left the church, was helped into the coach again, and Joe Brandon, being either justly irritated at his conduct, or angry that he could not see my unknown godmother's face, when we were all fairly on our way home, gave the old sot such a tremendous beating, that Mrs Brandon nearly went into fits with alarm, and Ford himself was confined to his bed for a week after. When I reflect upon the manner in which I was christened, though I cannot exactly call it "a maimed rite," I have a great mind to have it done over again, only I am deterred by the expense.

All now was bustle in removing from Felix Street, Lambeth, to Bath, where it was ordered that I should be dipped every morning in some spring that, at that time, had much celebrity. Old Ford was left behind. At Bath I remained three years, Joe Brandon doing no work, and persuading himself now, that he actually was a gentleman. In my third year, my foster-sister, little, robust, ruddy Mary died, and the weakly, stunted, and drooping sapling lived on. This death endeared me more and more to my nurse, and Joe himself was, by self interest, taught an affection for me. He knew that if I went to the grave, he must go to work; and he now used to perform the office himself, of the dry nurse to me, taking me to the spring, and allowing no one to dip me but himself. When I grew older, he had many stories to tell me about my pantings, and my implorings, and my offers of unnumbered kisses, and of all my playthings, if he would not put me in that cold water—only this one, one morning. And about a certain Doctor Buck, who had taken a wonderful liking to me, after the

manner of the Lambeth surgeon, and had prescribed for me, and sent me physic, and port wine, all out of pure philanthropy; and how much I hated this same Dr. Buck, and his horrible "give him t'other dip, Brandon." But all these are as things that had long died from my own recollection.

CHAPTER IV.

My proximity to the clergy impels me to preach—I advocate the vulgar; and prove that neither the humble nor the low, are necessarily the debased—consequently, this chapter need not be read.

WHAT with dipping, port wine, bark, and Dr. Buck, at the age of four years my limbs began to expand properly, and my countenance to assume the hue of health. I have recorded the death of my foster-sister Mary; but about this time, the top-sawyer, wishing to perpetuate the dynasty of the Brandons, began to enact *pater familias* in a most reckless manner. He was wrong; but this must be said in extenuation of his impiously acting upon the divine

command, "to increase and multiply," that, at that time, Mr. Malthus had not corrected the mistake of the Omniscient, nor had Miss Harriet Martineau begun her pilgrimage after "the preventive check." There was no longer any pretence for my remaining at Bath, or for my worthy foster-father abstaining from work, so we again removed, with a small family, in our search after sawpits and happiness, to one of the best houses in Felix Street, somewhere near Lambeth Marsh. This place, after the experience of some time, proving not to be sufficiently blissful, we removed to Paradise Row, some furlongs nearer the Father in God, His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. I have a laudable pride in showing that I had a *respectable*—I beg pardon, the word is inapplicable—I mean a grand neighbour. "I am not the rose," said the flower in the Persian poem, "but I have lived near the rose." I did not bloom in the archbishop's garden, but I flourished under the wall, though on the outside. The wall is now down, and rows of houses up in its place. I had a great inclina-

tion to be discursive on the mutability of human affairs, when I had finished the last sentence; but I have changed my mind, which is a practical commentary upon them, and will save me the trouble of writing one.

In our location in Paradise Row, the house being larger than we required for our accommodation, we again received old Ford, the only paradise, I am rather afraid, that will ever own him as an inmate. An awful man was old Ford, my godfather. His mingled prayers and blasphemies, hymns and horrid songs, defiance and remorse, groans and laughter, made every one hate and avoid him. Hell fire, as he continually asserted, was ever roaring before his eyes; and as there is a text in the New Testament that says, there is no salvation for him who curses the Holy Ghost, he would, in the frenzy of his despair, swear at that mysterious portion of the Trinity by the hour, and then employ the next in beating his breast in the agony of repentance. Many may think all this sheer madness; but he was not more mad than most of the hot-headed Methodists,

whose preachers, at that time, held uncontrolled sway over the great mass of people that toiled in the humbler walks of life. Two nights in the week we used to have prayer-meetings at our house ; and, though I could not have been five years old at the time, vividly do I remember that our front room used, on those occasions, to be filled to overflow with kneeling fanatics, old Ford in the centre of the room, and a couple of lank-haired hypocrites, one on each side of the reprobate, praying till the perspiration streamed down their foreheads, to pray the devil out of him. The ohs ! and the groanings of the audience were terrible ; and the whole scene, though very edifying to the elect, was disgraceful to any set who lived within the pale of civilization.

I must now draw upon my own memory. I must describe my own sensations. If I reckon by the toil and the turmoil of the mind, I am already an old man. I have lived for ages. I am far, very far on my voyage. Let me cast my eyes back on the vast sea that I have traversed ; there is a mist settled over it, almost

as impenetrable as that which glooms before me. Let me pause. Methinks that I see it gradually break, and partial sunbeams struggle through it. Now the distant waves rise, and wanton, and play, pure and lucid. 'Tis the day-spring of innocence. How near to the sanctified heavens do those remote waves appear ! They meet, and are as one with the far horizon. Those sparkling waves were the hours of my childhood—the blissful feelings of my infancy. As the sea of life rolls on, the waves swell and are turbid ; and, as I recede from the horizon of my early recollections, so heaven recedes from me. The thunder cloud is high above my head, the treacherous waters roar beneath me, before me is the darkness and the night of an unknown futurity. Where can I now turn my eyes for solace, but over the vast space that I have passed ? Whilst my bark glides heedlessly forward, I will not anticipate dangers that I cannot see, or tremble at rocks that are benevolently hidden from my view. It is sufficient for me to know that I must be wrecked at last ; that my mortal frame must be like

a shattered bark upon the beach ere the purer elements that it contains can be wafted through the immensity of immortality. I will commune with my boyish days—I will live in the past only. Memory shall perform the Medean process, shall renovate me to youth. I will again return to marbles and an untroubled breast—to hoop and high spirits—at least, in imagination.

I shall henceforward trust to my own recollections. Should this part of my story seem more like a chronicle of sensations than a series of events, the reader must bear in mind that these sensations are, in early youth, real events, the parents of actions, and the directors of destiny. The circle in which, in boyhood, one may be compelled to move, may be esteemed low; the accidents all around him may be homely, the persons with whom he may be obliged to come in contact may be mean in apparel, and sordid in nature; but his mind, if it remain to him pure as he received it from his Maker, is an unsullied gem of inestimable price, too seldom found, and too little appreciated when

found, among the great, or the fortuitously rich. Nothing that is abstractedly mental is low. The mind that well describes low scenery is not low, nor is the description itself necessarily so. Pride, and a contempt for our fellow creatures, evince a low tone of moral feeling, and is the innate vulgarity of the soul: it is this which but too often makes those who rustle in silks, and roll in carriages, lower than the lowest.

I have said this much, because the early, very early part of my life was passed among what are reproachfully termed "low people." If I describe them faithfully, they must still appear low to those who arrogate to themselves the epithet of "high." For myself, I hold that there is nothing low under the sun, except meanness. Where there is utility, there ought to be honour. The utility of the humble artisan has never been denied, though too often despised, and too rarely honoured; but I have found among the "vulgar" a horror of meanness, a self-devotion, an unshrinking patience under privation, and the moral courage, that

constitute the hero of high life. I can also tell the admirers of the great, that the evil passions of the vulgar are as gigantic, their wickedness upon as grand a scale, and their notions of vice as refined, and as extensive, as those of any fashionable *roué* that is courted among the first circles, or even as those of the crowned despot. Then, as to the strength of vulgar intellect.—True, that intellect is rarely cultivated by the learning which consists of words. The view it takes of science is but a partial glance—that intellect is contracted, but it is strong. It is a dwarf, with the muscle and sinews of a giant; and its grasp, whenever it can lay hold of any thing within its circumscribed reach, is tremendous. The general who has conquered armies and subjugated countries—the minister who has ruined them, and the jurist who has justified both, never at the crisis of their labours have displayed a tithe of the ingenuity and the resources of mind that many an artisan is forced to exert to provide daily bread for himself and family; or many a shopkeeper to keep his connexion together, and himself out of the work-

house. Why should the exertions of intellect be termed low, in the case of the mechanic, and vast, profound, and glorious, in that of the minister? It is the same precious gift of a beneficent Power to all his creatures. As well may the sun be voted as excessively vulgar, because it, like intellect, assists all equally to perform their functions. I repeat, that nothing that has mind is, of necessity, low, and nothing is vulgar but meanness.

CHAPTER V.

I receive my first lessons in pugnacity—and imbibe the evil spirit—Learn to read by intuition, and to fight by practice—Go to school to a soldier—Am a good boy, and get whipped.

AT six years of age my health had become firmly established, but this establishment caused dismay in that of Joe Brandon. As I was no longer the sickly infant that called for incessant attention, and the most careful nurture, it was intimated to my foster parents, that a considerable reduction would be made in the quarterly allowance paid on my account. The indignation of Brandon was excessive. He looked upon himself as one grievously wronged. No sine-

curist, with his pension recently reduced, could have been more vehement on the subject of the sanctity of vested rights. But his ire was not to be vented in idle declamation only. He was not a man to rest content with mere words: he declaimed for a full hour upon his wife's folly in procuring him the means of well-fed idleness so long, threatened to take the brat—meaning no less a personage than myself—to the work-house; and then he wound up affairs, in doors, by beating his wife, and himself, out of doors, by getting royally drunk.

This was the first scene that made a deep impression upon me. Young as I was, I comprehended that I was the cause of the ill-treatment of my nurse, whom I fondly loved. I interfered—I placed my little body between her and her brutal oppressor. I scratched, I kicked, I screamed—I grew mad with passion. At that hour, the spirit of evil and of hate blew the dark coal in my heart into a flame; and the demon of violent anger has ever since found it too easy to erect there his altar, of which the fire, though at the time all-consuming, is never durable. From that

moment I commenced my intellectual existence. I looked on the sobbing mother, and knew what it was to love, and my love found its expression in an agony of tears. I looked on the tyrant, I felt what it was to hate, and endeavoured to relieve the burning desire to punish with frantic actions and wild outcries. Old Ford, who had been present and enjoyed the fracas, immediately took me into his especial favour; he declared that I was after his own heart, for I had the devil in me—said that I had the right spirit to bring me to the gallows, and he hoped, old as he was, to live to see it: he then entreated of the Lord that my precious soul might be saved as a burning brand out of the fire—took me by the hand and led me to the next gin-shop—made me taste the nauseating poison—told me I was a little man, and it was glorious to fight—doubled up for me my puny fists, and asserted that cowards only suffered a blow without returning it. A lesson like this never can be forgotten. I ground my teeth whilst I was receiving it—I clenched my hands, and looked wildly round for something to destroy.

I was in training to become a little tiger. From what I then experienced, I can easily conceive the feelings that actuate, and can half forgive the crowned monsters who have revelled in blood, and relished the inflicting of torture; as pandering to their worst passions in infancy resolves them into a terrible instrument of cruelty, the control of which rests not with themselves. But this lesson in tiger ferocity had its emollient, though not its antidote, in the tenderness of the love which I bore my nurse, when, on my return, I flung myself into her arms. Ever since that day I have been subject to terrific fits of passion; but very happily for me, they have long ceased to be but of very rare occurrence.

The next morning master Joseph came home ill, and if not humbled, at least almost helpless. He had now three children of his own, and the necessity of eschewing skittles, and presiding over the sawpit, became urgent. With all his vices and his roughness, he was surprisingly fond of me. He, too, applauded my spirit in attacking himself. He now rejoiced to take me

to the sawpit, to allow me to play about the timber-yards, and share with him his *al fresco* mid-day meal and pot of porter. I always passed for his eldest son, my name being told to the neighbours as Ralph Rattlin Brandon. I knew no otherwise, and my foster parents kept the secret religiously. At seven I began to fight with dirty little urchins in the street, who felt much scandalized at the goodness of my clothes. It is hard work fighting up hill at seven years of age. Old Ford would wipe the blood from my nose, and clap the vinegar and brown paper on my bruises with words of sweet encouragement; though he always ended by predicting that his hopeful godson would be hung, and that he should live to see it. I have certainly not been drowned yet, though I have had my escapes, and old Ford has been dead these thirty years. As one part of the prophecy will certainly never be fulfilled, I have some faint hopes of avoiding the exaltation hinted at in the other.

About this time, I began to notice that a lady, at long intervals, came to see me. She

seemed exceedingly happy in my caresses, though she showed no weakness. She passed for my godmother, and so she certainly was. She was minute in her examination in ascertaining that I was perfectly clean; and always brought me a number of delicacies which were invariably devoured immediately after her departure, by me and those little cormorants my loving foster brothers and sister. Moreover, my nurse always received a present, which she very carefully and dutifully concealed from her liege lord of the pits. However, I cannot call to my mind more than four of these "angelic visits" altogether. "Angelic visits," indeed, they might be termed, if the transcendent beauty of the visitor be regarded. At that time, her form and her countenance furnished me with the idea I had of the blessed inhabitants of heaven before man was created, and I have never been able to replace it since by any thing more beautiful. The reader shall soon know how, at that very early age, I became so well acquainted with angelic lore.

At eight years of age I was sent to school.

I could read before I went there. How I picked up this knowledge I never could discover. Both my foster parents were grossly illiterate. Perhaps old Ford taught me—but this is one of the mysteries I could never solve, and it is strange that I should have so totally forgotten all about an affair so important, as not to remember a single lesson, and yet to hold so clear a recollection of many minor events. But so it is. To school I went: my master was a cadaverous, wooden-legged man, a disbanded soldier, and a disciplinarian, as well as an a-b-c-darian.

I well remember old Isaacs, and his tall, handsome, crane-necked daughter. The hussy was as straight as an arrow, yet, for the sake of coquetry, or singularity, she would sit in the methodist chapel, with her dimpled chin resting upon an iron hoop, and her finely formed shoulders, braced back with straps so tightly, as to thrust out in a remarkable manner her swan-like chest, and her almost too exuberant bust. This instrument for the distorted, with its bright crimson leather, thus pressed into the service of the beautiful, had a most

singular and exciting effect upon the beholder. I have often thought of this girl in my maturer years, and confess that no dress that I ever beheld gave a more piquant interest to the wearer, than those straps and irons. The jade never wore them at home. Perhaps the fancy was her father's, he being an old soldier, and his motto "eyes right, dress!" Whosever fancy it was, his daughter rejoiced in it. "Eyes right! dress!" is as good a motto for the ladies as the army—and well do they act up to it.

The most important facts that my mind has preserved concerning this scholastic establishment are—that one evening, for a task, I learned perfectly by heart the two first chapters of the Gospel according to St. John; that there was an unbaked gooseberry pie put prominently on the shelf in the school-room, a fortnight before the vacation at Midsummer, to be partaken of on the happy day of breaking up, each boy paying four-pence for his share of the mighty feast. There were between forty and fifty of us. I had almost forgotten to mention,

that I was to be duly punished whenever I deserved it, but the master was, on no account, to hurt me, or make me cry. I deserved it regularly three or four times a day, and was as regularly horsed once. Oh! those floggings, how deceptive they were, and how much I regretted them when I came to understand the thing fundamentally. Old Isaacs could not have performed the operation more delicately, if he were only brushing a fly off the down of a lady's cheek. *He* never made me cry.

CHAPTER VI.

This chapter sheweth, in a methodical manner, how to find a faith and lose all religion; also, to procure a Call for persons of all manner of callings.

I HAD, as I have related, been encouraged in fits of passion, and had been taught to be pugnacious; my mind was now to be opened to loftier speculations; and religious dread, with all the phantoms of superstition in its train, came like a band of bravoës, and first chaining down my soul in the awe of stupefaction, ultimately loosened its bonds, and sent it to wander in all its childish wildness in the direful realms of horrible dreams, and of waking visions hardly less so. I was fashioning for a poet.

My nurse was always a little devotional. She went to the nearest chapel or church, and, satisfied that she heard the word of God, without troubling herself with the niceties of any peculiar dogma, which she could not have understood if she had, and finding herself on the threshold of divine grace, she knelt down in all humility, prayed, and was comforted. Old Ford was a furious Methodist; he owned that he never could reform; and, as he daily drained the cup of sin to the very dregs, he tried, as an antidote, long prayer, and superabounding faith. The unction with which he struck his breast, and exclaimed, "Miserable sinner that I am!" could only be exceeded by the veracity of the assertion. Mrs. Brandon only joined in the prayer meetings that he held at our house, when Ford himself was perfectly sober — thus she did not often attend — Brandon never. Whilst he wore the top-boots, he was an optimist, and perfectly epicurean in his philosophy—I use the term in the modern sense. When he had eighty pounds odd a-year, with no family of his own, no man was more jovial

or happier. He had the most perfect reliance on Providence. He boasted, that he belonged to the Established Church, because it was so respectable—and he loved the organ. However, he never went in the forenoon because he was never shaved in time; in the afternoon he never went, because he could not dispense with his nap after dinner; and, in the evening, none but the serving classes were to be seen there. He ridiculed the humble piety of his wife, and the fanatical fervour of his lodger. He was a high churchman, and satisfied. But when he was obliged, with an increasing family and a decreased income, to work from morning till night, he grew morose, and very unsettled in his faith.

The French Revolution was then at its wildest excess. Equality was universally advocated in religious, as well as political establishments. The excitement of the times reached even to the sawpit. Brandon got tipsy one Saturday with a parcel of demagogues, and, when he awoke early next Sunday morning—it was a beautiful summer day—he

made the sudden discovery that he had still his faith to seek for. Then began his dominical pilgrimages. With his son Ralph in his hand, he roved from one congregation to another over the vast metropolis, and through its extensive environs. I do not think that we left a single place, dedicated to devotion, unvisited. I well remember that he was much struck with the Roman Catholic worship. We repeated our visits three or four times to the Catholic chapel, a deference we paid to no other. The result of this may be easily imagined. When an excited mind searches for food, it will be satisfied with the veriest trash, provided only that it intoxicates. We at length stumbled upon a small set of mad Methodists, more dismal and more excluding than even Ford's sect: the congregation were all of the very lowest class, with about twelve or thirteen exceptions, and those were decidedly mad. The pastor was an arch rogue, that fattened upon the delusion of his communicants. They held the doctrine of visible election, which election was made by having a call—that is, a direct visitation of the Holy Ghost, which was

testified by falling down in a fit—the testification being the more authentic, if it happened in full congregation. The elected could never again fall: the sins that were afterwards committed in their persons were not theirs—it was the evil spirit within them, that they could cast out when they would, and be equally as pure as before. All the rest of the world, who had not had their call, were in a state of reprobation, and on the high road to damnation.

All this, of course, I did not understand till long afterwards, but I too unhappily understood, or at least fancied I did, the dreadful images of eternal torments, and the certainty that they would soon be mine. First of all, either from inattention, or from want of comprehension, these denunciations made but a faint impression upon me. But the frightful descriptions took, gradually, a more visible and sterner shape, till they produced effects that proved all but fatal.

The doctrines of these Caterians just suited the intellect and the strong passions of Brandon. The sect was called Caterians, after the

Rev. Mr. Cate, their minister. My foster-father went home, after the second Sunday, and put his house in order. As far as regarded the household, the regulations would have pleased Sir Andrew Agnew: the hot joint was dismissed—the country walk discontinued—at meeting four times a day. Even Ford did not like it. Brandon was labouring hard for his call. He strove vehemently for the privilege of sinning with impunity. He was told by Mr. Cate that he was in a desperate way. Brandon did all he could, but the call would not come for the calling. Mrs. Brandon got it very soon, though she strenuously denied the honour. My good nurse was in the family way, and Mr. Cate had frightened her into fits, with a vivid delineation of the agonies of a new-born infant, under the torture of eternal fire, because it had died unelected. However, Brandon began a little to weary of waiting and long prayer, and perhaps of the now too frequent visits of Mr. Cate. He commenced to have his fits of alternate intemperate recklessness, and religious despondency. One Sunday morn-

ing, well do I recollect it, he called me up early, before seven, and I supposed, as usual, that we were going to early meeting. We walked towards the large room that was used as a chapel. We had nearly reached it, when the half-open door of an adjacent ale-house let out its vile compound of disgusting odours upon the balmy Sabbath air. My conductor hesitated—he moved towards the meeting-house, but his head was turned the other way—he stopped.

“Ralph,” said he, “did you not see Mr. Ford go into the public house?”

“No, father,” said I, “don’t think he’s up.”

“At all bounds, we had better go and see; for I must not allow him to shame a decent house by tippling on a Sunday morning, in a dram-shop.”

We entered. He found there some of his mates. Pint after pint of purl was called for; at length, a gallon of strong ale was placed upon the table, a quart of gin was dashed into it, and the whole warmed with a red-hot poker. I was now instructed to lie. I promised to

tell mother that we had gone into a strange chapel; but I made my conditions, that mother should not be any more beaten. It was almost church-time when the landlord put us all out by the back way. The drunken fellows sneaked home—whilst Brandon, taking me by the hand, made violent, and nearly successful, efforts to appear sober.

After a hasty breakfast we went to meeting. My foster-father looked excessively wild. Mr. Cate was raving in the midst of an extempore prayer, when a heavy fall was heard in the chapel. The minister descended from his desk, and came and prayed over the prostrate victim of intoxication, and, perhaps, of epilepsy, and he pronounced that brother Brandon had got his call, and was now indisputably one of the elect. He did not revive so soon as was expected—his groans were looked upon as indications of the workings of the Spirit, and when, at length, he was so far recovered as to be led home by two of the congregation, the conversion of the sawyer was dwelt upon by the preacher, from a text preached upon the chap-

ter that relates to the conversion of Saul, and the cases were cited as parallel. Let the opponents of the Established Church rail at it as they will, scenes of such wickedness and impiety could never have happened within its time-honoured walls.

When we returned to dinner, we found that Brandon had so far recovered, as to become very hungry, very proud, and very pharisaically pious. Mr. Cate dined with us. He was full of holy congratulations on the miraculous event. The sawyer received all this with a humble self-consequence, as the infallible dicta of truth, and, apparently, with the utter oblivion of any such things existing, as purl and red-hot pokers. Was he a deep hypocrite, or only a self-deceiver? Who can know the heart of man? However, "this call" had the effect of making the "called one" a finished sinner, and of filling up the measure of wretchedness to his wife.

CHAPTER VII.

I too have my call—to death's door—A great rise in life—Brandon allows neither slugs nor sluggards in his sawpit—Is ruined, and beats the reverend Mr. Cate.

ALL this was preparatory to an event, to me of the utmost importance, which is, perhaps, at this very moment, influencing imperceptibly my mind, and directing my character. Brandon's call, in our humble circle, made a great deal of noise. He had taken care that I should know what drunkenness meant. I thought he ought to have been drunk on the afternoon of his election, yet he so well disguised his intoxication, that he appeared not to be so. I listened atten-

tively to the sermon of the preacher that followed. I no longer doubted. I could not but believe that a grave man in a pulpit could speak any thing but truth, when he spoke so loudly, and spoke for two hours. My mind was a chaos of confusion. I began to be very miserable. The next, or one or two Sundays after, produced the crisis. My dress was always much superior to what could have been expected in the son of a mere operative. I was, at that time, a fair, and mild-featured child, and altogether remarkable among the set who frequented the meeting-house. Mr. Cate had been very powerful indeed, in his description of the infernal regions—of the abiding agonies—the level lake that burneth—the tossing of the waves that glow, and, when he had thrown two or three old women into hysterics, and two or three young ones into fainting fits, amidst the torrent of his oratory, and the groaning, and the “Lord have mercy upon me’s,” of his audience, he made a sudden pause. There was a dead silence for half a minute, then suddenly lifting his voice, he pointed to me, and exclaimed,

“Behold that beautiful child—observe the pure blood mantling in his delicate countenance—but what is he after all but a mouthful for the devil? All those torments, all those tortures, that I have told you of, will be his; there, look at him, he will burn and writhe in pain, and consume for ever, and ever, and ever, and never be destroyed, unless the original sin be washed out from him by the ‘call,’ lest he be made hereafter one of the ‘elect.’”

At this direct address to myself, I neither fainted, shuddered, nor cried—I felt, at the time, a little stupefied; and it was some hours after (the hideous man’s words all the time ringing in my ears) before I fully comprehended my hopeless state of perdition. I looked at the fire as I sat by it, and trembled. I went to bed, but not to sleep. No child ever haunted by a ghost story was more terrified than myself, as I lay panting on my tear-steeped pillow. At length, imagination began its dreadful charms—the room enlarged itself in its gloom to vast space—I began to hear cries from under my bed. Some dark bodies first of all flitted

across the gloaming. My bed began to rock. I tried to sing a hymn. I thought that the words came out of my mouth in flames of bright fire. I then called to mind the offerings from the altars of Cain and Abel. I watched to see if my hymns, turned into fire, and ascended up to heaven. I felt a cold horror when I discovered them scattered from my mouth exactly in the same manner that I had seen the flames in the engraving in our large Bible on the altar of Cain. Then there came a huge block of wood, and stationed itself in the air above me, about six inches from my eyes. I remember no more—I was in a raging fever.

I was ill for some weeks, and a helpless invalid for many more. When again I enjoyed perception of the things around me, I found myself in a new house in Red Cross Street, near St. Luke's. My foster parents had opened a shop—it had the appearance of a most respectable fruiterer's. Mr. Brandon had become a small timber merchant—had sawpits in the premises behind the house, and men of his own actually sawing in them. But the most surprising

change of all was, that the reverend Mr. Cate was domesticated with us. Brandon, as a master, worked harder than ever he did as a man. My nurse became anxious and careworn, and never seemed happy—for my part, I was so debilitated, that I then took but little notice of any thing. However, the beautiful lady never called. I used to spend my time thinking upon angels and cherubs, and in learning hymns by heart. I suppose that I, like my foster-father, had had my call, but I am sure that after it, I was as much weaker in mind as I was in body. When I became strong enough to be again able to run about, I was once more sent to a day-school, and all that I remember about the matter was, that every day about eleven o'clock I was told to run home and get a wigful of potatoes from Brandon's, the venerable pedagogue coolly taking off his wig, and exchanging it for a red night-cap, until my return with the provender.

Things now wore a dismal aspect at home. At length, one day, the broker sent his men into the shop, who threw all the green grocery about like peelings of onions. They carted away Mr.

Brandon's deals, and planks and timber, and, not content with all this, they also took away the best of the household furniture. My nurse called Mr. Cate a devil in a white sheet—her husband acted, as he always would do when he was offended, and found himself strong enough, he gave the reverend gentleman, most irreverently, a tremendous beating. The sheep sadly gored the shepherd. Afterwards, when he had nearly killed his pastor, he seceded from his flock, and gave him, under his own hand, a solemn abjuration of the Caterian tenets. How Brandon came to launch out into this expensive and ill-advised undertaking of green-groceries and sawpits, how he afterwards became involved, and how much the preacher had been guilty in deceiving him, I never clearly understood. However, my nurse never, for a long time after, spoke of the reverend gentleman without applying the corner of her apron to her eyes, or her husband without a hearty malediction. We removed to our old neighbourhood, but, instead of taking a respectable house, we were forced to burrow in mean lodgings.

CHAPTER VIII.

Another migration—from the ruralities of Cut-throat Lane to the groves of Academus—I am forced into good clothes, and the paths of learning, in spite of my teeth, though I use them spitefully.

MISFORTUNES never come single. I don't know why they should. They are but scarecrow, lean visaged, miserable associates, and so they arrive in a body to keep each other in countenance. I had been but a few weeks in our present miserable abode, and had fully recovered my health, though I think that I was a little crazed with the prints, and the subjects of them, over which I daily pored in the large Bible, when the greatest misfortune of all came

upon the poor Brandons—and that was, to add to their other losses, the loss of my invaluable self.

The misery was unexpected—it was sudden—it was overwhelming. Brandon was towing a chalked line on a heavy log of mahogany, unconscious of the mischief that was working at home. He afterwards told me, and I believe him, that he would have opposed the proceeding by force, if force had been requisite. A plain, private, or hired carriage, drove up to the door, and, after ascertaining that the Brandons lived at the house, a business-like looking, elderly gentleman stepped out, paid every demand immediately, and ordered my best clothes on. When I was thus equipped, my nurse was told that she was perfectly welcome to the remainder of my effects, and that I must get into the carriage.

The good woman was thunderstruck. There was a scene. She raved, and I cried, and the four little Brandons, at least three of them, joined in the chorus of lamentation, because the naughty man was going to take brother Ralph away. I

had been too well taught by old Ford, not to visit my indignation upon the shins and hands of the carrier away of captives, in well-applied kicks, and almost rabid bites. There was a great disturbance. The neighbours thought it very odd that the mother should allow her eldest son to be carried off by force, by a stranger, before her eyes, in the middle of the day; but then it was suggested, that "nothing could be well termed odd that concerned little Ned Brandon, for hadn't he been bit last year by a mad dog, and, when so and so had all died raving, he had never nothing at all happen to him." When the stranger heard this story of the mad dog, (which by-the-by, was fact, and I have the scars to this day,) he shook me off, pale with consternation, and was, no doubt, extremely happy to find that my little teeth had not penetrated the skin. I believe that he heartily repented him of his office. At length he lost all patience. "Woman," said he, "send these people out of the room." When they had departed, marvelling, he resumed. "I cannot lose my time in altercation. I am

commissioned to tell you, that if you keep the boy in one sense, you'll have to keep him in all. You may be sure that I would not trouble myself about such a little ill-bred wretch for a moment, if I did not act with authority, and by orders. Give up the child directly," (I was now sobbing in her arms,) "take your last look at him, for you will never see him again. Come, hand the young gentleman into the carriage."

"I won't go," I screamed out.

"We shall soon see that, master Rattlin," said he, dragging me along, resisting. I bawled out, "My name's not master Rattlin—you're a liar—and when father comes from the pit he'll wop you."

This threat seemed to have an effect, the very reverse of what I had intended. Perhaps he thought that he had already enough to contend with, without the addition of the brawny arm of the sawyer. I was forcibly lifted up, placed in the coach, and, as it drove rapidly away, I heard, amidst the rattling of the wheels,

the cries of her whom I loved as a mother, exclaiming, "My Ralph—my dear Ralph!"

Behold me then, "hot with the fray, and weeping from the fright," confined in a locomotive prison with my sullen captor. I blubbered in one corner of the coach, and he surveyed me with stern indifference from another. I had now fairly commenced my journey through life, but this beginning was any thing but auspicious. At length, the carriage stopped at a place I have since ascertained to be near Hatton Garden, on Holborn Hill. We alighted, and walked into a house, between two motionless pages, excessively well dressed. At first, they startled me, but I soon discovered they were immense waxen dolls. It was a ready-made clothes warehouse into which we had entered. We went up stairs, and I was soon equipped with three excellent suits. My grief had now settled down into a sullen resentment, agreeably relieved, at due intervals, by breath-catching sobs. The violence of the storm had passed, but its gloom still remained. Seeing the little

gladness that the possession of clothes, the finest I had yet had, communicated to me, my director could not avoid giving himself the pleasurable relief of saying, "Sulky little brute." A trunk being sent for, and my wardrobe placed in it, we then drove to three or four other shops, not forgetting a hatter's, and in a very short space of time, I had a very tolerable fit-out. During all this time not a word did my silent companion address to me.

At length, the coach no longer rattled over the stones. It now proceeded on more smoothly, and here and there the cheerful green foliage relieved the long lines of houses. After about a half-hour's ride, we stopped at a large and very old-fashioned house, built in strict conformity with the Elizabethan style of architecture, over the portals of which, upon a deep blue board, in very, very bright gold letters, flashed forth that word so awful to little boys, so big with associations of long tasks and wide-spreading birch, the Greek-derived polysyllable, ACADEMY. Ignorant as I was, I understood it all in a moment. I was struck cold as the dew-

damp grave-stone. I almost grew sick with terror. I was kidnapped, entrapped, betrayed. I had before hated school, my horror now was intense of "Academy." I looked piteously into the face of my persecutor, but I found there no sympathy. "I want to go home," I roared out, and then burst into a fresh torrent of tears.

Home! what solace is there in its very sound! Oh, how that blessed asylum for the wounded spirit encloses within its sacred circle all that is comforting, and sweet, and holy! 'Tis there that the soul coils itself up and nestles like the dove in its own downiness, conscious that every thing around breathes of peace, security, and love. Home! henceforward, I was to have none, until, through many, many years of toil and misery, I should create one for myself. Henceforth, the word must bring to me only the bitterness of regret—henceforth I was to associate with hundreds who had that temple in which to consecrate their household affections—but was, myself, doomed to be unowned, unloved, and homeless.

"I want to go home," I blubbered forth

with the pertinacity of anguish, as I was constrained into the parlour of the truculent rod-bearing, ferula-wielding Mr. Root. I must have been a strange figure. I was taken from my nurse's in a hurry, and, though my clothes were quite new, my face entitled me to rank among the much vituperated unwashed. When a little boy has very dirty hands, with which he rubs his dirty, tearful face, it must be confessed that grief does not, in his person, appear under a very lovely form. The first impression that I made on him, who was to hold almost every thing that could constitute my happiness, in his power, was the very reverse of favourable. My continued iteration of "I want to go home," was any thing but pleasing to the pedagogue. The sentence itself, is not music to a man keeping a boarding-school. With the intuitive perception of childhood, through my tears, my heart acknowledged an enemy. What my conductor said to him, did not tend to soften his feelings towards me. I did not understand the details of his communication, but I knew that I was as a cap-

tive, bound hand and foot, and delivered over to a foreign bondage. The interview between the contracting parties was short, and when over, my conductor departed without deigning to bestow the smallest notice upon the most important personage of this history. I was then rather twitched by the hand, than led, by Mr. Root, into the middle of his capacious school-room, and in the midst of more than two hundred and fifty boys: my name was merely mentioned to one of the junior ushers, and the master left me. Well might I then apply that blundering, Examiner-be-praised line of Keat's to myself, for like Ruth,

“I stood all tears among the alien corn.”

A few boys came and stared at me, but I attracted the kindness of none. There can be no doubt but that I was somewhat vulgar in my manners, and my carriage was certainly quite unlike that of my companions. Some of them even jeered me, but I regarded them not. A real grief is armour-proof against ridicule. In a short time, it being six o'clock, the supper

was served out, consisting of a round of bread, all the moisture of which had been allowed to evaporate, and an oblong, diaphanous, yellow substance, one inch and a half by three, that I afterwards learned might be known, among the initiated, as single Gloucester. There was also a pewter mug for each, three-parts filled with small beer. It certainly gave me, it was so small, a very desponding idea of the extent to which littleness might be carried; and it would have been too vapid for the toleration of any palate, had it not been so sour. As I sate regardless before this repast, in abstracted grief, I underwent the first of the thousand practical jokes that were hereafter to familiarize me with manual jocularities. My right-hand neighbour, jerking me by the elbow, exclaimed, "Hollo, you sir, there's Jenkins, on the other side of you, cribbing your bread." I turned towards the supposed culprit, and discovered that my informant had fibbed, but the informed against told me to look round and see where my cheese was. I did; it was between the mandibles of my kind neighbour on my right, and when I turned

again to the left for an explanation, pedagogue there had stripped my round of bread of all the crust. I cared not then for this double robbery, but having put the liquid before me, incautiously to my lips, sorrowful as I was, I cared for that. Joe Brandon never served me so. I drank that evening as little as I ate.

CHAPTER IX.

I prove to be, not one in a thousand, but one in a quarter of that number, to whom no quarter was shown—In spite of my entreaties I am evil entreated, and am not only placed on the lowest form, but made excessively uncomfortable on my seat of honour.

HEROES, statesmen, philosophers, must bend to circumstances, and so must little boys at boarding-school. I went to bed with the rest, and, like the rest, had my bedfellow. Miserable and weary was that night to my infant heart. When I found I could do so unobserved, I buried my face in the pillow, and wept with a perfect passion of wretchedness. Never shall I forget that bitter night of tears. It is singular that I

did not weep long for myself. The mournful images that arose before me, and demanded each, as it came, its tribute of grief, ceased soon to be connected with my own individual suffering. My own abandonment and isolation no longer affected me. But I fancied my nurse was ill—that my foster-brother was lost in the streets, and wandering, hungry and in rags—my fancy even imaged to me Brandon having met with some accident, and pitifully calling in vain for his little Ralph to run and fetch mother. It was these fond imaginings that gave me the intense agony that kept me wakeful till the morning dawned—and the first streak of light that appeared through the windows, heralded me to peace and sleep.

I had a hard, a cruel life at that school. When I lived with my nurse, the boys in the street used to beat me because I was too much of the gentleman, and now the young gentlemen thrashed me, for not coming up to their standard of gentility. I saw a tyrant in every urchin that was stronger than myself, and a derider in those that were weaker. The next

morning after my arrival, a fellow a little bigger than myself, came up, and standing before me, gave me very deliberately as hard a slap in the face as his strength would permit. Half crying with the pain, and yet, not wishing to be thought quarrelsome, I asked, with good-natured humility, whether that was done in jest or in earnest. The little insolent replied, in his school-boy wit, "betwixt and between." I couldn't stand that; my passion and my fist rose together, and hitting my oppressor midway between the eyes, "There's my betwixt and between," said I. His nose began to bleed, and when I went down into the school-room, the "new boy" had his hands well warmed with the ruler for fighting.

Alas! the first year of my academic life was one of unqualified wretchedness. For the two or three initiatory months, uncouth in speech, and vulgar in mien, with no gilded toy, rich plum-cake, or mint-new shilling to conciliate, I was despised and ridiculed; and when it was ascertained by my own confession, that I was the son of a day-labourer, I was shunned by the

aristocratic progeny of butchers, linen-drapers, and hatters. It took, at least, a half dozen floggings to cure me of the belief that Joseph Brandon and his wife were my parents. It was the shortest road to conviction, and Mr. Root prided himself upon short *cuts* in imparting knowledge. I assure my readers they were severe ones.

Mr. Root, the pedagogue of this immense school, which was situated in the vicinity of Islington, was a very stout and very handsome man, of about thirty. He had formerly been a subordinate where he now commanded, and his good looks had gained him the hand of the widow of his predecessor. He was very florid, with a cold dark eye, but his face was the most physical that I ever beheld. From the white, low forehead, to the well-formed chin, there was nothing on which the gazer could rest that spoke of intellectuality. There was "speculation in his eye," but it was the calculation of farthings. There was a pure ruddiness in his cheek, but it was the glow of matter, not that of mind. His mouth was well formed, yet pursed

up with an expression of mingled vanity and severity. He was very robust, and his arm exceedingly powerful. With all these personal advantages, he had a shrill girlish voice, that made him, in the execution of his cruelties, actually hideous. I believe, and I make the assertion in all honesty, that he received a sensual enjoyment by the act of inflicting punishment. He attended to no department of the school, but the flagellative. He walked in about twelve o'clock, had all on the list placed on a form, his man-servant was called in, the lads horsed, and he, in general, found ample amusement till one. He used to make it his boast that he never allowed any of his ushers to punish. The hypocrite! the epicure! he reserved all that luxury for himself. Add to this, that he was very ignorant out of the Tutor's Assistant, and, that he wrote a most abominably good hand, (that usual sign of a poor and trifle-occupied mind,) and now you have a very fair picture of Mr. Root. I have said that he was a most cruel tyrant: yet Nero himself ought not to be blackened; and I must

say this for my master's humanity, that I had been two days at school before I was flogged; and then it was for the enormity of not knowing my own name. "Rattlin," said the pedagogue. No reply. "Master Rattlin," in a shriller tone. Answer there was none. "Master Ralph Rattlin." Many started, but "Ralph Brandon" thought it concerned not him. But it did indeed. I believe that I had been told my new name, but I had forgotten it in my grief, and now in grief and in pain I was again taught it. When, for the first time, in reality, I tasted that acrid and bitter fruit of the tree of knowledge, old Isaac's (my soldier-schoolmaster) mock brushings were remembered with heartfelt regret.

At that time, the road to learning was strewed neither with flowers nor palm leaves, but with the instigating birch. The schoolmaster had not yet gone abroad, but he flogged most diligently at home, and verily, I partook amply of that diligence. I was flogged full, and I was flogged fasting; when I deserved it, and when I did not; I was flogged for speaking too

loudly, and for not speaking loudly enough, and for holding my tongue. Moreover, one morning I rode the horse without the saddle, because my face was dirty, and the next, because I pestered the maid-servant to wash it clean. I was flogged because my shoes were dirty, and again flogged, because I attempted to wipe them clean with my pocket-handkerchief. I was flogged for playing, and for staying in the schoolroom and not going out to play. The bigger boys used to beat me, and I was then flogged for fighting. It is hard to say for what I was not flogged. Things, the most contradictory, all tended to one end, and that was my own. At length, he flogged me into serious ill-health, and then he staid his hand, and I found relief on a bed of sickness. Even now, I look back to those days of persecution with horror. Those were the times of large schools, rods steeped in brine, (*actual fact,*) intestine insurrections, the bumping of obnoxious ushers, and the "barring out" of tyrannical masters. A school of this description was a complete place of torment for the orphan, the unfriended, and the deserted.

Lads then staid at school till they were eighteen and even twenty, and fagging flourished in all its atrocious oppression.

Let no one deem these details to be puerile. As the reader proceeds, he will find facts like these afford him a psychological study. He will see how a perverse mind was formed, or a noble one ruined; how all the evil passions were implanted, and by what means their growth was encouraged. He will trace by what causes a poetical temperament was driven almost to insanity; he has already seen how the demon of sudden anger got an unrelinquishing hold of a corner of my heart; and he will now see by whom, and in what manner, the seeds of worse vices were sown in a bosom, that was perhaps made to entertain only the noblest feelings, or soften to the most tender sentiments. This is not vanity. I know what a wreck I am. Allow me the poor consolation of contemplating what I might have been. There is piety in the thought. There is in it a silent homage to the goodness of the Creator, in acknowledging that he gave me purity and high capa-

bilities of virtue; and there is hope also, for perhaps, at some future time, if not here, hereafter, that soul may again adore him, in all the infant purity in which he bestowed it, ere I was, in a manner, compelled into sin. I am, after years of suffering, no more than a shell, once beautiful, but now corroded and shattered, that is cast upon the sands. At times I think, that not all the former bright tints are defaced, and that if the breath of kindness be breathed into it gently, it is still able to discourse, in return, some few notes of "most excellent music."

This may be real vanity. But why should I appear masked before the public? I am vain. I have been assured of it by hundreds, who have more vanity than myself. Verily *they* ought to know.

CHAPTER X.

I grow egotistical, and being pleased with myself, give good advice—A visit; and a strange jumble of tirades, tears, tutors, tenderness, and a tea-kettle.

LET me now describe the child of nine years and a half old, that was forced to undergo this terrible ordeal. We will suppose that, by the aid of the dancing-master and the drill-sergeant, I have been cured of my vulgar gait, and that my cockney accent has disappeared. Children of the age above mentioned, soon assimilate their tone and conversation with those around them. I was tall for my years, with a very light and active frame, and a countenance, the

complexion of which was of the most unstained fairness. My hair light, glossy, and naturally, but not universally, curling. To make it appear in ringlets all over my head, would have been the effect of art; yet, without art it was wavy, and at the temples, forehead, and the back of the head, always in full circlets. My face presented a perfect oval, and my features were classically regular. I had a good natural colour, the intensity of which ebbed and flowed with every passing emotion. I was one of those dangerous subjects whom anger always makes pale. My eyes were decidedly blue, every thing else that may be said to the contrary notwithstanding. The whole expression of my countenance was very feminine, but not soft. It was always the seat of some sentiment, or passion, and in its womanly refinement gave to me an appearance of constitutional delicacy and effeminacy, that I certainly did not possess. I was decidedly a very beautiful child, and a child that seemed formed to kindle and return a mother's love, yet the maternal caress never blessed me; but I was abandoned to the tender

mercies of a number of he-beings, by many of whom my vivacity was checked, my spirit humbled, and my flesh cruelly lacerated. Mothers! do you know how few are the years of happiness allotted to the longest and most fortunate life? Do not embitter, then, so large a portion of it as playful infancy, by abandoning your offspring to the hireling and the stranger. If your children must away from you, let them know that they have still a home; not merely a retreat composed of walls and a roof, and of man-servants, and maid-servants; all these make not a home. The child's real home is in his mother's arms.

I dwell thus particularly on my school-boy life, in order, in the first place, to prepare the reader for the singular events that follow; and, in the second, (and which forms by far the most important consideration, as I trust I am believed, and if *truth* deserves credence, believed I am,) to caution parents from trusting to the specious representations of any schoolmaster, to induce them to examine carefully and patiently into every detail of the establishment,

or they may become a party to a series of cruelties, that may break the spirit, and, perhaps, shorten the life of their children. Unfortunately, the most promising minds are those that soonest yield to the effect of harsh discipline. The phlegmatic, the dull, and the common-place vegetate easily through this state of probation. The blight that will destroy the rose, passes ever harmlessly over the tough and earth-embracing weed.

I staid at Mr. Root's school for very nearly three years, and I shall divide that memorable period into three distinct epochs—the desponding, the devotional, and the mendacious. After I had been flogged into uncertain health, I was confined, for at least six weeks, to my room, and, when I was convalescent, it was hinted by the surgeon, in not unintelligible terms, to Mr. Root, that if I did not experience the gentlest treatment, I might lose my life; which would have been very immaterial to Mr. Root, had it not been a mathematical certainty that he would lose a good scholar at the same time. By-the-by, the meaning that a schoolmaster

attaches to the words "good scholar," is one for whom he is paid well. Thus I was emphatically a good scholar; no doubt his very best. I was taught everything—at least his bill said so. He provided everything for me, and I staid with him during the holidays. He, therefore, ceased to confer upon me his cruel attentions; and abandoned me to a neglect hardly less cruel. The boys were strictly enjoined to leave me alone, and they obeyed. I found a solitude in the midst of society.

A loneliness came over my young spirit. I was a-weary, and I drooped like the tired bird, that alights on the ship, "far, far at sea." As that poor bird folds its wings, and sinks into peaceful oblivion, I could have folded my arms, and have laid down to die with pleasure. My heart exhausted itself with an intense longing for a companion to love. It wasted away all its substance in flinging out fibres to catch hold of that, with which it might beat in unison. As turn the tendrils of the vine hither and thither to clasp something to adorn, and to repay support by beauty, so I wore out my young ener-

gies in a fruitless search for sympathy. I had nothing to love me, though I would have loved many, if I had dared. There were many sweet faces among my school-fellows, to which I turned with a longing look, and a tearful eye. How menial I have been to procure a notice, a glance of kindness! I had nothing to give wherewith to bribe affection but services and labour, and those were either refused, or perhaps accepted with scorn. I was the only pariah among two hundred and fifty. There was a mystery and an obloquy attached to me, and the master had, by his interdiction, completely put me without the pale of society. I now said my lessons to the ushers with indifference—if I acquitted myself ill, I was unpunished—if well, unnoticed. My spirits began to give way fast, and I was beginning to feel the pernicious patronage of the servants. They would call me off the play-ground, on which I moped, send me on some message, or employ me in some light service. All this was winked at by the master, and, as for the mistress, she never let me know that it oc-

curred to her that I was in existence. It was evident that Mr. Root had no objection to all this, for, in consideration of the money paid to him for my education, he was graciously pleased to permit me to fill the office of his kitchen-boy. But, before I became utterly degraded into the menial of the menials, a fortunate occurrence happened, that put an end to my culinary servitude. To the utter surprise of Mr. and Mrs. Root, who expected nothing of the kind, a lady came to see me. What passed between the parties, before I was ushered into the parlour appropriated to visitors, I know not; it was some time before I was brought in, as preparatory ablutions were made, and my clothes changed. When I entered, I found that it was "the lady." I remember that she was very superbly dressed, and I thought, too, the most beautiful apparition that I had ever beheld. The scene that took place was a little singular, and I shall relate it at full.

As I have rigidly adhered to truth, I have been compelled to state what I have to say in

a form almost entirely narrative ; and have not imitated those great historians, who put long speeches into the mouths of their kings and generals, very much suited to the occasions undoubtedly, and deficient only in one point—that is, accuracy. I have told only of facts and impressions, and not given speeches that it would have been impossible for me to have remembered. Yet, in this interview there was something so striking to my young imagination, that my memory preserved many sentences, and all the substance, of what took place. There was wine and cake upon the table, and the lady looked a little fluttered. Mr. Root was trying with a forty Chesterfieldian power to look amiable. Mrs. Root was very fidgetty. As I appeared at the door timorously, the lady said to me without rising, but extending her delicate white hand, “Come here to me, Ralph ; do you not know me ?”

I could get no farther than the middle of the room, where I stood still, and burst out into a passion of tears. Those sweet tones of tenderness, the first I had heard for nine months,

thrilled like fire through my whole frame. It was a feeling so intense, that, had it not been agony, it would have been bliss.

"Good God!" said she, deeply agitated; "my poor boy, why do you cry?"

"Because, because you are so kind," said I, rushing forward to her extended arms, and, falling on my knees at her feet, I buried my face in her lap, and felt all happiness amidst my sobbings. She bent over me, and her tears trickled upon my neck. This did not last long. She placed me upon my feet, and drawing me to her side, kissed my cheeks, and my eyes, and my forehead. Her countenance soon became serene, and turning to my master, she said quietly, "This, sir, is very singular."

"Yes, ma'am, Master Rattlin *is* very singular. All clever boys are. He knows already his five declensions, and the four conjugations, active and passive. Come, Master Rattlin, decline for the lady the adjective *felix*—come, begin, nominative *hic et hæc et hoc felix*."

"I don't know any thing about it," said I, doggedly.

"I told you he was a *singular* child," resumed the pedagogue, with a most awkward attempt at a smile.

"The singularity to which I allude," said the lady, "is his finding kindness so singular."

"Kind! bless you, my dear madam," said they both together; "you can't conceive how much we love the little dear."

"It was but yesterday," said Mrs. Root, "that I was telling the lady of Mr. Alderman Jenkins—we have the five Jenkinses, ma'am—that Master Rattlin was the sweetest, genteel-est, and beautifullest boy in the whole school."

"It was but yesterday," said Mr. Root, "that I was saying to Doctor Duncan, (our respected rector, madam,) that Master Rattlin had evinced such an uncommon talent, that we might, by-and-by, expect the greatest things from him. Not yet ten months with me, madam. Already in Phædrus—the rule of three—and his French master gives the best account of him. He certainly has not begun to speak it yet, though he has made a vast progress in the French language. But it is

Monsieur le Gros' system to make his pupils thoroughly master of the language, before they attempt to converse in it. And his dancing, my dear madam—O, it would do your heart good to see him dance. Such grace, such elasticity, and such happiness in his manner."

A pause—and then they exclaimed together with a long-drawn, sentimental sigh, "And we both love him so."

"I am glad to hear so good an account of him," said the lady. "I hope, Ralph, that you love Mr. and Mrs. Root, for they seem very kind to you."

"No, I don't."

Mr. and Mrs. Root lifted their hands imploringly to heaven.

"Not love me!" they both exclaimed together, with a tone of heartfelt surprise and wounded sensibility, that would have gone far to have made the fortune of a sentimental actor.

"Come here, sir, directly," said Mr. Root. "Look me full in the face, sir. You are a singular boy, yet I *did* think you loved me. Don't be frightened, Ralph, I would not give

you *pain* on any account; and you know I never did. Now tell me, my dear boy," gradually softening from the terrible to the tender, "tell me, my dear boy, why you fancy you do not love me. You see, madam, that I encourage sincerity—and like, at all times, the truth to be spoken out. Why don't you love me, Ralph, dear?" pinching my ear with a spiteful violence, that was meant for gracious playfulness in the eyes of the lady, and an intelligible hint for myself. I was silent.

"Come, Ralph, speak your mind freely. No one will do you any harm for it, I am sure. Why don't you love Mr. Root?" said the lady.

I was ashamed to speak of my floggings, and I looked upon his late abandonment and neglect as kindness. I knew not what to say, yet I knew I hated him most cordially. I stammered, and at last I brought out this unfortunate sentence, "Because he has got such an ugly, nasty voice."

Mr. and Mrs. Root burst out into a long, and, for the time, apparently uncontrollable laughter.

When it had somewhat subsided, the schoolmaster exclaimed, "There, madam, didn't I tell you he was a singular lad? Come here, you little wag, I must give you a kiss for your drollery." And the monster hauled me to him, and when his face was close to mine, I saw a wolfish glare in his eyes, that made me fear that he was going to bite my nose off. The lady did not at all participate in the joviality, and, as it is difficult to keep up mirth entirely upon one's own resources, we were beginning to be a gloomy party. What I had unconsciously said respecting my master's voice, was wormwood to him. He had long been the butt of all his acquaintance respecting it, and what followed was the making that unbearable which was before too bitter. Many questions were put by the visitor, and the answers appeared to grow more and more unsatisfactory as they were elicited. The lady was beginning to look unhappy, when a sudden brightness came over her lovely countenance, and with the most polished and kindly tone, she asked to see Mr. Root's own children. Mr. Root looked silly,

and Mrs. Root distressed. The vapid and worn-out joke that their family was so large that it boasted of the number of two hundred and fifty, fell spiritless to the ground, and disappointment, and even a slight shade of despondence, came over the lady's features.

"Where were you, Ralph, when I came?" said she; "I waited for you long."

"I was being washed, and putting on my second best."

"But why washed at this time of day—and why put on your second best?"

"Because I had dirtied my hands, and my other clothes, carrying up the tea-kettle to Mr. Matthews' room."

Mr. and Mrs. Root again held up their hands in astonishment.

"And who is Mr. Matthews?" continued the lady.

"Second Latin master, and ill a-bed in the garret."

"From whence did you take the tea-kettle?"

"From the kitchen."

"And who gave it you?"

"Molly, one of the maids."

At this disclosure Mr. Root fell into the greatest of all possible rages, and, as we like the figure of speech called a climax, we must say, that Mrs. Root fell into a much greater. They would turn the hussey out of the house that instant; they would do that, they would do this, and they would do the other. At length, the lady, with calm severity, requested them to do nothing at all.

"There has been," said she some mistake here. There is nothing very wrong, or disgraceful in Ralph attending to the wants of his sick master, though he does lie in the garret. I would rather see in his disposition a sympathy for suffering encouraged. God knows, there is in this world too much of the latter, and too little of the former. Yet I certainly think that there could have been a less degrading method pointed out to him of showing attention. But we will let this pass, as I know it will never happen again. You see, Mr. and Mrs. Root, that this poor child is rather delicate in appearance; he is much

grown, certainly ; much more than I expected, or wished—but he seems both shy and dejected. I was in hopes that you had been yourselves blessed with a family. A mother can trust to a mother. Though you are not parents you have known a parent's love. I have no doubt that you are fond of children,—[‘ Very,’ both in a breath :]—from the profession you have chosen. I am the godmother of this boy. Alas ! I am afraid no nearer relation will ever appear to claim him. He has no mother, Mrs. Root, without you will be to him as one ; and, I conjure you, sir, to let the fatherless find in the preceptor, a father. Let him only meet for a year or two with kindness, and I will cheerfully trust to Providence for the rest. Though I detest the quackery of getting up a scene, I wish to be as impressive as I can, as, I am sorry to say, more than a year will unavoidably pass before I can see this poor youth again. Let me, at that time, I conjure you, see him in health and cheerfulness. Will you permit me now to say farewell, as I wish to say a few words of adieu to my godson, and should I cry over him for

his mother's sake, you know that a lady does not like to be seen with red eyes."

The delicacy of this sickly attempt at pleasantry, was quite lost upon the scholastic pair. They understood her literally. And Mrs. Root began, "My eye—water——" However, leave was taken, and I was left with the lady. She took me on her lap and a hearty hug we had together. She then rang for Molly. She spoke to the girl kindly, asked no questions of her that might lead her to betray her employers, but giving her half a guinea not to lose sight of me in the multitude, and, to prove her gratitude, never to suffer me again to enter into the kitchen. She promised to double the gratuity when she again saw me if she attended to her request. The girl evidently affected, as much by her manner as her gift, curtsied and withdrew. While she stayed at the school she complied with my godmother's request most punctually.

CHAPTER XI.

Containeth a lecture on love from a personification of loveliness—and sheweth that superstition has its sweets as well as its horrors—and also how to avoid the infection of the evil eye.

WHEN we were alone, she examined me carefully under my clothes to ascertain if I were perfectly clean. It would have, perhaps, been for me a happy circumstance, if Mr. Root had flogged me this day, or even a fortnight previously. The marks that he left were not very ephemeral. I don't know whether a flogging a month old would not equally well have served my purpose. He certainly wrote a strong, bold hand, in red ink, not easily obliterated. However, as

he had not noticed me since my illness, I had no marks to show.

When she had readjusted my dress, she hugged me to her side, and we looked, for a long while, in each other's eyes in silence.

"Ralph," said she, at length, forgetting that the fault was mutual, "do you know that it is very rude to look so hard into people's faces: why do you do it, my boy?"

"Because you are so very, very, very pretty, and your voice is so soft; and, because I do love you so."

"But you must not love me too much, my sweet child; because I can't be with you to return your love."

"O dear, I'm so sorry; because, because, if you don't love me, nobody will. Master don't love me—nor the ushers—nor the boys; and they keep calling me the ——"

"Hush, Ralph! hush, my poor boy," said she, colouring to her very forehead. "Never tell me what they call you. Little boys who call names, are wicked boys, and very false boys too. Hear me, Ralph! You are nearly

ten years old. You must be a man, and not love any one too much—not even me—for it makes people very unhappy to love too much. Do you understand me, Ralph? You must be kind to all, and all will be kind to you; but it is best not to love any thing violently—excepting, Ralph, Him who will love you when all hate you—who will care for you when all desert you—your God!”

“I don’t know too much about that,” was my answer. “Mr. Root tells us once every week to trust in God, and that God will protect the innocent, and all that; and then he flogs me for nothing at all, though I trust all I can; and I’m sure that I’m innocent.”

My good godmother was a little shocked at this, and endeavoured to convince me that such expressions were impious, by assuring me that every thing was suffered for the best, and that, if Mr. Root flogged me unjustly and wickedly, I should be rewarded, and my master punished for it, hereafter, which assurance did not much mend my moral feelings, as I silently resolved to put myself in the way of a few

extra unjust chastisements, in order that my master might receive the full benefit of them in a future state.

Moral duties should be inculcated in the earliest youth, but the mysteries of religion should be left to a riper age. After many endearments, and much good advice, that I thought most beautiful, from the tenderness of tone in which it was given, I requested the lady, with all my powers of entreaty, and, amidst a shower of kisses, to take me home to my mother.

"Alas, my dear boy," was the reply, "Mrs. Brandon is not your mother."

"Well, I couldn't believe that before;—never mind—I love her just as well; but who is my mother? if you were not so pretty, and so fine, I would ask you to be my mother; all the other boys have got a mother; and a father too."

The lady caught me to her bosom, and kissing me amidst her tears said, "Ralph, I will be your mother, though you must only look upon me as your godmamma."

“ Oh, I’m so glad of that ; and what shall I call you ? ”

“ Mamma, my dear child.”

“ Well, mamma, won’t you take me home ? I don’t mean now, but at the holidays, when all the others go to their mammas ? I’ll be so good. Won’t you, mamma ? ”

“ Come here, Ralph. I was wrong. You must not call me mamma, I can’t bear it. I was never a mother to you, my poor boy. I cannot have you home. By-and-by, perhaps. Do not think about me too much, and do not think that you are not loved. Oh, you are loved, very much indeed ; but now you must make your schoolfellows love you. I have told Mr. Root to allow you sixpence a-week, and there are eight shillings for you, and a box of playthings in the hall, and a large cake in the box ; lend the playthings and share the cake. Now, my dear boy, I must leave you. Do not think that I am your mother, but your very good friend. Now, may God bless you, and watch over you. Keep up your spirits, and remem-

ber that you are cared for, and loved—O, how fondly loved !”

With a fervent blessing, and an equally fervent embrace, she parted from me ; and, when I looked round and found that she had gone from the room, I actually experienced the sensation as if the light of the sun had been suddenly withdrawn, and that I walked forth in twilight. Exceeding beautiful was that tall, fair lady, and she must have been a spirit of light in the house where she moved, even a ray of gladness, and an incarnate blessing must she have been in the loveliness of her presence.

When I went up melancholy, to my bed, and crept sorrowfully under the clothes, I felt a protection round me in that haunted chamber, in the very fact of having again seen her. This house, that had been now converted into a large school, had formerly been one of the suburban palaces of Queen Elizabeth ; it was very spacious and rambling ; some of the rooms had been modernized, and some remained as they had been for centuries. The room in

which I slept, was one of the smallest, and contained only two beds, one of which was occupied by the housekeeper, a very respectable old lady, and the other by myself. Sometimes I had a bedfellow, and sometimes not. This room had probably been a vestibule, or the antichamber to some larger apartment, and it now formed an abutment to the edifice, all on one side of it being ancient, and the other modern. It was lighted by one narrow, high, gothic window, the panes of which were very small, lozenged, and many of them still stained. The roof was groined and concave, and still gay with tarnished gold. The mouldings and traceries sprang up from the four corners, and all terminated in the centre, in which grinned a Medusa's head, with her circling snakes, in high preservation, and of great and ghastly beauty. There were other grotesque visages, sprinkled here and there over that elaborate roof; but look at that Medusa from what point you might, the painted wooden eyes were cast with a stolid sternness upon you. When I had a bedfellow it was always some cast-away

like myself—some poor wretch who could not go home and complain that he was put to sleep in “the haunted chamber.” The boys told strange tales of that room, and they all believed that the floor was stained with blood. I often examined it, both by day and by candle-light; it was very old and of oak, dark, and much discoloured. But even my excited fancy could discover nothing like blood-spots upon it. After all, when I was alone in that bed-chamber, for the housekeeper seldom entered before midnight, and the flickering and feeble oil lamp, that always burned upon her table, threw its uncertain rays upwards, and made the central face quiver as it were into life, I would shrink, horror-stricken, under the clothes, and silently pray for the morning. It was certainly a fearful room for a visionary child like myself, with whom the existence of ghosts made an article of faith, and who had been once before frightened, even unto the death, by supernatural terrors.

But of all this I never complained. I have not merit enough to boast that I am proud, for

pride has always something ennobling about it; but I was vain, and vanity enabled me to put on the appearance of courage. When questioned by the few schoolfellows who would speak to me, I acknowledged no ghosts, and would own to no fear. All this, in the sequel, was remembered to my honour. Besides, I had found a singular antidote against the look of the evil eye in the ceiling. What I am going to relate may be startling, and for a child ten years old, appear incredible; but it is the bare, unembellished truth. The moment that I shall feel tempted to draw, in these memoirs, on my invention instead of my memory, that moment, distrusting myself, I shall lay down my pen. I feel conscious that I could relate something infinitely more striking and amusing, had I recourse to fiction: but the moral force of the actual and stern verity would be lost to my readers.

This was my antidote alluded to. In the church where we went, there was a strongly painted altar-piece. The Virgin Mother bent, with ineffable sweetness, over the sleeping Jesus.

The pew in which I sat was distant enough to give the full force of illusion to the power of the artist, and the glory round the Madonna much assisted my imagination. I certainly attended to that face, and to that beneficent attitude, more than to the service. When the terrors of my desolate situation used to begin to creep over me in my lonely bed, I could, without much effort of imagination, bring that sweet motherly face before me, and view it visibly in the gloom of the room, and thus defy the dead glance of the visage above me. I used to whisper to myself these words—"Lady with the glory, come and sit by me." And I could then close my eyes, and fancy, nay almost feel assured of her presence, and sleep in peace.

But in the night that I had seen my god-mother, when I crept under my clothes disconsolately, I no longer whispered for the lady with the glory; it was for my sweet mamma. And she too came and blessed my gentle slumbers. Surely that beautiful creature must have been my mother, for long did she come and play the seraph's part over her child, and

watched by his pillow, till he sank in the repose of innocence.

Lately, at the age of forty, I visited that church. I looked earnestly at the altar-piece. I was astonished, hurt, disgusted. It was a coarse daub. The freshness of the painting had been long changed by the dark tarnish of years, and the blighting of a damp atmosphere. There were some remains of beauty in the expression, and elegance in the attitude; but, as a piece of art, it was but a second-rate performance. Age dispels many illusions, and suffers for it. Truly, youth and enthusiasm are the best painters.

CHAPTER XII.

Ralph lectureth on divinity and little boys' nether garments—Despondeth exceedingly—and being the weakest goeth to the wall, and there findeth consolation—An old friend with an old face, and excellent provent.

THE next morning, I arose the possessor of eight shillings, a box of playthings, a plum-cake, and a heavy heart. It is most true, that which Wordsworth hath said or sung, the "Boy's the *father* of the man." When I mingled with my schoolmates, and the unexpected possession of my various wealth had transpired, I found many of them very kind and *fatherly* indeed, for they borrowed my money, ate my

cake, broke my playthings, and my heart they left just in the same state as it was before.

But I will no longer dwell upon the portraiture of that saddest of all created things, the despised of many. I was taught the hard lesson of looking upon cruelty as my daily bread, tears as my daily drink, and scorn as my natural portion. Had not my heart hardened, it must have broken. But, before I leave what I call the desponding epoch of my schoolboy-days, I must not omit to mention a species of impious barbarity, that had well nigh alienated my heart for ever from religion, and which made me, for the time, detest the very name of church. Christianity is most eminently a religion of kindness; and, through the paths of holy love only, should the young heart be conducted to the throne of grace, for we have it from the highest authority, that the worship of little children is an acceptable offering, and may well mingle with the sweetest symphonies that ascend from the lips of seraphs to the footstool of the Everlasting. Our God

is not a God of terrors, and when he is so represented, or is made so by any flint-hearted pedagogue to the infant pupil, that man has to answer for the almost unpardonable sin of perilling a soul. Let parents and guardians look to it. Let them mark well the unwilling files that are paraded by boarding-school keepers, into the adjacent church or chapel, bringing a mercenary puff up to the very horns of the altar, and let them then inquire how many are flogged, or beaten, or otherwise evil-entreated, because they have flagged in an attention impossible in the days of childhood, and have not remembered a text perhaps indistinctly or inaudibly given ;—let those parents and guardians, I say, inquire, and if but one poor youth has so suffered, let them be fully assured, that that master, whatever may be his diligence, whatever may be his attainments, however high his worldly character may stand, is not fit to be the modeller of the youthful mind, and only wants the opportunity to betray that bigotry which would gladly burn his dissenting neigh-

bour at the stake, or lash a faith, with exquisite tortures, into the children of those whom, in his saintly pride, he may call heretical.

At church we occupied, at least, one third of the whole of one side of the gallery. Two hundred and fifty boys and young men, with their attending masters and ushers, could not but fill a large space, and of course, would form no unimportant feature in the audience. Mr. Root, and the little boys, were always placed in the lower and front seats. There we sat, poor dear little puppets, with our eyes strained on the prayer-books, always in the wrong places, during the offertory, and, after the sermon had begun, repeating the text over and over again, whilst the preaching continued, lest we should forget it ; whilst all this time the bigger boys in the rear were studying novels, or playing at odd and even for nuts, marbles, or halfpence. I well know that the mathematical master used, invariably, to solve his hard problems on fly-leaves in his prayer-book during the service, for I have repeatedly seen there his laborious calculations in minutely

small figures ; and he never opened his prayer-book but at church—as perhaps he thought, with the old woman of Smollett, that it was a species of impiety to study such works any where else. Whilst all this was going on in the back rows, Mr. Root, in the full-blown glory of his Sunday paraphernalia, and well powdered, attended exclusively to the holiness and devout comportment of his little chapter of innocents. Tablet in hand, every wandering look was noted down ; and, alas ! the consequences to me were dreadfully painful.

The absolution absolved me not. The “*Te Deum laudamus*” was to me more a source of tears than of praise,—and, the “*O be joyful in the Lord*” has repeatedly made me intensely sorrowful in the school-room. In all honesty, I don’t think that, for a whole half-year, I once escaped my Sunday flogging. It came as regularly as the baked rice puddings. I began to look upon the thing as a matter of course ; and, if any person should doubt the credibility of this, or any other account of these my school-boy days, happily, there are several now living

who can vouch for its veracity, and if I am dared to the proof by any one, by whose conviction I should feel honoured, that proof most certainly will I give.

I have stated all this, from what I believe to be a true reverence for worship, to make the offices of religion a balm and a blessing, to prove that there is a cherishing warmth in the glory of light that surrounds the throne of Exhaustless Benevolence, and, that the Deity cannot be worthily called upon, by young hearts stricken by degrading fears, and fainting under a Moloch-inspired dread. Notwithstanding my eccentric life, I have ever been the ardent, the unpretending, though the unworthy adorer of the Great Being, whose highest attribute is the "Good." I have had reason to be so.

The man who has acknowledged his Creator amidst his most stupendous works, who has recognised his voice in the ocean-storm, who has confessed his providence amidst the slaughter of battle, and witnessed the awful universality of that adoration that is wafted to Him,

from all nations, under all forms, from the simple smiting of the breast of the penitent solitary one, to the sublime pealings of the choral hymn, buoyed upon the resounding notes of the thunder-tongued organ in the high and dim cathedral,—the man, who has witnessed and acutely felt all this, and has no feelings of piety, or deference to religion, must be endued with a heart hardened beyond the flintiness, as the Scriptures beautifully express it, “of the nether millstone.”

But my *forte* is not the serious. I am intent, and quiet, and thoughtful, only under the influence of great enjoyment. When I have the most cause to deem myself blessed, or to call myself triumphant, it is then that I am stricken with a feeling of undesert, that I am grave with humility, or sad with the thought of human instability. But on the eve of battle, on the yard-arm in the tempest, or amidst the dying in the pest-house, say, O ye companions of my youth! whose jest was the most constant, whose laugh the loudest? Yet the one feeling was not real despondence, nor the

other real courage. In the first place, it is no more than the soul looking beyond this world for the real, in the second, she is trifling in this world with the ideal. However, as in these pages I intend to attempt to be tolerably gay, it may be fairly presumed that I am very considerably unhappy, and dull, perhaps, as the perusal of these memoirs may make my readers.

As such great pains were *taken*, at least by me, in my religious education, it is not to be wondered at that I should not feel at all sedentary on the Sunday afternoons after church-time. In fact, I affected any position rather than the sitting one. But all the Sundays were not joyless to me. One, in particular, though the former part of it had been passed in sickening fear, and the middle in torturing pain, its termination was marked with a heartfelt joyousness, the cause of which I must record as a tribute of gratitude due to one of the "not unwashed," but the muddy-minded multitude.

I was stealing along mournfully under the play-ground wall, with no hasty or striding step, not particularly wishing any rough or

close contact of certain parts of my dress with my person, my passing schoolmates looking upon me in the manner that Shakspeare so beautifully describes the untouched deer regard the stricken hart. My soul was very heavy, and full of dark wonder. The sun was setting, and, to all living, it is either a time of solemn peace, or of instinctive melancholy when looked upon by the solitary one. Of a sudden I was roused from my gloom by the well known, yet long-missed shout of, "Ralph! Ralph!" and looking up, I discovered the hard-featured, grinning physiognomy of Joe Brandon, actually beaming with pleasure, on the top of the wall. How glad he was! How glad I was! He had found me! Instead of seeking the Lord in his various conventicles on the Sunday, he had employed that day, invariably, after I had been taken from his house, in reconnoitering the different boarding-schools in the vicinity, and, at some distance from the metropolis. To this, no doubt, he was greatly instigated by the affection of my nurse, but I give his own heart the credit of its being a labour of love. The

wall being too high to permit us to shake hands; at my earnest entreaty, he went round to the front; but after having made known his desire—literally, “a pampered menial drove him from the door.” Well, the wall if not open to him, was still before and above him, and he again mounted it. Our words were few, as the boys began to cluster around me. He let drop to me fourpence halfpenny, folded in a piece of brown paper, and disappeared. Oh how I prize that pilgrim visit! Forget it, I never can! That meeting was to me a one bright light on my dark and dreary path. It enabled me to go forward; there was not much gloom between me and happier days—perhaps the light of joy that that occurrence shed, enabled me to pass over the trial. It might have been, that, at that period, I could have borne no more, and should have sunk under my accumulated persecutions. I will not say that so it was, for there is an elasticity in early youth that recovers itself against much—yet, I was at that time, heavy indeed with exceeding hopelessness. All I can say to the sneerer is, I wish, that at

the next conclave of personages who may be assembled to discuss the destinies of nations, there may be as much of the milk of human kindness, and right feelings among them, as there was between me and the labouring sawyer Joe Brandon, the one being at the top, and the other at the bottom of the wall.

The next Sunday, Brandon was again on the wall with a prodigious plum-cake. A regular cut-and-come-again affair: it fell to the ground with a heaviness of sound that beat the falling of Corporal Trim's hat all to ribbons. To be sure the Corporal's fell as if there had been a quantity of "clay kneaded in the crown of it," whilst mine was kneaded with excellent dough. The Sunday after there was the same appearance varied with gingerbread, and then—for years, I neither saw, nor heard of him. Poor Joseph was threatened with the constable, and was put to no more expense for cakes for his foster-son.

CHAPTER XIII.

Pray remember the fifth of November—Rumours of wars—preceded by scholastic elocution, and succeeded by a cold dinner, darkness, and determination.

I SHALL now draw the dolorous recital of what I have termed my epoch of despondency to a close. The fifth of November was approaching; I had been at school nearly two years, and had learned little but the hard lesson “to bear,” and that I had well studied. I had, as yet, made no friends. Boys are very tyrannical and very generous, by fits. They will bully and oppress the outcast of a school, because it is the fashion to bully and oppress

him—but they will equally magnify their hero, and are sensitively alive to admiration of feats of daring and wild exploit. With them, bravery is the first virtue, generosity the second. They crouch under the strong for protection, and they court the lavish from self-interest. In all this they differ from men in nothing but that they act more undisguisedly. Well, the fifth of November was fast approaching, in which I was to commence the enthusiastic epoch of my schoolboy existence. I was now twelve years of age. Almost insensible to bodily pain by frequent magisterial and social thrashings, tall, strong of my age, reckless, and fearless. The scene of my first exploit was to be amidst the excitement of a “barring out,” but of such a “barring out,” that the memory of it remains in the vicinity in which it took place, to this day.

I have before said that the school contained never less than two hundred and fifty pupils—sometimes it amounted to nearly three hundred. At the time of which I am about to speak, it was very full, containing, among others,

many young men. The times are no more when persons of nineteen and twenty suffered themselves to be horsed, and took their one and two dozens with edification and humility. At this age, we now cultivate moustaches, talk of our Joe Mantons, send a friend to demand an explanation, and all that sort of thing. Oh! times are much improved! However, at that period, the birch was no visionary terror. Infliction or expulsion were the alternatives! and, as the form of government was a despotism—like all despotisms to my thinking, a most odious one—it was subject, at intervals, to great convulsions. I am going to describe the greatest under the reign of Root the First.

Mr. Root was capricious. Sometimes he wore his own handsome head well powdered; at others curled without powder; at others straight, without powder or curls. He was churchwarden; and then, when his head was full of his office, it was also full of flour, and full of ideas of his own consequence and infallibility. On a concert night, and in the ball-room, it was curled, and then it was full of

amatory conquests—and, as he was captain in the — cavalry volunteers, on field days his hair was straight and lank—martial ardour gave him no time to attend to the fripperies of the coxcomb. These are but small particulars, but such are very important in the character of a great man. With his hair curled, he was jocular, even playful—with it lank, he was a great disciplinarian—had military subordination strong in respect, and the birch gyrated freely. But when he was full blown in powder, he was unbearable. There was then combined all the severity of the soldier and the dogmatism of the pedagogue, with the self-sufficiency and domineering nature of the coxcomb and churchwarden.

On the memorable fifth of November, Mr. Root appeared in the school-room, with his hair elaborately powdered.

The little boys trembled. Lads by fifteens and twenties wanted to go out under various pretences. The big boys looked very serious, and very resolved. It was twelve o'clock—and some thirty or forty—myself always in-

cluded—were duly flogged, it being “his custom at the hour of noon.” When the periodical operation was over, at which there was much spargefication of powder from his whitened head, he commanded silence. Even the flagellated boys contrived to hush up their sobs, the shuffling of feet ceased, those who had colds refrained from blowing their noses; and, after one boy was flogged for coughing, he thus delivered himself:

“Young gentlemen, it has been customary—customary it has been, I say, for you to have permission to make a bonfire in the lower field, and display your fireworks, on this anniversary of the fifth of November. Little boys, take your dictionaries, and look out for the word anniversary.”

A bustle for the books, whilst Mr. Root plumes himself, and struts up and down. Two boys fight for the same dictionary; one of them gets a plunge on the nose, which makes him cry out—he is immediately horsed and flogged for speaking; and, rod in hand, Mr. Root. continues.

“Young gentlemen, you know my method—my method is well known to you, I say,—to join amusement with instruction. Now, young gentlemen, the great conflagration—tenth, ninth, and eighth forms, look out the word conflagration—the great conflagration, I say, made by this pyrotechnic display—seventh, sixth, and fifth forms, turn up the word pyrotechnic. Mr. Reynolds, (the head classical master,) you will particularly oblige me by not taking snuff in that violent way whilst I am speaking, the sniffing is abominable.”

“Turn up the word sniffing,” cries a voice from the lower end of the school. A great confusion—the culprit remains undiscovered, and some forty, at two suspected desks, are fined three-halfpence a piece. Mr. Root continues, with a good deal of indignation: “I sha’n’t allow the bonfire no more—no, not at all; nor the fireworks neither—no, nothing of no kind of the sort.” All this in his natural voice: then swelling in dignity and in diction, “but, for the accumulated pile of combustibles, I say—for the combustible pile that you have

accumulated, that you may not be deprived of the merit of doing a good action, the materials of which it is composed, that is to say, the logs of wood, and the bavins of furze, with the pole and tar-barrel, shall be sold, and the money put in the poor-box next Sunday, which I, as one of the churchwardens, shall hold at the church-porch; for a charity sermon will on that day be preached by the reverend Father in God, the Lord Bishop of Bristol. It is our duty, as Christians, to give eleemosynary aid to the poor;—let all classes but the first and second, look out the word eleemosynary. I say to the poor, eleemosynary aid should be given. You will also give up all the fireworks that you may have in your play-boxes, for the same laudable purpose. The servant will go round and collect them after dinner. I say, by the servants after dinner they shall all be collected. Moreover, young gentlemen, I have to tell you, that the churchwardens, and the authorities in the town, are determined to put down Guy Faux, and he shall be put down accordingly. So now, young gentlemen, you'd

better take your amusements before dinner, for you will have no holiday in the afternoon, and I shall not suffer any one to go out after tea, for fear of mischief." Having thus spoken, he dismissed the school, and strode forth majestically.

O reader! can you conceive the dismay, the indignation, and the rage that the Court of Aldermen would display, if, when sitting down hungrily to a civic feast, they were informed that all the eatables and potatories were carried off by a party headed by Mr. Scales? Can you conceive the fury that would burn in the countenances of a whole family of lordly sinecurists, at being informed upon official authority, that henceforth their salaries would be equal to their services? No, all this you cannot conceive; nor turtle-desiring alderman, nor cate-fed sinecurist, could, under these their supposed tribulations, have approached in fury and hate, the meekest spirited boys of Mr. Root's school, when they became fully aware of the extent of the tyrannous robbery about to be perpetrated. Had they not been led on

by hope? Had they not trustingly eschewed banbury-cakes—sidled by longingly the pastry-cook's—and piously withstood the temptation of hard-bake, in order that they might save up their pocket-money for this one grand occasion? And even after this, their hopes and their exertions to end in smoke? Would that it were even that; but it was decided that there should be neither fire nor smoke. Infatuated pedagogue! Unhappy decision!

The boys did not make use of the permission to go out to play. They gathered together unanimously, in earnest knots—rebellion stalked on tip-toe from party to party—the little boys looked big, and the big boys looked bigger—and the young men looked magnificent. The half-borders whispered their fears to the ushers, the ushers spoke under their breaths to the under masters, the under masters had cautious conversation with the head Latin, French, and mathematical tutors, and these poured their misgiving into the ears of the awful *Dominus* himself; but he only shook his powdered head in derision and disdain.

On that cold, foggy, fifth of November, we all sat down to a dinner as cold as the day, and with looks as dark as the atmosphere. Amidst the clatter of knives and forks, the rumour already run from table to table, that a horse and cart was just going to remove the enormous pile of combustibles collected for the bonfire. We had good spirits amongst us. There was an air of calm defiance on a great many. The reason was soon explained, for before we rose from our repast, huge volumes of red flame rose from the field—the pile had been fired in twenty places at once, and, at this sight, a simultaneous and irrepressible shout shook the walls of the school-room. The maid-servants who were attending the table, shrieking, each in her peculiar musical note, hurried out in confusion and fear; and there was a rush towards the door by the scholars, and some few got down stairs. However, the masters soon closed the door, and those who had escaped were brought back. The shutters of the windows that looked out upon the fire were closed, and thus, in the middle of the day,

we were reduced to a state, almost of twilight.

Every moment expecting actual collision with their pupils, the masters and ushers, about sixteen in number, congregated at the lower end of the room, near the door, for the double purpose of supporting each other, and of making a timely escape. The half-suppressed hubbub among three hundred boys, confined in partial darkness, grew stronger each moment; it was like the rumbling beneath the earth, that precedes the earthquake. No one spoke as yet louder than the other—the master-voice had not yet risen. That dulled noise seemed like a far-off humming, and had it not been so intense, and so very human, it might have been compared to the wrath of a myriad of bees confined in the darkness of their hives, with their queen lying dead amongst them.

CHAPTER XIV.

Hard words the precursors of hard blows—A turn-up to be apprehended, but not merely of pollysyllables—Ralph commences raving—Root resisting—The latter gits the whip-hand of us.

WHILST this commotion was going on in the school-room, Mr. Root was active in the field, endeavouring, with the aid of the men servants, to pluck as much fuel from the burning pile as possible. The attempt was nearly vain. He singed his clothes, and burnt his hands, lost his hat in the excitement and turmoil, and sadly discomposed his powdered ringlets. Advances were brought to him, (we must now use the phrase military,) of the demonstration made

by the young gentlemen in the school-room. He hurried with the pitchfork in his hand, which he had been using, and appeared at the entrance of his pandemonium, almost, considering his demoniac look, in character. He made a speech, enforced by thumping the handle of the fork against the floor, which speech, though but little attended to, was marked by one singularity. He did not tell the lads to turn up any of his hard words. However, he hoped that the young gentlemen had yet sense of propriety enough left, to permit the servants to clear the tables of the plates, knives, forks, and other dinner appurtenances. This was acceded to by shouts of "Let them in—let them in." The girls and the two school servants came in, one of the latter being the obnoxious hoister, and they were permitted to perform their office in a dead silence. It speaks well for our sense of honour, and respect for the implied conditions of the treaty, when it is remembered that this abhorred Tom, the living instrument of our tortures, and, on whose back we had most of us so often

writhed, was permitted to go into the darkest corners of the room unmolested, and even un-insulted. When the tables were cleared, then rung out exultingly the shout of "Bar him out—bar him out!"

"I never yet," roared out Mr. Root, "was barred out of my own premises, and I never will be!" He was determined to resist manfully, and if he fell, to fall like Cæsar, in the capitol, decorously: so as togæ are not worn in our unclassical days he retired to prepare himself for the contention, by getting his head newly powdered, telling his assistants to keep the position that they still held, at all hazards, near the door.

Before I narrate the ensuing struggle—a struggle that will be ever remembered in the town in which it took place, and which will serve any one that was engaged in it, as long as he lives, to talk of with honest enthusiasm, even if he has been happy enough to have been engaged in real warfare; it is necessary to describe exactly the battle-field. The school was a parallelogram, bowed at one end, and about the dimen-

sions of a moderately-sized chapel. It was very lofty, and, at the bowed end, which looked into the fields, there were three large windows built very high, and arched after the ecclesiastical fashion. One of the sides had windows similar to those at the end. The school-room was entered from the house by a lobby, up into which lobby terminated a wide staircase, from the play-ground. The school-room was therefore entered from the lobby, by only one large folding door. But over this end there was a capacious orchestra, supported by six columns, which orchestra contained a very superb organ. The orchestra might also be entered from the house, but from a floor and a lobby, above that which opened into the school-room. Consequently, at the door end of the school-room, there was a space formed of about twelve or fourteen feet, with a ceiling much lower than the rest of the building, and which space was bounded by the six pillars that supported the gallery above. This low space was occupied by the masters and assistants—certainly a strong position, as it commanded the only

outlet. The whole edifice was built upon rows of stone columns, that permitted the boys a sheltered play-ground beneath the school-room in inclement or rainy weather. The windows being high from the floor within doors, and very high indeed from the ground without, they were but sorry and dangerous means of communication, through which, either to make an escape, or bring in succours or munitions, should the siege be turned to a blockade. It was, altogether, a vast, and when properly fitted up, a superb apartment, and was used for the monthly concerts and the occasional balls.

Time elapsed. It seemed that we were the party barred in, instead of the master being the party barred out. The mass of rebellion was as considerable as any radical could have wished; and, as yet, as disorganized as any Tory commander-in-chief of the forces could have desired. However, Mr. Root did not appear, and it having become completely dark, the boys themselves lighted the various lamps. About six or seven o'clock there was a stir

among the learned guard at the door, when at length Mr. Reynolds, the head classical master, having rapped the silver top of his great horn snuff-box, in a speech, mingled, very appropriately, with Latin and Greek quotations, wished to know what it was precisely, that the young gentleman desired, and he was answered by fifty voices at once, "Leave to go into the fields, and let off the fireworks."

After a pause, a message was brought that this could not be granted; but, upon the rest of the school going quietly to bed, permission would be given to all the young gentlemen above fifteen years of age, to go down the town until eleven o'clock. The proposal was refused with outcries of indignation. We now had many leaders, and the shouts of "Force the door!" became really dreadful. Gradually the lesser boys gave back, and the young men formed a dense front line, facing the sixteen masters, whose position was fortified by the pillars supporting the orchestra, and whose rear was strengthened by the servants of the household. As yet, the scholars stood with nothing

offensive in their hands, and with their arms folded, in desperate quietude. At last, there was a voice a good way in the *rear*, which accounts for the bravery of the owner, that shouted, "Why don't you rally, and force the door?" Here Monsieur Moineau, a French emigré, and our Gallic tutor, cried out lustily, "You shall force that door, never—*jamais, jamais*--my pretty *garçons, mes chers pupils*, be good, be quiet—go you couch yourself—*les feux d'artifices*! bah! they worth noding at all—you go to bed. Ah, ah, *demain*—all have *congé*—one, two, half holiday—but you force this door—*par ma fois, loyauté—jamais*—you go out, one, two, three, *tout*—go over dis corps, of Antoine Auguste Moineau."

We gave the brave fellow a hearty cheer for his loyalty; and, I have no doubt, had he been allowed to remain, he would have been trampled to death on his post. He had lost his rank, his fortune, every thing but his self-respect, in the quarrel of his king, who had just fell on the scaffold: he had a great respect for constituted authority, and was sadly grieved

at being obliged to honour heroism in spite of himself, when arrayed against it.

Let us pause over these proceedings, and return to myself. As the rebellion increased, I seemed to be receiving the elements of a new life. My limbs trembled, but it was with a fierce joy. I ran hither and thither exultingly—I pushed aside boys three or four years older than myself—I gnashed my teeth, I stamped, I clenched my hands,—I wished to harangue, but I could not find utterance, for the very excess of thoughts. At that moment I would not be put down; I grinned defiance in the face of my late scorers; I was drunk with the exciting draught of contention. The timid gave me their fireworks, the brave applauded my resolution, and, as I went from one party to another, exhorting more by gesture than by speech, I was at length rewarded, by hearing the approving shout of “Go it, Ralph Rattlin!”

I am not fearful of dwelling too much upon the affair. It must be interesting to those amiabilities called the “rising generation,” the

more especially, as a "barring out" is now become matter of history. Alas! we shall never go back to the good old times in that respect, notwithstanding we are again snugly grumbling under a Whig government. Let us place at least one "barring out" upon record, in order to let the radicals see, and seeing hope, when they find how nearly extremes meet, what a slight step there is from absolute despotism to absolute disorganization.

Things were in this state, the boys encouraging each other, when, to our astonishment, Mr. Root, newly-powdered, and attended by two friends, his neighbours, made his appearance in the orchestra, and incontinently began a speech. I was then too excited to attend to it; indeed it was scarcely heard for revilings and shoutings. However, I could contain myself no longer, and I, even I, though far from being in the first rank, shouted forth, "Let us out, or we will set fire to the school-room, and, if we are burnt, you'll be hung for murder." Yes, I said those words—I, who actually now start at my own shadow—I, who

when I see a stalwart, whiskered and moustached-fellow coming forward to meet me, modestly pop over on the other side—I, who was in a fit of the trembles the whole year of the comet !

“ God bless me,” said Mr Root, “ it is that vagabond Rattlin ! I flogged the little incorrigible but eight hours ago, and now he talks about burning my house down. There’s gratitude for you ! But I’ll put a stop to this at once—young gentlemen, I’ll put a stop to this at once ! I’m coming down among you to seize the ringleaders, and that good-for-nothing Rattlin. Ah ! the monitors, and the heads of all the classes, shall be flogged ; the rest shall be forgiven, if they will go quietly to bed, and give up all their fireworks.” Having so said, he descended from above with his friends, and in about a quarter of an hour afterwards, armed with a tremendous whip, he appeared among his satellites below.

CHAPTER XIV.

Much excellent, and consequently useless, diplomacy displayed—A truce, and many heads broken—the battle rages; and, at length, the pueriles achieve the victory.

THE reader must not suppose that, while masters and scholars were ranged against each other as antagonists, they were quiet as statues. There was much said on both sides, reasonings, entreaties, expostulations, and even jocularities passed between the adverse, but yet quiescent ranks. In this wordy warfare the boys had the best of it, and I'm sure the ushers had no stomach for the fray—if they fought, they must fight, in some measure, with their

hands tied ; for their own judgment told them that they could not be justified in inflicting upon their opponents any desperate wounds. In fact, considering all the circumstances, though they asseverated that the boys were terribly in the wrong, they could not say that Mr. Root was conspicuously in the right.

When Mr. Root got among his myrmidons, he resolutely cried, "Gentlemen assistants, advance, and seize Master Atkinson, Master Brewster, Master Davenant, and especially Master Rattlin;" the said Master Rattlin having very officiously wriggled himself into the first rank. Such is the sanctity of established authority, that we actually gave back, with serried files however, as our opponents advanced. All had now been lost, even our honour, had it not been for the gallant conduct of young Henry St. Albans, a natural son of the Duke of Y——, who was destined for the army, and, at that time, studying fortification, and to some purpose—for, immediately behind our front ranks, and while Mr. Root was haranguing and advancing, St. Albans had

ranged the desks quite across the room, in two tiers, one above the other; the upper tier with their legs in the air, no bad substitute for *chevaux-de-frize*. In fact, this manœuvre was an anticipation of the barricades of Paris. When the boys came to the obstacle, they made no difficulty of creeping under or jumping over it—but for the magisterial Mr. Root, fully powdered; or the classical master full of Greek; or the mathematical master, conscious of much algebra, to creep under these desks, would have been *infra dig.*, and for them to have leapt over was impossible. The younger assistants might certainly have performed the feat, but they would have been but scurvily treated for their trouble, on the wrong side of the barricade.

When two antagonist bodies cannot fight, it is no bad pastime to parley. St. Albans was simultaneously and unanimously voted leader, though we had many older than he, for he was but eighteen. A glorious youth was that St. Albans. Accomplished, generous, brave, handsome, as are all his race, and of the most bland

and sunny manners that ever won woman's love or softened man's asperity. He died young—where? Where should he have died, since this world was deemed, by providence, not deserving of him, but amidst the enemies of his country, her banners waving victoriously above, and her enemies flying before, his bleeding body?

Henry now stood forward as our leader and spokesman: eloquently did he descant upon all our grievances, not forgetting mouldy bread, caggy mutton, and hebdomadal meat pies. He represented to Mr. Root the little honour that he would gain in the contest, and the certain loss—the damage to his property, and to his reputation—the loss of scholars, and of profit; and he begged him to remember that every play-box in the school-room was filled with fireworks, and that they were all determined, and sorry he was in this case to be obliged to uphold such a determination, they were one and all resolved, if permission were not given to let off the fireworks out of doors, they would in—the consequences be on Mr. Root's head. His

speech was concluded amidst continued "bravos" and shouts of "Now, now!"

Old R—lds, our classic, quietly stood by, and taking snuff by handfuls, requested, nay entreated Mr. Root to pass it all off as a joke, and let the boys, with due restrictions, have their will. Mr. Root, with a queer attempt at looking pleasant, then said, "He began to enter into the spirit of the thing—it was well got up—there could be nothing really disrespectful meant, since Mr. Henry St. Albans was a party to it, (be it known that Henry was an especial favourite,) and that he was inclined to humour them, and look upon the school in the light of a fortress about to capitulate. He therefore would receive a flag of truce, and listen to proposals."

The boys began to be delighted. The following conditions were drawn up, and a lad, with a white handkerchief tied to a sky-rocket stick, was hoisted over the bench into the besieging quarters. The paper, after reciting (as is usual with all rebels in arms against their

lawful sovereign) their unshaken loyalty, firm obedience, and unqualified devotion, went on thus—but we shall, to save time, put to each proposition the answer returned:—

1. The young gentlemen shall be permitted, as in times past, to discharge their fireworks, round what remains of the bonfire, between the hours of nine and eleven o'clock.

Ans. Granted, with this limitation, that all young gentlemen under the age of nine, shall surrender their fireworks to the elder boys, and stand to see the display without the fence.

2. That any damage, or injury caused by the said display, to Mr. Root's premises, fences, &c., shall be made good by a subscription of the school.

Ans. Granted.

3. It now being nearly eight o'clock, the young gentlemen shall have their usual suppers.

Ans. Granted.

4. That a general amnesty shall be proclaimed, and that no person or persons shall suffer in any manner whatever, for the part

that he or they may have taken in this thoughtless resistance.

Ans. Granted, with the exception of Masters Atkinson, Brewster, Davenant, and Rattlin.

Upon the last article issue was joined, the flag of truce still flying during the debate. The very pith of the thing was the act of full amnesty and oblivion. Yet so eager were now the majority of the boys for their amusement, that had it not been for the noble firmness of St. Albans, the leaders, with poor Pilgarlick, would have been certainly sacrificed to their lust of pleasure. But the affair was soon brought to a crisis. All this acting the military pleased me most mightily, and the better to enjoy it, I crouched under one of the desks that formed the barricade, and, with my head and shoulders thrust into the enemy's quarters, sat grinning forth my satisfaction.

The last clause was still canvassing, when, unheard of treachery! Mr. Root, seeing his victim so near, seized me by the ears, and attempted to lug me away captive. My schoolfellows attempted to draw me back. St.

Albans protested—even some of the masters said “shame!” when Mr. Root, finding he could not succeed, gave me a most swinging slap of the face, as a parting benediction, and relinquished his grasp. No sooner did I fairly find myself on the right side of the barricade, than, all my terrors overcome by pain, I seized an inkstand and discharged it point blank at the fleecy curls of the ferulafer with an unlucky fatality of aim! Mr. Root’s armorial bearings were now, at least on his crest, *blanche chequered noire*.

“On, my lads, on!” exclaimed the gallant St. Albans; the barricades were scaled in an instant, and we were at fisty cuffs with our foes. Rulers flew obliquely, perpendicularly, and horizontally—inkstands made ink spouts in the air, with their dark gyrations—books, that the authors had done their best to fasten on their shelves, peacefully for ever, for once became lively, and made an impression. I must do Mr. Root the justice to say, that he bore him gallantly in the *mélée*. His white and black head popped hither and thither, and the

smack of his whip resounded horribly among the shins of his foes.

Old R——lds not, even in battle, being able to resist the inveteracy of habit, had the contents of his large snuff-mull forced into his eyes, ere twenty strokes were struck. He ran roaring and prophesying like blind Tiresias, among both parties, and, as a prophet we respected him. The French master being very obese was soon borne down, and there he lay sprawling and calling upon glory, and *la belle France*, whilst both sides passed over him by turns, giving him only an occasional kick when they found him in their way. It is said of Mr. Simp—n, the mathematical master—but I will not vouch for the truth of the account, for it seems too Homeric—that being hard pressed, he seized, and lifted up the celestial globe, wherewith to beat down his opponents, but being a very absent man, and the ruling passion being always dreadfully strong upon him, he began, instead of striking down his adversaries, to solve a problem upon it, but, before he had found the value of a single tangent, the orb was beaten

to pieces about his skull, and he then saw more stars in his eyes than ever twinkled in the milky way. In less than two minutes, Mr. Root to his crest added *gules*—his nose spouted blood, his eyes were blackened, and those beautiful teeth, of which he was so proud, were alarmingly loosened.

For myself, I did not do much—I could not—I could not for very rapture. I danced, and shouted, in all the madness of exhilaration. I tasted then, for the first time, the fierce and delirious poison of contention. Had the battle cry been “A Rattlin!” instead of “A St. Albans!” I could not have been more elated. The joy of battle to the young heart, is like water to the sands of the desert—which cannot be satiated.

In much less than three minutes the position under the gallery was carried. Root and the masters made good their retreat through the door, and barricaded it strongly on the outside—so that, if we could boast of having barred him out, he could boast equally of having barred us in. We made three prisoners, Mr.

R——lds, Mr. Moineau, and a lanky, sneaking, turnip-complexioned, under usher, who used to write execrable verses to the sickly housemaid, and borrow half-crowns of the simple wench, wherewith to buy pomatum to plaister his thin, lank hair. He was a known sneak, and a suspected tell-tale. The booby fell a-crying in a dark corner, and we took him with his handkerchief to his eyes. Out of the respect that we bore our French and Latin masters, we gave them their liberty, the door being set a-jar for that purpose, but we reserved the usher, that, like the American Indians, we might make sport with him.

CHAPTER XVI.

An affecting appeal that effects nothing—The rebels commence their rejoicings—They are suddenly damped—The firemen defeat the fire-boys by means of water—The victors are vanquished, who shortly find themselves covered with disgrace and the bed-clothes.

WHEN we informed the captive usher that he was destined for the high honour of being our Guy Faux, and that he should be the centre of our fireworks, promising him to burn him as little as we could help, and as could reasonably be expected, his terror was extreme, and he begged, like one in the agonies of death, that we would rather bump him. We granted his request, for we determined to be magnanimous, and he really bore it like a stoic.

The beauty of the scene is to come yet. Scarcely had we finished with the usher, than Mrs. Root, "like Niobe, all in tears," appeared with out-stretched arms in the gallery. Her out-stretched arms, her pathetic appeals, her sugared promises, had no avail,—the simple lady wanted us to go to bed, and Mr. Root, to use her own expression, should let us all off to-morrow. We were determined to stay up, and let all our fireworks off to-night. But we granted to her intercession, that all the little boys should be given up to her.

It now became a very difficult thing to ascertain who was a little boy. Many a diminutive urchin of eight, with a stout soul, declared that he was a big fellow, and several lanky lads, with sops of bread for hearts, called themselves little boys. There was, as I said before, no communication from the school-room with the orchestra; we were, therefore, obliged to pile the desks as a platform, and hand up the chicken-hearted to take protection under the wing of the old hen.

Our captive usher respectfully begged to ob-

serve that, though he could not say that he was exactly a little boy, yet if it pleased us, he would much rather go to bed, as he had lately taken physic. The plea was granted, but not the platform. That was withdrawn, and he was forced to climb up one of the pillars; and as we were charitably inclined, we lent him all the impetus we could, by sundry appliances of switches and rulers, in order to excite a rapid circulation in those parts that would most expedite his upward propulsion, upon the same principles that cause us to fire one extremity of a gun, in order to propel the ball from the other. He having been gathered with the rest round Mrs. Root, she actually made us a curtsy in the midst of her tears, and smiled as she curtsied, bidding us all a good night, to be good boys, to do no mischief, and, above all, to take care of the fire. Then, having obtained from us a promise that we would neither injure the organ, nor attempt to get into the orchestra, she again curtsied, and left us masters of the field.

Now the debate was frequent and full. We had rebelled, and won the field of rebellion in

order to be enabled to discharge our fireworks. The thought of descending by means of the windows was soon abandoned. We should have been taken in the detail, even if we escaped breaking our bones. We were compelled to use the school-room for the sparkling display, and, all under the directions of St. Albans, we began to prepare accordingly.

Would that I had been the hero of that night! Though I did not perform the deeds, I felt all the glow of one; and, unexpected honour! I was actually addressed by Henry St. Albans himself, as "honest Ralph Rattlin, the brave boy who slept in the haunted room." There was a distinction for you! Of course, I cannot tell how an old gentleman, rising sixty-five, feels when his sovereign places the blue ribbon over his stooping shoulders, but if he enjoys half the rapture I then did, he must be a very, very happy old man.

Revenons à nos moutons—which phrase I use on account of its originality, and its applicability to fireworks. Nails were driven into the walls, and Catherine wheels fixed on them;

Roman candles placed upon the tables instead of mutton dips, and the upper parts of the school windows let down for the free egress of our flights of sky-rockets. The first volley of the last-mentioned beautiful firework went through the windows, amidst our huzzas, at an angle of about sixty-five degrees, and did their duty nobly ; when—when—of course, the reader will think that the room was on fire. Alas ! it was quite the reverse. A noble Catherine wheel had just begun to fizz, in all the glories of its many-coloured fires, when, horror, dismay, confusion ! half a dozen firemen, with their hateful badges upon their arms, made their appearance in the orchestra, and the long leathern tube being soon adjusted, the brazen spout began playing upon us and the Catherine wheel, amidst the laughter of the men, in which even we participated, whilst we heard the clank, clank, clank, of the infernal machine working in the play-ground. Mr. Root was not simple enough to permit his house to be burned down with impunity, and, since he

found he could do no better, he resolved to throw cold water upon our proceedings.

The school-room door was now thrown open, to permit us to go out if we pleased, but we chose to remain where we were, for the simple reason, that we did not know whom we might meet on the stairs. We had agreed, under the directions of St. Albans, to let off our fireworks with some order; but now, instead of playthings for amusement, they were turned into engines of offence. Showers of squibs, crackers, and every species of combustible were hurled at our opponents above us. It was the struggle of fire with water; but that cold and powerful stream played continuously; wherever it met us it took away our breath, and forced us to the ground, yet we bore up gallantly, and the rockets that we directed into the orchestra very often drove our enemies back, and would have severely injured the organ, had they not covered it with blankets.

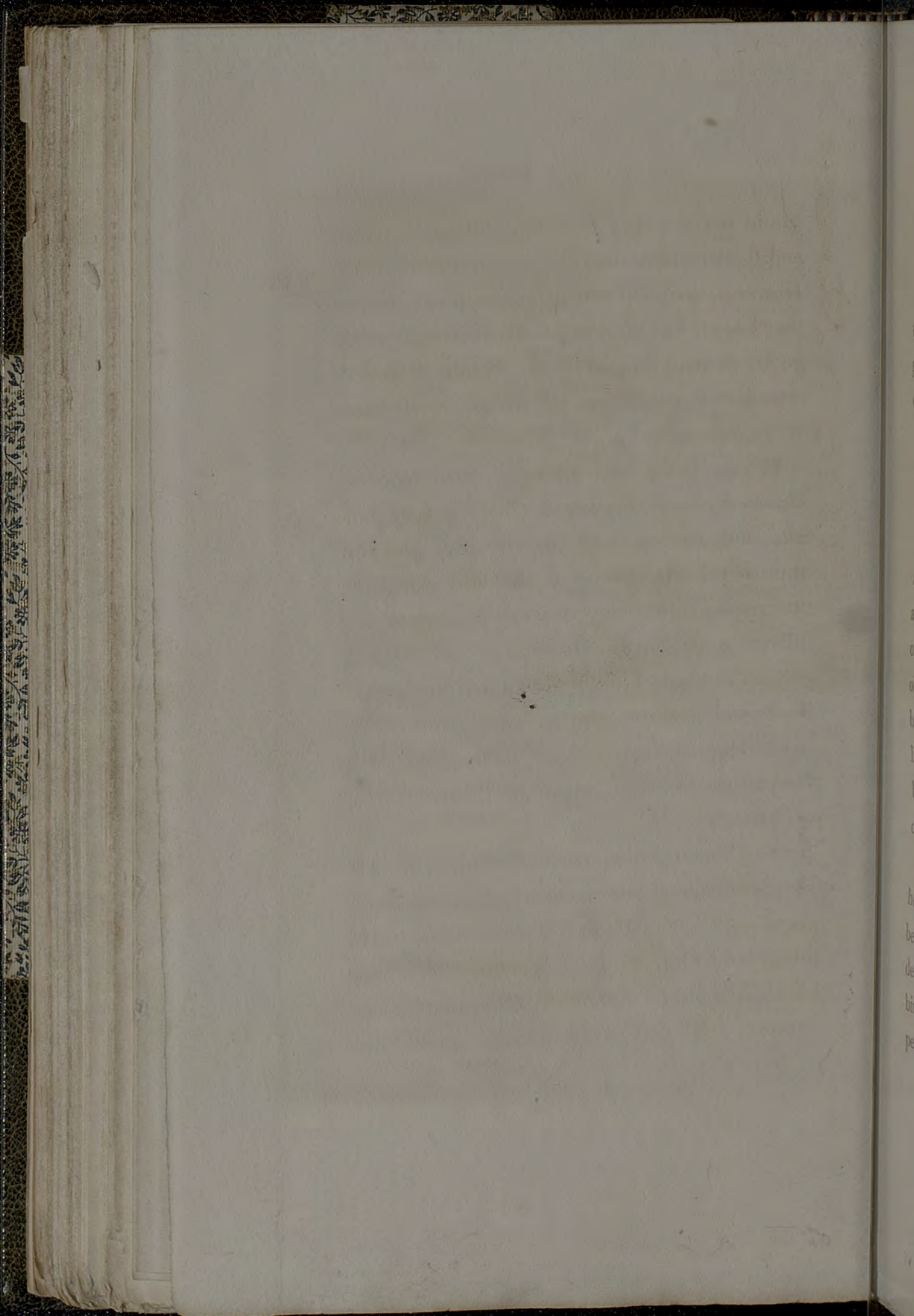
We advanced our desks near the gallery, to use them as scaling-ladders to storm; but it



Drawn and Etched by A. Herpin.

INDOOR CELEBRATION OF THE 5TH OF NOVEMBER.

London, Published by Richard Bentley, 1836.



would not do, they were not sufficiently high, and the stream dashed the strongest of us back. However, we plied our fiery missiles as long as they lasted, but the water never failed—its antagonist element did too soon. Whilst it lasted, considering there was no slaughter, it was a very glorious onslaught.

In one short half hour we were reduced. Drowned, burnt, blackened—looking very foolish, and fearing very considerably, we now approached the door: it was still open—no attempt to capture any one—no opposition was offered to us; but the worst of it was, we were obliged to sneak through files of deriding neighbours and servants, and we each crept to bed, like a dog that had stolen a pudding, any thing but satisfied with our exploits, or the termination of them.

St. Albans would not forgive himself. He heaped immeasurable shame upon his own head, because he had not secured the orchestra. He declared he had no military genius. He would bind himself an apprentice to a country carpenter, and make pigsties—he would turn

usher, and the boys should bump him for an ass—he would run away. He did the latter.

Leaving the firemen to see all safe, Mr. Root to deplore his defaced school-room and his destroyed property, Mrs Root to prepare for an immensity of cases of cold, and burnt faces and hands,—I shall here conclude the history of the famous barring out of the fifth of November, of the year of grace, 18—. If it had not all the pleasures of a real siege and battle, excepting actual slaughter, I don't know what pleasure is; and the reader by-and-bye will find out that I had afterwards opportunities enough of judging upon this sort of kingly pastimes, in which the cutting of throats was not omitted.

CHAPTER XVII.

Is full of moral and religious disquisition, therefore it behoveth the general reader, to look at and pass it by with that inattention that readers generally have for morality and religion.

If we may judge from the expressed sentiments of the first general of any age, the feelings and retrospections after a splendid victory are any thing but exhilarating. Indeed, our hero has not only fought many good battles, but said a few good things. When, after the achievement of Waterloo, he exclaimed that the victory was only less to be deplored than the defeat, he spoke at once with the sublimity of the Christian and the depth of the philosopher. If,

then, seeing it involves so many distressing contingencies, even a victory gives but little satisfaction, a drawn battle must consequently give much less. We will not say one single word of a defeat. We, of the academy, would never acknowledge so much shame as that word expresses. It was a drawn battle in every sense. Had we not drawn the magisterial blood of Mr. Root? Had not, in return, Mr. Root drawn off all the disposable water on his premises? Had we not, at the end of the affray, drawn off our forces unmolested? Neither party occupied the field of battle, that incontestable proof of victory. Certainly it was a drawn battle.

The fastidious may call all this a mere quibbling upon words—but unjustly: did they ever read the despatches of two contending powers, neither of which has much to boast of excepting honourable blows—it will then be perceived that they make out their case, in no manner more effectually than I have done mine. There is much virtue in the artful construction of words.

When the boys came down stairs there was

as comfortless a scene displayed before them, as the most retributive justice could have wished to visit on the rebellious. The morning raw and cold, the floor saturated with water, and covered with cases of exploded fireworks; the school-room in horrible confusion, scarcely a pane of glass unshattered—the walls blackened, the books torn—and then the masters and ushers stole in, looking both suspicious and discomfited. Well, we went to prayers, and very lugubriously indeed did we sing the hymn,

“Awake, my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily course of duty run.”

Now, that morning, no one could tell whether the sun had waked or not, at least he kept his bed curtains of fog closely drawn, and about twenty-five of the scholars gave a new reading to “thy daily course of duty run,” as, immediately after they had paid their doleful orisons, they took the course of running their duty by running away. There were no classes

that day. Mr. Root did not make his appearance—and we had a constrained holiday.

On the 7th, to use a nautical expression, we had repaired damages, and we began to fall into the usual routine of scholastic business—but it was full a week before our master made his appearance in the school-room, and he did so then with a green shade over his eyes, to conceal the green shades under them. He came in at the usual hour of noon—the black list was handed up to him—and I expected, in the usual order of things, an assiduous flogging. But in this world we are the martyrs of disappointment. The awful man folded up the paper very melancholily, and thrust it into his waistcoat pocket, and thus saved me the expense of some very excellent magnanimity, which I had determined to display, had he proceeded to flagellation. It was my intention, very intrepidly, to have told him, that if he punished me, I also would run away. On the veracity of a schoolboy, I was disappointed at not receiving my three or four dozen.

I had now fairly commenced my enthusiastic epoch. I was somebody. I still slept in the haunted room. I had struck the first blow in the barring out—St. Alban's had openly commended me for my bravery—I could no longer despise myself, and the natural consequence was, that others dared not. I formed friendships, evanescent certainly, but very sweet, and very sincere. Several of the young gentlemen promised to prevail upon their parents to invite me to their homes, during the approaching holidays; but either their memories were weak, or their fathers obdurate.

Well, the winter holidays came at last, and I was left sole inhabitant of that vast and lonely school-room, with one fire for my solace, and one tenpenny dip for my enlightenment. How awful and supernatural seemed every passing sound that beat upon my anxious ears! Every thing round me seemed magnified—the massive shadows were as the wombs teeming with unearthly phantoms—the whistle of the wintry blasts against the windows, voiced the half unseen beings that my fears acknowledged

in the deep darknesses of the vast chamber. And then that lonely orchestra,—often did I think that I heard low music from the organ, as if touched by ghostly fingers—how gladly I would have sunk down from my solitude to the vulgarity of the servants' hall—but that was now carefully interdicted. The consequences of all this seclusion to a highly imaginative, and totally unregulated mind, must have been much worse than putting me to sleep in the haunted room, for in that I had my counter spell—and long use had almost endeared me to it, and its grotesque carvings—but this dismally large school-room, generally so instinct with life, so superabounding in animation, was painfully fearful, even from the contrast. Twenty times in the evening, when the cold blast came creeping along the floor, and wound round my ankles, did I imagine it was the chill hand of some corpse, thrust up from beneath, that was seizing me, in order to drag me downwards—and a hundred times, as the long flame from the candle flared up tremulously, and shook the deep shadows that encom-

passed me around, did I fancy that there were very hideous faces indeed mouthing at me amidst the gloom—and my own gigantic shadow—it was a vast horror of itself personified! It was a cruel thing, even in Mr. Root, to leave me alone so many hours in that stupendous gloom, but his wife—fie upon her!

Considering how my imagination had been before worked upon, even from my earliest childhood, and the great nervous excitability of my temperament, it is a wonder that my mind did not reel, if not succumb—but I now began to combat the approaches of one sort of insanity with the actual presence of another—I *wrote verses*. That was “tempering the wind to the shorn lamb,” as Sterne would have expressed it, after the prettiest fashion imaginable.

Had I not the reader so completely at my mercy—did I not think him or her not only the gentlest but also the most deserving of all the progeny of Japhet—did I not think that it would be the very acmé of ingratitude to impose upon him or her, I would certainly

transcribe a centaine, or so, of these juvenile poems. It is true they are very bad—but then that is a proof that they are undeniably genuine. I really have, in some things, a greatness of soul. I will refrain—but in order that these effusions may not be lost to the world, I offer them to the *Annuals* for 1837; not so much for the sake of pecuniary compensation, but in order to improve the reading of some of that very unreadable class of books.

Well, during these dismal holidays, I wrote verses, and began to take, or to make, my madness methodical. The boys came back, and having left me a very Bobadil, they now found me a juvenile Bavius; not quite so bad as a juvenile whig, however, for I could boast of being able to rhyme ghost, with twelve words at most. Oh! but I became a lad of great consideration.

I wish much to hurry over this part of my life, but I should not be using those philosophical geniuses well, who love to study all the vagaries of the human mind, did I omit to

describe a very peculiar hallucination that held the most despotic sway over me for more than a month. This phase of mental associations was so singular and so perfect, and will be viewed in such different lights by persons as they are biassed by education or by prejudice, that I shall merely confine myself to the fact, and leave others to pronounce an opinion upon it. I only beg leave most solemnly to asseverate that what I am going to state is unexaggerated truth.

was at this period nearly in my thirteenth year, and, what with my rhyming, and my fistical prowess,—my character for bravery, and the peculiarity of my situation, as it regarded its mystery—I became that absurd thing that the French call "*une tête montée*." When persons act much, they soon find it necessary to reason. I was thus forced, in order to preserve my position, to become irrationally rational. Root had ceased to flog me. I could discover that he even began to fear me—and just in proportion as he seemed to avoid all occasion to punish me, I became towards him mild, ob-

servant, and respectful. The consequence was, that, as I was no longer frightened out of my wits at church; from very weariness, and for the sake of variety, I began to attend to the sermons. What a lesson ought not this to be to instructors! One Sunday, I returned from church in a state of almost spiritual intoxication. The rector was a pale, attenuated man, with a hollow, yet flashing eye—a man who seemed to have done with every thing in this world, excepting to urge on his brethren to that better one, to which himself was fast hastening; and, on this memorable day, that I fancied myself a convert, he had been descanting on the life of the young Samuel. Of course he, very appropriately, often turned to the juvenile part of his congregation; and as I was seated in the front row, I felt as if I were alone in the church—as if every word was individually addressed to myself; his imploring yet impassioned glances seemed to irradiate my breast with a sweet glory. I felt at once, that, since the goodness of the Creator was inexhaustible, the fault must rest with man if there were no

more Samuels, so I determined to be one—to devote myself entirely to divine abstraction, to heavenly glory, and to incessant worship—and, stupendous as the assertion may seem, for six weeks I did so. This resolution became a passion—a madness. I was as one walking in a sweet trance—I revelled in secret bliss, as if I had found a glorious and inexhaustible treasure. I spoke to none of my new state of mind—absorbed as I was, I yet dreaded ridicule—but I wrote hymns, I composed sermons. If I found my attention moving from heavenly matters, I grew angry with myself, and I renovated my flagging attention with inward ejaculation. I had all the madness of the anchorite upon me in the midst of youthful society, yet without his asceticism, and certainly without his vanity.

My studies, of course, were nearly totally neglected, under this complete alienation of spirit, and Mr. Root, lenient as he had lately become towards me, began to flog again; and—shall I be believed when I say it?—I have been examining my memory most severely, and

I am sure it has delivered up its record faithfully; but yet, I hardly dare give it to the world—but, despite of ridicule, I find myself compelled to say, that those floggings I scarcely felt. I looked upon them as something received for the sake of an inscrutable and unfathomable love, and I courted them—they were pleasurable. I now can well understand the enthusiasm and the raptures of that ridiculous class of exploded visionaries, called flagellants. I certainly was in a state of complete oblivion to every thing but a dreamy fanaticism, and yet that term is too harsh, and it would be impiety to call it holiness, seeing that it was a state of inutility,—and yet, many well meaning persons will think, no doubt, that my infant and almost sinless hand, had hold of a blessed link of that chain of ineffable love, which terminates in the breast of that awful Being, who sits at the right hand of the throne of the Eternal. I give, myself, no opinion. I only state facts. But I cannot help hazarding a conjecture of what I might have been, had I then possessed a friend in any one of my in-

structors, who could have pointed out to me what were the precincts of true piety, what those of incipient insanity. At that time I had the courage to achieve any thing. Let the cold-hearted and the old say what they will, youth is the time for moral bravery. The withered and the aged mistake their failing forces for calmness and resignation, and an apathy, the drear anticipator of death, for presence of mind.

However, this state of exalted feeling had a very ludicrous termination. I ceased fighting, I was humble, seeking whom I might serve, reproving no one, but striving hard to love all, giving, assisting, and actually panting for an opportunity of receiving a slap on one side of the face, that I might offer the other for the same infliction. The reader may be sure that I had the Bible almost constantly before me, when not employed in what I conceived some more active office, of what I thought sanctification. But, though the spirit may be strong, at times, the body will be weak. I believe I dozed for a few minutes over the sacred book,

when a wag stole it away, and substituted for it the "renowned and veracious history of the Seven Champions of Christendom." There was the frontispiece, the gallant St. George, in green and gold armour, thrusting his spear into the throat of the dragon, in green and gold scales. What a temptation! I ogled the book coyly at first. I asked for my Bible. "Read that, Ralph," said the purloiner; and oh! recreant that I was, I read it.

I was cured in three hours of being a saint, of despising flogging, and of aping Samuel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ralph receives an infusion of patriotism—Is himself drilled and drills a touch-hole—He turns out a monstrous big liar—Somebody comes to see him whom nobody can see, and the mystery ends in another migration.

It is the nature of men and boys to run into extremes. I have carried the reader with me through my desponding and enthusiastic epochs. I now come to the most miserable of all, my mendacious one. An avowed poet is entitled, *de jure*, to a good latitude of fiction; but I abused this privilege most woefully. I became a confirmed and intrepid liar—and this, too, was the natural course of my education, or the

want of it. I began to read all manner of romances. There was a military and chivalrous spirit strong in the school—the mania for volunteering was general, and our numerous school were almost all trained to arms. The government itself supplied us with a half dozen drill serjeants to complete us in our manual and platoon exercise. We had a very pretty uniform, and our equipments as infantry were complete in all things, save and excepting, that all the muskets of the junior boys had no touch-holes. Mine was delivered to me in this innocent state. Oh! that was a great mortification on field-days, when we were allowed to incorporate with the united — and — volunteers, whilst all the big lads actually fired off real powder, in line with real men, to be obliged to snap a wooden flint against a sparkless hammer. A mortification I could not, I would not, endure.

There was a regular contention between Mr. Root, my musket, and myself, and at last, by giving my serjeant a shilling, I conquered. Every day that our muskets were examined on

parade, mine would be found with a touch-hole drilled in it; as certainly as it was found, so certainly was I hoisted. In that fever of patriotism, I, of all the school, though denied powder and shot, was the only one that bled for my country. However, I at length had the supreme felicity of blowing powder in the face of vacancy, in high defiance of Buonaparte and his assembled legions on the coasts of Boulogne. Thus I had military ardour added to my other ardencies. Moreover, I had learned to swim in the New River, and, altogether, began to fancy myself a hero.

I began now to appreciate and to avail myself of the mystery of my birth. I did not read romances and novels for nothing. So I began my mendacious career. Oh! the improbable and impossible lies that I told, and that were retold, and all believed. I was a prince incognito; my father had coined money--and I gave my deluded listeners glimpses at pocket-pieces as proofs; if I was doubted, I fought. The elder boys shook their heads, and could make nothing of it. The ushers made what

inquiries they dared, and found nothing which they could contradict positively, but much upon which to found conjecture.

Still, notwithstanding my success, my life began to grow burthensome. The lies became too manifold, too palpable, and, to me, too onerous. They had been extremely inconsistent—ridicule began to raise her hissing head. Shame became my constant companion—yet I lied on. I think I may safely say, that I would, at the time that I was giving myself out as a future king, have scorned the least violation of the truth, to have saved myself from the most bitter punishment, or to injure, in the least, my worst enemy; my lies were only those of a most inordinate vanity; began in order to make a grand impression of myself, and persevered in, through obstinacy and pride. But I was crushed beneath the stupendous magnificence of my own creations. I had been so circumstantial—described palaces, reviews, battles, my own chargers, and now—oh! how sick all these fabrications made me! It was time I left the school, or that life left me, for it had

become intolerable. And yet this state of misery, the misery of the convicted, yet obstinately persevering liar, lasted nearly a year. Let me hurry over it; but, at the same time, let me hold it up as a picture to youth, upon the same principle as the Spartans showed drunken slaves to their children. Could the young but conceive a tithe of the misery I endured, they would never after swerve from truth.

I have not time to expatiate on several droll mishaps that occurred to Mr. Root; how he was once bumped in all the glowing panoply of equine war; how, when one night, with his head well powdered, he crept upon all fours, as was his wont, into one of the boys' bedrooms, to listen to their nightly conversations; and how such visit being expected, as his head lay on the side of the bedstead, it was there immovably fixed, by the application of a half-pound of warm cobbler's wax, and release could only be given by the Jason-like operation of shearing the fleecy locks. We must rapidly pass on. I was eager to get away from this

school, and my desire was accomplished in the following very singular manner.

One fine sunshiny Sunday morning, as we were all ranged in goodly fashion, two by two, round the play-ground, preparatory to issuing through the house to go to church, the unusual cry was heard, of "Master Rattlin wanted," which was always understood to be the joyful signal that some parent or friend had arrived as a visitor. I was immediately hurried into the house, a whispering took place between Mr. and Mrs. Root, and the consequence was, that I was bustled up into the bedroom, and my second best clothes, which I then had on, were changed for the best, and, with a supererogatory dab with a wet towel over my face, I was brought down, and, my little heart playing like a pair of castanets against my ribs, I was delivered into the tender keeping of the pedagogue.

Having taken me by the hand, whilst he was practising all the amenities with his countenance, he opened the parlour-door, where the supposititious visitor was expected to be found,

and lo! the room was empty. Mrs. Root and the servants were summoned, and they all positively declared, and were willing to swear to the fact, that a gentleman had gone into the room, who had never gone out. It was a front parlour, on the ground floor, and from the window he could not have emerged, as the area intervened between that and the foot pavement; and to see a gentleman scrambling through by that orifice into the principal street of —, and from one of the principal houses of the town, whilst all the people were going to church, was a little too preposterous even for Mr. Root's matter-of-fact imagination. However, they all peeped up the chimney one after the other, as if an elderly, military-looking gentleman, encumbered with a surtout, for thus he was described, would have been so generous as to save my schoolmaster a shilling, by bustling up his chimney, and bringing down the soot. The person was not to be found; Root began to grow alarmed—a constable was sent for, and the house was searched from the attics to the cellar. The dwelling was not, however, robbed,

nor any of its inmates murdered, notwithstanding the absconder could not be found.

Now, Mr. Root was a man wise in his own generation, yet was he, notwithstanding, a great fool. He was one of that class who can sometimes overreach a neighbour, yet, in doing so, inevitably loses his own balance, and tumbles into the mire. A sagacious ninny, who had an "*I told you so*," for every possible event after it had happened. Indeed, he was so much in the habit of applying this favourite phrase upon all unhappy occasions, that he could not help using it to an unfortunate housemaid of his, one morning, who had delivered herself secretly of twins the previous night. Mrs. Root did not like the application of the sentence at all.

Instead of taking the common sense view of the affair of the missed gentleman, and supposing that the footman had been bribed to let him quietly out at the street-door, who, perhaps, had found his feelings too little under his control to go through the interview with me that he sought, Root set about making a miracle of the matter. It was astounding—nay,

superhuman! It boded some misfortune to him; and so it really did, by the manner in which he treated it. I verily believe, that had the servants or Mrs. Root, who had seen the gentleman, averred to a cloven foot as peeping out from his military surtout, he would have given the assertion not only unlimited credence, but unlimited circulation also. However, as it was, he made himself most egregiously busy; there were his brother churchwardens, and the curate, summoned to assist him in a court of inquiry; evidence was taken in form, and a sort of *proces verbal* drawn out, and duly attested. Mr. Root was a miracle-monger, and gloried in being able to make himself the hero of his own miracles.

Well, after he had solaced himself by going about to all his neighbours with this surprising paper in hand, for about the space of a fortnight, he thought to put the climax to his policy and his vain glory, by taking it and himself up to the banker's in town where he always got the full amount of his bills for my board and education paid without either examination

or hesitation. The worthy money-changer looked grimly polite at the long and wonderful account of the schoolmaster, received a copy of the account of the mysterious visitor with most emphatic silence, and then bowed the communicant out of his private room with all imaginable etiquette.

Mr. Root came home on excellent terms with himself; he imposed silence upon his good lady, his attentive masters and ushers, and then wiping the perspiration from his brow, proceeded to tell his admiring audience of his great, his very great exertions, and, how manfully through the whole awful business he had done his duty. Alas! he soon found to his cost that he had done something more. In cockney language, he had done himself out of a good pupil. A fortnight after I was again "wanted." There was a glass coach at the door. A very reserved sort of gentleman alighted, paid all demands up to the end of the ensuing half year, answered no questions, but merely producing a document, handed me and all my worldly wealth into his vehicle, and off we drove.

To the best of my recollection, all the conversation that I heard from this taciturn person, was that sentence, so much the more remarkable for verity than originality, "Ask no questions, and I shall tell you no stories." Having nothing else to do in this my enforced *tête-à-tête*, I began to conjecture what next was going to become of me. At first I built no castles in the air; I had got quite sick of doing that aloud with my late school-fellows, and passing them all off as facts. Still it must be confessed, that my feelings were altogether pleasurable. It was a soul-cheering relief to have escaped from out of that vast labyrinth of lies that I had planted around me, and no longer to dread the rod-bearing Root; even novelty, under whatever form it may present itself, is always grateful to the young.

In the midst of these agitations I again found myself in town; and I began to hope that I should once more see my foster-parents. I began to rally up my "little Latin and less Greek," in order to surprise the worthy sawyer and his wife; and I had fully determined to

work out for him what the amount of his daily wages came to in a week, firstly by simple arithmetic, secondly by fractions, thirdly by decimals, and fourthly by duodecimals; and then to prove the whole correct by an algebraical equation. But all those triumphs of learning were not destined for me. I found, at length, that the glass coach drove up the inn-yard of some large coachmaster; but few words were said, and I was consigned to the coachman of one of the country stages, with as little remorse and as little ceremony as if I had been an ugly, blear-eyed pug, forwarded in a basket labelled, "this side uppermost," to an old maiden aunt, or a superannuated grandmother.

This was certainly unhandsome treatment to one who had been lately seriously telling his companions that he was a disguised prince of the blood, forced, for state reasons, to keep a strict incognito. It is true, that I travelled with four horses, and was attended by a guard; nay, that a flourish of music preceded my arrival at various points of my journey; but all these little less than royal honours I shared with

a plebeian butcher, a wheezing and attenuated plumber and glazier, and other of his lieges, all very useful, but hardly deemed ornamental members of the body politic.

But let me now pause at this point of my life; and sum up in a few words, what I was at thirteen years of age; what I might have been, it is both useless and painful to conjecture. At that age, it is certain that the outlines of the character are traced in, unerasably so. If the youth's bursts of passion have not been counteracted, all his life he will be passionate; if his vindictive feelings have not been corrected, all his life he will be revengeful; if religious principles have not been cultivated, he will be either lukewarm in faith, or a sinner, or a sceptic; if habits of industry have not been formed, he will for ever after think labour to be ignoble, and exertion only laudable when its immediate aim is pleasure. Now, what was I at thirteen, the child of desertion or neglect; by turns the footstool of oppression, or the shuttlecock of caprice; alternately kicked, cajoled, and flattered? I will tell the reader what I was. I

was superstitious, with a degree of superstition that would have borne me within the drear realms of fatuity, had not a healthful temperament, and an indomitable pride, made me, whilst I believed in all absurd horrors, brave them. I owed this to the Methodist preachers. I hated public worship; and all that associated with it, and for this feeling, I was indebted to the church-observing disciplinarian, Mr. Root. I was idle, extravagant, and as inconstant as the summer wind; though I could, when the whim seized me, wander amongst the flowers of literature, unwearied, for successive hours. This was the consequence of the neglect I experienced at school. I was obdurate, obstinate, and cruel—the undoubted effects of my repeated floggings; and above all, I was a monstrous liar. But mine was not the lying of profit, or of fear, but of ambition. I could not carve out for myself, young as I was, glory by my sword, so I vainly thought to create it to myself by my tongue. The consolation that I have in looking back upon this the shameful part of my character, was, that I did it heroically.

cally. If the axiom be true, that one murder makes a felon, a thousand a hero, surely I may say, one falsehood makes a grovelling liar, a thousand a magnificent inventor. But sound morality sees through and condemns the one and the other. There is nothing really great that is not true, even in those things that seem to take fiction for their basis. Let me earnestly advise every high-spirited youth, to be aware of romancing at school, or elsewhere. If he possess genius, he will not be able to stop himself, and the first pause that he will make will be, when he finds himself brought up suddenly, the standing-mark for the derision of fools whom he despises, but whose superiority he cannot dispute, because *they* have not lied.

CHAPTER XIX.

A chapter of disappointments, which Ralph hopes the reader will not share—Some comparisons which he hopes will not be found odious, and some reflections which he thinks cannot be resented.

MY friends will perceive, that at the time of which I am speaking, the stage coach contained, if not actually a bad character, a person on the very verge of being one—that I was that graceless, yet tolerated being, a scamp, was very certain—yet my gentle demeanour, my smooth, bright countenance, and never-ceasing placid smile would have given a very different impression of my qualities. I have been thus liberal in my confessions, in order that parents may see

that their duties do not terminate where those of the schoolmaster begin; that the schoolmaster himself must be taken to task, and the watcher, watched. I had been placed in one of the first boarding-schools near town; a most liberal stipend had been paid with me; I had every description of master; yet, after all this outlay of money, which is not dross—and waste of time, which is beyond price precious, what was I at leaving this academy? Let the good folks withinside of the Stickenham stage testify; by one trick or another I had contrived to make them all tolerably uncomfortable before the journey was half over.

But where am I going? Cæsar and his fortunes are embarked in a stage coach. An hour and a half had elapsed when I perceived that the horses were dragging the vehicle slowly up a steep hill. The full-leaved trees are arching for us, over head, a verdant canopy; the air becomes more bracing and elastic; and even I feel its invigorating influence, and cease to drop silyly the gravelly dirt I had collected from my shoes, down the neck and back of a very pretty

girl, who sat blushing furiously on my left. Now the summit is gained, and in another moment, the coach thunders down the other side of the hill. But what a beautiful view is spread before my fascinated eyes ! And then rose up in my young heart the long sleeping emotions of love, and kindred affection. Into whose arms was I to be received ; whose were to be the beautiful lips that were now longing to kiss me with parental, perhaps fraternal rapture ? Had I a sister ? Could I doubt it at that ecstatic moment ? How I would love her ! The fatted calf was not only killed, but cooked, to welcome the long lost. Nor Latin, nor French, nor Greek, nor Mathematics, should embitter the passing moments. This young summer, that breathed such aromatic joy around me, had put on its best smile to welcome me to my paternal abode, " No doubt," said I, to myself — " no doubt, but that some one of the strange stories that I told of myself at Root's, is going to be realized."

In the midst of these rapturous anticipations, each later one becoming more wild and more

glorious than the previous one that begot it, it wanting still an hour of sun down, all at once the coach stopped before a house, upon a gentle elevation—stopped with a jerk too, as if it were going to usher in some glorious event. I looked out, and behold! in hated gold letters, upon the hated blue board, the bitterly hated word “academy,” met my agonized sight.

I burst into tears. I needed no voice to tell me that I was the person to alight. I knew my doom. Farewell to all my glorious visions! I could have hurled back into the face of the laughing sun, my hate, and called him deceiver, and traitor, for had he not, with other causes, conspired to smile me, five minutes ago, into a fool’s paradise?

“Master Rattlin, won’t you please to alight?” said one of those under-toned, gerund-singing voices, that my instinct told me to be an usher’s.

“No thank’ee, sir,” said I, amidst my sobbings, “I want to go home.”

“But you are to get down here, however,” said my evil-omened inviter. “Your boxes

are all off the coach, and the coachman wants to go forward."

"So do I."

"It's excessively droll this—hi, hi, hi! as sure as my name's Saltseller, it is excessively droll. So you want to get forward, Master Rattlin? why come to school then, that's the way—droll, isn't it? Why, you've been riding backwards all the way too—time to change—droll that—hi, hi!"

"It's no change," said I, getting out sulkily, "from one school to another—and do you call this a school?" I continued, looking round contemptuously, for I found about twenty little boys playing upon a green knoll before the house, and over which we were compelled to walk to reach it, as the road did not come near the habitation. "Do you call this a school? Well, if you catch me being flogged here, I'm a sop, that's all—a school! And I suppose you're the usher—I don't think those little boys bumped you last half year."

"I don't think they did," said Mr. Saltseller, which was actually the wretch's name, and with

whom I fell desperately in hate at first sight.

"Bump me!" he exclaimed soliloquising—and with that air of astonishment, as if he had heard the most monstrous impossibility spoken of imaginable. "Bump me! droll, isn't it—excessively? Where have you been brought up, Master Rattlin?"

"Where they bar out tyrannical masters, and bump sneaking ushers," said I. "That's where I was brought up."

"Then that's what I call very bad bringing up."

"Not so bad as being brought down here, any how."

His next "excessively droll, isn't it?" brought us to the door of the academy; but, in passing over the play-ground, I could see, at once, that I was with quite another class of beings, than those who composed my late schoolfellows. They were evidently more delicately nurtured; they had not the air of school-boy daring, to which I had been so much accustomed; and they called each other "Master." Everything, too, seemed to be upon a

miniature scale. The house was much smaller, yet there was an air of comfort and of health around, that at first I did not appreciate, though I could not help remarking it.

No sooner was I conducted into the passage, than I heard a voice which I thought I remembered, exclaim, "Show Master Rattlin in here, and shut the door."

I entered; and the next moment I was in the arms of the mysterious and very beautiful lady that had called to see me the few times that I have recorded; and who, I conceived, was intimately connected with my existence. I think that I have before said, that she never avowed herself either to my nurse or to myself, as more than my godmother. She evinced a brief, but violent emotion; and then controlled her features to a very staid and matronly expression. For myself, I wept most bitterly, from many mingled emotions; but, to the shame of human nature, and of my own, wounded pride was the most intolerable pang that I felt. In all my day dreams I had made this lady the presiding genius. I gave her, in my inmost

heart, all the reverence and the filial affection of a son ; but it was the implied understanding between my love and my vanity, that in joining herself to me as a mother, she was to bestow upon me a duchess at least ; though I should not have thought myself over-well used, had it been a princess. And here were all these glorious anticipations merged, sunk, destroyed, in the person of a boarding-school mistress of about twenty boys, myself the biggest. It was no use that I said to myself over and over again, she is not less lovely—her voice less musical, her manner less endearing, or her apparel less rich. The startling truth was ever in my ear—she “ keeps a school,” and, consequently, she cannot be my mother.

She could not know what was passing in my mind ; but it was evident that my grief was of that intensity that nearly approached to misery. She took me by the hand, showed me my nice little bed, the large garden, the river that ran at the bottom of it, and placed before me fruit and cakes ; I would not be consoled ; what business had she to be a schoolmistress ? I had a thou-

sand times rather have had Mrs. Brandon for a mother again—she had never deceived me. But I was soon aware that this lady, whom I now, for the first time, heard named, as Mrs. Cherfeuil, was as little disposed to grant me the honour of calling her mother, as I was to bestow it. I was introduced to her husband as the son of a female friend of hers of early life; that she had stood godmother to me, that my parentage was respectable; and, as he had before had sufficient references to satisfy him from the agent, who had called a week before my arrival, the good man thought that there was nothing singular in the affair.

But let us describe this good man, my new pedagogue. In all things he was the antithesis of Mr. Root. The latter was large, florid, and decidedly handsome—Mr. Cherfeuil was little, sallow, and more than decidedly ugly. Mr. Root was worldly wise, and very ignorant; Mr. Cherfeuil, a fool in the world, and very learned. The mind of Mr. Root was so empty, that he found no trouble in arranging his one idea and a half; Mr. Cherfeuil's was so full, that there

was no room for any arrangement at all. Mr Root would have thought himself a fool if he condescended to write poetry ; but he supposed he could, for he never tried. Mr. Cherfeuil would have thought any man a fool that did not perceive at once that he, Cherfeuil, was born a great poet. Shall I carry, after the manner of Plutarch, the comparison any farther? No; let us bring it to an abrupt conclusion, by saying in a few words, that Mr. Root was English, Mr. Cherfeuil French; that the one had a large school, and the other a little one; and, that both were immeasurably great men in their own estimation—though not universally so in that of others.

Mr. Cherfeuil was ambitious to be thought five feet high; his attitude, therefore, was always erect; and, to give himself an air of consequence, he bridled and strutted like a full breasted-pigeon, with his head thrown back, and was continually in the act of wriggling his long chin into his ample neckerchief. He could not ask you how you do, or say in answer to that question, “ I thank you, sare, very well,”

without stamping prettily with his foot, as if cracking a snail, and tossing his chin into the air as if he were going to balance a ladder upon it. Then, though his features were compressed into a small monkeyfied compass, they were themselves, individually, upon a magnificent scale. It was as if there had been crowded half a dozen gigantic specimens of human ugliness into my lady's china closet, all of which were elbowing each other for room. The eyes would have been called large, had it not been for the vast proportions of the nose, and the nose would have been thought preposterous, had it not been for the horrible dimensions of the mouth. Yet the expression of all these anomalies, though very grotesque, was not unpleasant. You smiled with satisfaction when you saw how great the improvement was that baboonery had made toward manhood. You might call him in a word, a queer, little ugly-looking box of yellow mortality, that contained some amiable qualities, and a great many valuable attainments. Of good sense, or of common sense, he was never known to show, during the

whole period of his life, but one instance; and that was a most important one—a complete deference, in all things, to his stately, and beautiful wife. Her dominion was undivided, complete, and unremitting. How she came to marry him was one of those human riddles that will never be satisfactorily resolved. He had been a French *émigré*, had had a most superior education—played on several instruments without taste—understood every thing connected with the classics but their beauty, and was deeply versed in the mathematics, without comprehending their utility.

At this school my progress was rapid. All the care and attention that the most maternal of hearts could bestow upon me were mine; yet there was no approach to any thing like familiarity on the part of Mrs. Cherfeuil. There lay a large wild common before the house—there was a noble collection of deep water in the vicinity, in which I perfected my natatory studies, (affected phraseology is the fashion,) and my body strengthened, my mind improved, and I began to taste of real happiness.

It would be an amusing work, to write a biography of some of the most remarkable ushers. They seem to be the bats of the social scheme. Gentlemen will not own them, and the classes beneath reject them. They are generally self-sufficient; the dependency of their situation makes them mean, and the exercise of delegated power tyrannical. If they have either spirit or talent, they lift themselves above their situation; but when they cannot do this, they are, in my estimation, the most abject of all classes—gipsies and beggars not excepted. Mr. Cherfeuil was, in himself, a mine of learning; but he delivered it out from the dark cavities of his mind, encumbered with so much ore, and in such misshaped masses, that it required another person to arrange for use what he was so lavish of producing. A good usher or assistant was therefore necessary; but I do not recollect having more than one, out of the thirty or forty that came and went during the three years I was at the school.

This class of people are, alas! fatally suscep-

tible of the tender impulses. They always find the rosy cheeks of the housemaid, or the *en bon point* of the cook irresistible. And they have themselves such delicate soft hands, so white and so ashy. On Sundays, too, their linen is generally clean; so, altogether, the maidservants find them killing.

Mr. Saltseller, who found every thing droll, and who used to paint his cheeks, lost his situation just at the precise moment that the housemaid lost her character. The two losses together were not of very great moment; then we had another, and another, and another; and more characters were lost—till at last there did come a man,

“ take him for all in all,
I ne’er shall look upon his like again.”

He was very tall, stout, of a pompous carriage, *un homme magnifique*. He wore a green coat, false hair, a black patch over his left eye, and was fifty, or rather, fifty-five. His face was large, round, and the least in the world bloated. This Adonis of matured ushers, after school hours, would hang a guitar from his broad neck,

by means of a pale pink ribbon, and walk up and down on the green before the house, thrum, thrum, thrumming, the admiration of all the little boys, and the coveted of all the old tabbies in the village. O, he was the *beau idéal* of a *vieux garçon*. We recommend all school-assistants to learn the guitar, and grow fat—if they can; and then, perhaps, they may prosper, like Mr. Sigismund Pontifex. He contrived to elope with a maiden lady, of good property, just ten years older than himself: the sweet, innocent, indiscreet ones, went off by stealth one morning before daylight, in a chaise and four, and returned, a week after, Mr. and Mrs. Pontifex.

The gentleman hung up his guitar, and for ever; and every fine day, he was found, pipe in mouth, and tankard in hand, presiding at the bowling green of the Black Lion, the acknowledged and revered umpire—cherished by mine host, and referred to by the players. I write this life for instruction. Gentlemen ushers, look to it—be ambitious—learn the guitar, and make your mouths water with ideas of prospective tankards of ale, and odoriferous pipes.

CHAPTER XX.

Ralph groweth egregiously modest, and boasteth immoderately, until he is beaten by one with one foot in the grave ; with something touching the feats of the man without feet.

I FIND myself in a dilemma. My modesty (?) is at variance with my love of verity. O the inconvenience of that little pronoun, I ! Would that I had, in the first instance, imitated the wily conduct of the bald-pated invader of Britain. How complacently might I not then have vaunted in the beginning, have caracoled through the middle, and glorified myself at the conclusion of this my auto-biography ! What a monstrous piece of braggodocio would not

Cæsar's Commentaries have been, had he used the first, instead of the third person singular ! How intolerable would have been the presumption of his 'Thrasonical, " I thrashed the Helvetians—I subjugated the Germans—I utterly routed the Gauls—I defeated the painted Britons !" And, on the contrary, for I like to place heroes side by side, how decorously and ingeniously might I not have written, " Ralph Rattlin blackened master Simpkin's left eye—Ralph Rattlin led on the attack upon Farmer Russel's orchard, and Ralph Rattlin fought three rounds, with no considerable disadvantage, with the long-legged pieman." Alas ! I cannot even shelter myself under the mistiness of the peremptory *we*. I have made a great mistake. But I have this consolation, in common with other great men, that, for our mistake, the public will assuredly suffer more than ourselves. Many a choice adventure, of which I was the hero, must be suppressed. I should blush myself black in the face, to say what *he* would relate with a very quiet smile of self-satisfaction. However, as regrets are quite unavailing, unless,

like the undertaker's, they are paid for, I shall exclaim with the French soldier, who found his long military queue in the hands of a pursuing English sailor, "Chivalry of the world, *toujours en avant*."

En avant. Have I lingered too long over my school days? Ah, no! In early spring are not the flowers more fresh? Are not the waters of the river more pure, the nearer we go to their source? Even the glorious sun is hailed with the greatest rapture at his rising. It is at the commencement of every thing, as well as of life, that we must look for the greatest enjoyment. No scheme of ambition, of grandeur, or of avarice, but contains its greatest elements of happiness in the conception and its prosecution. The last throb of exultation for success, is the sure herald of the first pang of satiety. The final chorus of fruition is, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit" It is the chorus of ages, of time, and of mortality. Let us then go back to the early and fresh days of young life, to the spring-tide of joyous existence, and what reader is there, however *blazé* by the world, that will not gladly attend us?

I have described a wretched schoolboy, let us now view a happy one. It is a fine and breezy summer morning, the sun about an hour old. Remark that tall youth springing over the garden railings. The gate is fastened only with a latch, but the exultation of health disdains to lift it. There is a vast and heathy common before him, bounded by lofty hills; behind, an immense expanse of champaign country; on his right is a lovely lake, crisping to the fragrant winds; and on his left, nestling in foliage of antique oaks and majestic elms, sleeps, in rural repose, the village. He pauses for one moment on the green sward—his eyes are upon the golden fretwork of the heavens. You may see by the mantling cheek, that there is a gush of rapture thrilling through his bosom; and his glistening eyes are beautiful, for in them is silent worship. Perhaps the reverie is too joyous, the swelling sensation in his bosom too overpowering, for see, with a bound like that of a startled stag, he is off and away. He is racing with the winds—he is competing with the viewless messengers, that bring health upon

their swift wings. He seems to have no object but the enjoyment of rapid motion. He leaps over bush and brake exultingly; and even while we admire him, he is down in the far vale. The cheruping lark rises from the dewy grass; he stops, and his unconscious voice bursts out into a shout of imitative rapture. At first he pours out his soliloquy in mere ejaculations of pleasure; by-and-by these bursts of feeling assume a more regular form; he walks more slowly, and before he has reached, on his return, the lake, he has composed a hymn of gratitude to the bountiful Author of all good, that hung the bright and gorgeous canopy above him, and spread the odoriferous and variegated carpet at his feet. He thinks himself unheard, and he shouts out his composition with honest joy. Now he plunges into the lake, and dives, and swims, and 'gambols amid the tiny waves. He is the personation of animal spirits. He is wild with the sweet and innocent intoxication of nature's beauty. It is six o'clock, and he hears the bell that summons him to his morning studies. The sound strikes

him with no dismay. His Greek and Latin are prepared ; and he well knows that the hour of his examination will be the hour of his triumph. He looks round, and he sees his master, proud of him and his talents ; and school fellows, that have all for him the greetings of a love that is not venal, and the homage of admiration that is sincere. Is not all this delightful ? and this delight was all mine. Ah, my good sir—notwithstanding your bilious look, and pursed-up mouth, it, or something similar to it, was once yours. Notwithstanding the late fall in the funds, does not this description throw you back into yourself—into that close and secret arcanum of your seared heart, that you have always kept sacred for the holier feelings ? I'm sure it does—I am almost inclined to believe with the Hebrews, that, though the rest of the mortal frame will perish, there is a minute and indestructible particle within us, a sort of heart of hearts, that shall last eternally, and about it will hang, for ever, all our virtues and all our youthful associations. It never grows old,

though old age forgets it. Be it my office sometimes to remind the worldly, that they have that exhaustless storehouse of happiness within them.

I now began to commit the sin of much verse, and consequently acquired in the neighbouring village much notice. No chastising blow, or even word of reproof, fell upon me. My mind was fed upon praise, and my heart nourished with caresses. In the school I had no equal, and my vanity whispered that such was the case without. However, this vanity I did not show, for I was humble from excessive pride.

There are two animals that are almost certain to be spoiled - a very handsome young man, and the "cock of the school." Being certainly in the latter predicament, I was only saved from becoming an utter and egregious ass, by the advent of one, the cleverest, most impudent, rascally, agreeable scoundrel, that ever swindled man or deceived woman, in the shape of a wooden-legged usher. He succeeded my worthy friend of the guitar, Mr. Sigismund Pontifex. His name was Riprapton, and he only

wanted the slight requisite of common honesty to have made himself the first man of any society in which fate might happen to cast him—and fate had been pleased to cast him into a great many. He was a short, compactly made, symmetrically-formed man, with a countenance deeply indented with the small pox, and, in every hole, there was visibly ensconced a little imp of audaciousness. His eyes were such intrepid and quenchless lights of impudence, that they could look even Irish *sang froid* out of countenance. And then that inimitable wooden leg! It was a perfect grace. As he managed it, it was irresistible. He did not progress with a miserable, vulgar, dot-and-go-one kind of gait; he neither hopped, nor halted, nor limped; and though he was wood from the middle of his right thigh downwards, his walk might almost have been called the poetry of motion. He never stumped, but he stole along with a glissade that was the envy and admiration—not exactly of surrounding nations—but of the dancing-master. It was a beautiful study to see him walk, and I made myself master of it. The

left leg was inimitably formed; the calf was perhaps a little too round and Hibernian—a fault gracious in the eyes of the fair sex; his ancle and foot were exquisitely small and delicately turned; of course, he always wore shorts, with immaculate white cotton or silk stockings.

I shall not distinguish the two legs by the terms, the living and the dead one—it would be as great an injustice to the carved as to the calfed one. For the former had a graceful life, *sui generis*, of its own. I shall call them the pulsating, and the gyrating leg, and now proceed to describe how they bare along, in a manner so fascinating, the living tabernacle of Mr. Riprapton. The pulsator, with pointed toe, and gently turned calf, would make a progress in a direct line, but as the sole touched the ground, the heel would slightly rise, and then fall, and whilst you were admiring the undulating grace of the pulsator, unobserved and silently, you would find the gyrator had stolen a march upon you, and actually taken the *pas* of its five-toed brother. One leg marched, and

the other swam, in the prettiest semicircle imaginable. When he stopped, the flourish of the gyrator was ineffable. The drum-stick in the hand of the big black drummer of the first regiment of foot guards, was nothing to it. Whenever Riprapton bowed, and he was always bowing, this flourish preluded and concluded the salutary bend. It was making a leg indeed.

Many a time, both by ladies and gentlemen, he had been offered a cork leg—but he knew better; had he accepted the treacherous gift, he would have appeared but as a lame man with two legs, now he was a perfect Adonis with one. I do believe, in my conscience, that Cupid often made use of this wooden appendage when he wished to befriend him, instead of one of his own arrows, for he was really a marvellous favourite with the ladies.

Well, no sooner had my friend with the peg made himself a fixture in the school, than he took me down, not one peg or two, but a good half dozen. He ridiculed my poetry—he undervalued my drawing—he hit me through my most approved guards at my fencing—he beat

me hollow at hopping, though it must be confessed, that I had the advantage with two legs; but he was again my master at "all fours." He outtalked me immeasurably, he out-bragged me most heroically, and outlied me most inconceivably. Knowing nothing either of Latin or Greek, they were beneath a gentleman's notice, fit only for parsons and pedants; and he was too patriotic to cast a thought away upon French. As he was engaged for the arithmetical and mathematical departments, it would have been perhaps as well, if he had known a little of algebra and Euclid; but, as from the first day he honoured me with a strict, though patronizing friendship, he made me soon understand that we were to share this department of knowledge in common. It was quite enough if one of the two knew anything about the matter; besides, he thought that it improved me so much to look over the problems and algebraical calculations of my school-fellows.

With this man, I was continually measuring my strength; and, as I conceived that I found myself woefully wanting, he proved an excellent

moral sedative to my else too rampant vanity. Few, indeed, were the persons who could feel themselves at ease under the withering sarcasms of his intolerable insolence. Much more to their astonishment than to their instruction, he would very coolly, and the more especially when ladies were present, correct the divinity of the parson, the pharmacy of the doctor, and the law of the attorney; and with that placid air of infallibility, that carried conviction to all but his opponents.

Once, at a very large evening party, I heard him arguing strenuously, and very triumphantly, against a veteran captain of a merchant ship, who had circumnavigated the world with Cook, that the degrees of longitude were equal in length all over the world, be they more or less—for he never descended to details—and, that the farther south you sailed, the hotter it grew, though the worthy old seaman pointed to what remained of his nose, the end of which had been nipped off by cold, and consequent mortification, in the antarctic regions. As Riprapton flourished his wooden index, in the midst of his brilliant pe-

ration, he told the honest seaman that he had not a *leg* to stand upon ; and all the ladies, and some of the gentlemen too, cried out with one accord, " O fie, Captain Headman, now don't be so obstinate—surely you are quite mistaken." And the arch-master of impudence looked round with modest suavity, and, in an audible whisper, assured the gentleman that sat next to him, that Captain Headman's argument of the demolished proboscis went for nothing, for that there were other causes equally efficacious as cold and frost, for destroying gentlemen's noses.

In the sequel this very learned tutor had to instruct me in navigation. Nothing was too high or too low for him. Had any persons wished to have taken lessons in judicial astrology, Mr. Riprapton would not have refused the pupil. Plausible ignorance will always beat awkward knowledge, when the ignorant, which is generally the case, make up the mass of the audience.

CHAPTER XXI.

Treateth of the amativeness of wooden members, and the folly of virgin frights—Ralph putteth his threat of versifying into actual execution, for which he may be thought worthy of being executed.

NOTWITHSTANDING the superciliousness of my friendly assistant, I still wrote verse, which was handed about the village as something wonderful. As Riprapton doubted, or rather denied my rhyming prowess, at length, I was determined to try it upon himself, and he shortly gave me an excellent opportunity for so doing. Writers who pride themselves on going deeply into the mysteries of causes and effects will tell you, that in cold weather people

are apt to congregate about the fire. Our usher, and a circle of admiring pupils, were one day establishing the truth of this profound theory. The timbered man was standing in the apex of the semicircle, his back to the fire-place, and his coat tails tucked up under his arms. He was enjoying himself, and we were enjoying him. He was the hero of the tale he was telling us—indeed, he never had any other hero than himself—and this tale was wonderful. In the energy of delivery, now the leg of wood would start up with an egotistical flourish, and describe with the leg of flesh, a right-angled triangle, and then down would go the peg, and up the leg, with the toe well pointed, whilst he greeted the buckle on his foot with an admiring glance.

Whilst this was proceeding in the school-room; in the back-kitchen, or rather breakfast-parlour, immediately below, in a very brown study, there sate a very fair lady, pondering deeply over the virtues of brimstone and treacle, and the most efficacious antidote to chilblains. She was the second in command over the do-

mestic economy of the school. Unmarried of course. And ever and anon, as she plied the industrious needle over the heel of the too fragmental stocking, the low melody would burst unconsciously forth of, "Is there nobody coming to marry me? Nobody coming to woo-oo-oo?" Lady, not in vain was the burden of that votive song. There *was* somebody coming.

Let us walk up stairs—Mr. Rip is in the midst of his narrative—speaking thus:—"And, young gentlemen, as I hate presumption, and can never tolerate a coxcomb, perceiving that his lordship was going to be insolent, up went thus my foot to chastise him, and down,"——a crash! a cry of alarm, and then one of derision, and behold the chastiser of insolence, or at least, that part of him that was built of wood, through the floor!

Mr. Cherfeuil opening the door at this moment, and perceiving a great noise, and not perceiving him who ought to have repressed it, for the boys standing round *what remained of him* with us, it was concealed from the worthy pe-

dagogue, who exclaimed, "Vat a noise be here ! Vere ist Mr. Reepraaptong ?"

"Just *stepped down below*, to Miss Brocade, in the breakfast-parlour," I replied.

"Ah, bah ! *c'est un veritable chevalier aux dames*," said Mr Cherfeuil, and slamming to the door, he hurried down stairs to reclaim his too gallant representative. We allowed Mr. Riprapton to inhabit for some time, two floors at once, for he was, in his position, perfectly helpless ; that admired living leg of his, stretched out at its length upon the floor. We soon, however, recovered him ; but so much I cannot say of his composure, for he never lost it. I do not believe that he was ever discountenanced in his life.

"Nobody coming to woo-oo-oo," sang Miss Brocade, below—down into her lap come mortar, rubbish and clouds of dust ! And, when the mist clears away, there pointed down from above, an inexplicable index. Her senses were bewildered, and being quite at a loss to comprehend the miracle, she had nothing else to do but faint away. When Mr. Cherfeuil

entered, the simple and good-natured Gaul found his beloved manageress apparently lifeless at his feet, covered with the *debris* of his ceiling, and the wooden leg of his usher slightly tremulous above him. The fright, of course, was succeeded by a laugh, and the fracture by repairs, and the whole, by the following school-boy attempt at a copy of verses, upon the never-to-be-forgotten occasion.

Ambitious usher! there are few
Beyond you that can go,
In double character, to woo
The lovely nymph below.
At once, both god and man you ape
To expedite your flame;
And yet you find in either shape,
The failure just the same.

Jove fell in fair Danaë's lap
In showers of glittering gold;
By Jove! his Joveship was no sap!
How could *you* be so bold,
To hope to have a like success,
Most sapient, ciphering master,
And think a lady's lap to bless
With show'rs of *lath* and *plaster*?

That you should fail, when you essay'd
To act the god of thunder,
In striving to enchant the maid,
Was really no great wonder ;
But when as *man* you wooing go,
Pray let me ask you whether
You had no better leg to show,
Than one of wood and leather ?

These verses are exactly as I wrote them, and I trust the reader will not think that I could now be guilty of such a line, as "*To expedite my flame,*" or of the pedantic school-boyism, of calling a house-keeper a nymph. In fact, it is by the merest accident, that I am now enabled to give them in their genuine shape. An old school-fellow, whom I have not seen since the days of syntax, and whose name I had utterly forgotten, enclosed them to me very lately.

However, such as they are, they were thought in a secluded village as something extraordinary. The usher himself, affected to enjoy them extremely. They added greatly to my reputation, and what was of more consequence to me, my

invitations to dinner and to tea. Truly, my half holidays were no longer my own. I had become an object of curiosity, and I hope and believe, in many instances, of affection. I was quite cured of my mendacious propensities, by the pain, the horror and the disgust that they had inflicted upon me at my last school. I invented no more mysteries and improbabilities for myself, but my good-natured friends did it amply for me.

Mrs. Cherfeuil asserted she knew scarcely any thing about me—indeed, before I came to her school, she had hardly seen me four times during the whole space of my existence. She only knew that I was the child of a lady, that accident had thrown in her way, a lady whom she knew but shortly, but for whom she acquired a friendship as strong as it proved short; that, from mere sympathy she had been induced to stand godmother to me; that she had never felt authorized, nor did she inquire into the particulars of my birth. Of course, there was a mystery attached to it, but to which she had no clue; however, she knew, that at least on

one side, I came of good, nay, very distinguished parentage. But this, her departed friend assured her, and that most solemnly, that whoever should stigmatize me as illegitimate would do me a grievous wrong.

Here was a subject to be canvassed in a gossiping village! Conjecture was at its busy work. I was quite satisfied with the place that the imaginations of my hospitable patrons had given me in the social scale. Nor in the country only did I experience this friendly feeling; most of my vacations were spent in town, at the houses of the parents of some of my school-fellows. I was now made acquainted with the scenic glories of the stage. I fought my way through crowds of fools, to see a child perform the heroic Coriolanus, the philosophical Hamlet, and the venerable and magnificent Lear. Master Betty was at the height of his reputation; and the dignified and classical Kemble had, for a time, to veil his majestic countenance from the play-going eye. Deeply infatuated, indeed, were the Molly-coddles with their Betty.

As the diplomatists say, mine was a curious,

yet a pleasant position. I felt myself shadowed from all evils by the guardian wings of an unavowed, yet fond and admiring mother; often, when in company, have I seen her eye glisten, and her face flush, with the mantling blush of triumph, as some one has praised me for some good quality, either real or imaginary. I alone felt and understood, and loved those emotions, that were to all others so mysterious. But she followed one unvarying policy; her's was constantly the language, let who would praise me, of gentle depreciation, but a depreciation always accompanied by a saving clause, that generally made it real commendation. And how very cautious she was of showing me any thing like a preference! Hardly ever did I find myself alone with her, and on those rare occasions when it so happened, her manner was more than ordinarily cold. The words, "who am I?" always when we were thus situated, burned upon my lips, yet such was the respect with which her deportment inspired me, that I could not utter what was so painful to suppress.

Whatever once there might have been, at

this period, though perhaps placed in a most romantic situation, there was not a particle of romance in her character. How could there be, when her bosom was continually filled with suppressed tenderness, and peradventure, fear? That she loved me with a surpassing affection I felt assured, from two little circumstances; the first was, every night, when she thought me soundly asleep, before she retired, herself, to rest, she came and kissed me as I lay in bed, first ascertaining, by many little manœuvres, if I were not awake. She would stoop down, and as she eased the fulness of her maternal heart, she did it tremblingly and cautiously, like a guilty thing. Once or twice, I purposely let her see that I was awake, and then, as I watched her retire, she did so with a look of such sorrow and disappointment, that I was determined no more to inflict upon her so much pain,—and thus, whilst, in general, the expected benison kept me awake until she came and gave it, I always feigned sleep that I might ensure it, and a sweet night's rest in the bargain, to myself. How she would have comforted herself, had I

been seriously ill, I cannot conjecture, for that trial was never put upon her; as, notwithstanding my weakly infancy, and excepting during the low fever flogged into me by Mr. Root, I was never confined, during the whole course of my life, by any malady, for a single day. Of course I do not reckon the infliction of wounds and the effects of external accidents as sicknesses.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ralph describeth a rare character, a noble and a good man—He goeth to fish without a rod, and suffereth more than fifty rods could inflict, and is not reconciled to the honour of the sun riding him a pick-a-back.

It is now my duty, as well as my greatest pleasure, to put on record the true kindness, the considerate generosity, and the well-directed munificence of a family, a parallel to which can only be found in our own soil—a superior nowhere. By the heads of this family, I was honoured with particular notice. Perhaps they never gave a thought about my poetical talent, or the wonderful progress that my master said

that I had made in my classics, and my wooden-legged tutor in my mathematics. Their kind patronage sprang from higher motives,—from benevolence; they had heard that I had been forsaken—their own hearts told them that the sunshine of kindness must be doubly grateful to the neglected, and, indeed, to me they were very kind.

Perhaps it may be thought, that I had a quick eye to the failings, and the ridiculous points of those with whom chance threw me in contact. I am sure that I was equally susceptible to the elevation of character that was offered to me, in the person of Mr. ———, the respected father of the family of which I have just made mention. As the noble class to which he belonged, and of which he was the first ornament, are fast degenerating, I will endeavour to make a feeble portrait of a man, that at present finds but too few imitators, and that could never have found a superior. He was one of those few merchant princes,—that was really, in all things, princely. Whilst his comprehensive mind directed the commerce of

half a navy, and sustained in competence and happiness hundreds at home, and thousands abroad, the circle immediately around him felt all the fostering influence of his well-directed liberality, as if all the energies of his powerful genius had been concentrated in the object of making those only about him prosperous. He was born for the good of the many, as much as for the elevation of the individual. Society had need of him, and it confessed it. When its interests were invaded by a short-sighted policy, it called upon his name to advocate its violated rights, and splendidly did he obey the call. He understood England's power and greatness, for he had assisted in increasing it; he knew in what consisted her strength, and in that strength he was strong, and in his own.

As a senator, he was heard in the assembled councils of his nation, and those who presided over her mighty resources and influenced her destinies, that involved those of the world, listened to his warning counsel, were convinced that his words were the dictates of wisdom, and obeyed. This is neither fiction nor fulsome

panegyric. The facts that I narrate have become part of our history; and I would narrate them more explicitly, did I not fear to wound the susceptibilities of his still existing and distinguished family. How well he knew his own station, and preserved, with the blindest manners, the true dignity of it! Though renowned in parliament for his eloquence, at the palace for his patriotic loyalty, and in the city for his immense wealth, in the blessed circle, that he truly made social, there was a pleasing simplicity and joyousness of manner, that told, at once, the fascinated guest, that though he might earn honours and distinctions abroad, it was at home that he looked for happiness—and, uncommon as such things are in this repining world—there, I verily believe, he found it. His was a happy lot; he possessed a lady, in his wife, who at once shared his virtues, and adorned them. The glory he won was reflected sweetly upon her, and she wore with dignity, and enhanced those honours, that his probity, his talents, and his eloquence had acquired. At the time of which I am speaking, he was blessed

with daughters, that even in their childhood had made themselves conspicuous by their accomplishments, amiability of disposition, and gracefulness of manners, and plagued with sons who were full of wildness, waggishness, and worth.

It is too seldom the case that the person accords with the high qualification of the mind. Mr. ——— was a singular and felicitous exception to this mortifying rule. His deportment was truly dignified, his frame well-knit and robust, and his features were almost classically regular. His complexion was florid, and the expression of his countenance serene, yet highly intelligent. No doubt but that his features were capable of a vast range of expression; but, as I never saw them otherwise than beaming with benevolence, or sparkling with wit, I must refer to Master James, or Master Frank, for the description of the austerity of his frown, or the awfulness of his rebuke.

This gentleman's two elder sons, at the time to which I allude, had already made their first step in the world. James was making a tour

of the West Indies, the continent being closed against him ; and Frank had already began his harvest of laurels in the navy under a distinguished officer. The younger sons, my juniors, were my school-fellows. Master Frank was two or three years my senior, and before he went to sea, not going to the same school as myself, we got together only during the vacations ; when, notwithstanding my prowess, he would fag me desperately at cricket, out-swim me on the lake, and out-cap me at making Latin verses. However, I consoled myself by saying, " As I grow older all this superiority will cease." But when he returned, after his first cruise, glittering in his graceful uniform, my hopes and my ambition sank below zero. He was already a man, and an officer—I a school-boy, and nothing else.

Of course he had me home to spend the day with him—and a day we had of it. It was in the middle of summer, and grapes were ripe only in such well regulated hot-houses as were Mr. ——'s. We did not enact the well-known fable as it is written—the grapes were

not *too* sour—nor did we repeat the fox's ill-natured and sarcastic observation, "That they were only fit for blackguards." We found them very good for gentlemen—though, I fear, Mr. ———'s desert sometime after owed more to Pomona than to Bacchus for its embellishments. And the fine mulberry-tree on the lawn—we were told that it must be shaken, and we shook it: if it still exist, I'll answer for it, it has never been so shaken since.

The next day we went fishing. Though our bodies were not yet fully grown, we were persons of enlarged ideas; and to suppose that we, two mercurial spirits, could sit like a couple of noodles, each with a long stick in our hands, waiting for the fish to pay us a visit, was the height of absurdity. No, we were rather too polite for that; and as it was we, and not the gentlemen of the finny tribe that sought acquaintance, we felt it our duty as gentlemen to visit them. We carried our politeness still farther, and showed our good breeding in endeavouring to accommodate ourselves to the tastes and habits of those we were about to visit. "Do at Rome

as the Romans do," is the essence of all politeness. As our friends were accustomed to be *in naturalibus—vulgice*, stark naked, we adopted their Adamite fashion, and, undressing, in we plunged. Our success was greater with the finny, than was that of any exquisite, with the fair tribe. We captivated and captured pail-fuls. We drove our entertainers into the narrow creeks in shoals, and then with a net extended between us, we had the happiness of introducing them into the upper air. The sport was so good, that we were induced to continue it for some hours, but, whilst we were preparing for a multitudinous fry, the sun was actually all the while enjoying a most extensive broil. Our backs, and mine especially, became one continuous blister. Whilst in the water, and in the pursuit, I did not regard it—indeed, we were able to carry home the trophies of our success—and then—I hastened to bed. My back was fairly peeled and re-peeled. I performed involuntarily Mr. St. John's curative process to a miracle. No wonder that I've been ever since free from all, even the slightest symp-

toms of pulmonary indisposition. However, my excruciating torments gained me two things—experience, and a new skin.

When I had fresh skinned myself, and it took me more than a week to do it, I found that my fellow labourer had flown. I heard that he had suffered almost as severely as myself, but, as he looked upon himself as no vulgar hero, he was too manly to complain, and next Sunday he actually went to church, whilst I lay in bed smarting with pain—yet I strongly suspect, that a new sword, that he had that day to hang by his side, made him regardless to the misery of his back.

That Sunday fortnight I dined with Mr. ———, and of course he did me the honour to converse upon our fishing exploit, and its painful consequences.

“So, Master Rattlin,” said the worthy gentleman, “you think that you and Frank proved yourselves excellent sportsmen?”

“Yes, sir,” said I; “I will answer for the sport, if you will only be pleased to answer for the men.”

"Well said, my little man!" said Mrs. ——— to me, smiling kindly.

"You see, sir, with all submission, I've gained the verdict of the lady; and that's a great deal."

"But I think that you lost your hide. Was your back very sore?" said my host encouragingly.

"O dear—very sore indeed, sir! Mrs. Cherfeuil said that it looked quite like a new cut steak."

"O it did! did it? but Frank's was not much better," said the senator turning to his lady.

"Indeed it was not," said she compassionately.

"Very well," said Mr. ———, very quietly. "I'll tell you this, Master Ralph, sportsmen as you think yourselves, you and Frank, after all, whatever you both were when you went into the lake, you turned out two *Johnny Raws*."

"Why, Master Rattlin," said the lady,

“ Mr. —— uses you worse than the sun—that did but scorch—but he roasts you.”

“ No wonder, madam, as he considers me *raw*,” replied I.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Reminiscences—A friend found and a line lost—Ralph makes a new acquaintance and a hearty supper, both of which do him much good.

OPENLY admired abroad, and secretly cherished by a love, the more intense because concealed, at home, the course of my days was as happy as the improvement in the various branches of my education was rapid. Nor was I wholly unnoticed by men who have since stood forward, honoured characters, in the van of those who have so nobly upheld the fame of England. The bard who began his career in the brightest fields of Hope, and whose after-fame has so well responded to his auspicious commence-

ment, read many portions of my boyish attempts, and pronounced them full of promise, and the author possessed of *nous*. It was the term he himself used, and that is the only reason why I have recorded it. Indeed, this deservedly great man was, in some sense, my schoolfellow, for he came in the evening to learn French of M. Cherfeuil. He was then engaged to translate an epic, written by one of the Buonapartes, into English verse. I believe that engagement never was carried into effect, notwithstanding the erudite pains Mr. ——— took to qualify himself to perform it successfully. No man could have laboured more to make himself master of the niceties of the Gallic idiom, and the right use of its very doubtful subjunctive.

At the time to which I allude, the inspired author wore a wig—not that his then age required one. Perhaps, the fervid state of his brain, like a hidden volcano, burnt up the herbage above—perhaps, his hair was falling off from the friction of his laurels—perhaps, growing prematurely grey from the work-

ings of his spirit ; but without venturing upon any more conjectures, we may safely come to the conclusion, that the hair that God gave him did not please him so well as that which he bought of the peruquiers. Since we cannot be satisfied with the causes, we must be satisfied with the fact—he wore a wig ; and, in the distraction of mental perplexity, when M. Cherfeuil was essaying to get the poet out of the absent into the conditional mood, the man of verse staring abstractedly upon the man of tense, would thrust his hand under his peruke, and rub, rub, rub his polished scalp, which all the while effused a divine ichor—(poets never perspire)—and, when he was gently reminded that his wig was a little awry towards the left side, he would pluck it resentfully, equally as much awry on the right ; and then, to punish the offending and displacing hand, he would commence gnawing off the nails of his fingers, rich with the moisture from above. We have recorded this little personal trait, because it may be valuable to the gentleman's future biographers ; and also because it is a convincing

proof to the illiterate and the leveller, that head work is not such easy, sofa-enjoyed labour, as is commonly supposed; and finally, that the great writer's habit, *vivos ungues rodere*, proves him to be tooth and nail, *homo ad unguem factus*.

I was also honoured with the friendship and monitory familiarity of Dr. —, a retired head-master of one of our principal public schools. He was a man who had seen much of the highest circles, had been a courtier, and was once, upon a most intimate footing with the third George. This gentleman gave me lessons, better than any I have ever heard or read, upon the *practicability* of true Christianity in every grade of life. He impressed upon my mind, that Christianity, though a creed, was as essentially a virtue as courage, and as necessary to the fulfilment of the duties of life. He showed me that it could go with the labourer to the plough, with the lawyer to the bar, and even with the soldier to battle. He proved to me that it might be courtly with the polished gentleman, gainful with the mer-

chant, and even rough with the sailor; and yet, be not only in all truth, itself unchanged, yet continually changing those who possessed it really, into better and higher beings. I owe him much that I ought to have treasured with a better memory, and to have repaid with a better life.

I feel, also, that there are many other persons to whom I ought to pay a passing tribute of gratitude for much kindness shown to me; but, as my first duty is to my readers, I must not run the risk of wearying them even by the performance of a virtue. But there was one, to omit the mention of whom would be, on my part, the height of ingratitude, and, as concerns the public, something very like approaching to a fraud; for by the implied contract between it and me, I am, in this my auto-biography, bound to supply them with the very best materials, served up to them in my very best manner. The gentleman whom I am going to introduce to the notice of my readers, was the purest personation of benevolence that perhaps ever existed. His countenance was a glowing index

of peace with himself, goodwill to man, and confidence in the love of God. There was within him that divine sympathy for all around him, that brings man, in what man can alone emulate the angels, so near to his Creator. But with all this goodness of soul there was nothing approaching to weakness, or even misjudging softness: he had seen, had known, and had struggled with the world. He left the sordid strife triumphantly, and bore away with him, if not a large fortune, a competence; and what also was of infinitely more value, that "peace of mind which passeth all understanding."

Mr. R—— was, in his person, stout, tall, florid in his countenance, and, for a man past fifty, the handsomest that I have ever beheld. I do not mean to say that his features possessed a classical regularity, but that soul of benevolence transpired through, and was bound up with them, that had a marble bust fitly representing them been handed down to posterity from some master-hand of antiquity, we should have revered it with awe as something beyond human nature, and gazed on it

at the same time with love, as being so dearly and sweetly human. These are not the words of enthusiasm, but a mere narrative of fact. He wore his own white and thin hair, that was indeed so thin, that the top of his head was quite bald. A snuff-coloured coat, cut in the olden fashion, knee-breeches, white lamb's wool stockings, and shoes of rather high quarters, gave a little of the primitive to his highly respectable appearance.

I first saw him as he was pretending to angle in the river that runs through the village. Immediately I had gazed upon his benignant countenance, I went and sate down by him. I could not help it. At once I understood the urbanity and the gentlemanliness that must have existed in the patriarchal times. There was no need of forms between us. He made room for me as a son, and I looked up to him as to a father. He smiled upon me so encouragingly, and so confidently, that I found myself resting my arm upon his knee, with all the loving familiarity of long-tried affection. From that first moment of meeting until his heart lay cold in the grave—and cold the grave

alone could make it—a singular, unswerving, and, on my part, an absorbing love was between us. We remained for a space in this caressing position, in silence; my eyes now drinking in the rich hues of the evening, now the mental expression of the “good old man.” “O! it is very beautiful,” said I, thinking as much of his mild face as of the gorgeousness of the sky above me.

“And do you *feel it*?” said he. “Yes, I see you do; by your glistening eyes and heightened colour.”

“I feel very happy,” I replied; “and have just now two very, very strange wishes, and I don’t know which I wish for most.”

“What are they, my little friend?”

“O! you will laugh at me so if I tell you.”

“No, I will not, indeed. I never laugh at any body.”

“Ah, I was almost sure of that. Well, I was wishing when I looked up into the sky, that I could fly through and through those golden clouds like an eagle; and when I looked at you, I wished that I were just such a good-natured old gentleman.”

"Come, come, there is more flattery than good sense in your wishes. Your first is unreasonable, and your second will come upon you but too soon."

"I did not mean to flatter you," I replied, looking proudly; "for I would neither be an eagle nor an old man, longer than those beautiful clouds last, and the warm sunset makes your face look so—so——"

"Never mind—you shall save your fine speeches for the young ladies."

"But I have got some for the gentleman too: and there's one running in my head just now."

"I should like to hear it."

"Should you? Well, this fine evening put me in mind of it, it is Mrs. Barbauld's Ode." And then putting myself into due attitude, I mouthed it through much to my own, and still more to Mr. R.'s satisfaction. That was a curious, a simple, and yet a cheering scene. My listener was swaying to and fro, with the cadences of the poetry; I with passionate fervour ranting before him; and, in the meantime, his rod and line, unnoticed by either,

were navigating peacefully, yet rapidly, down the river. When I had concluded, his tackle was just turning an eddy, far down below us, and the next moment was out of sight.

Without troubling ourselves much about the loss, shortly after, we were seen hand in hand, walking down the village in earnest conversation. I went home with him—I shared with him and his amiable daughters a light and early supper, of fruit and pastry; and such was the simultaneous affection that sprang up between us—so confiding was it in its nature, and so little worldly, that I had gained the threshold, and was about taking my leave, ere it occurred to him to ask, or myself to say, who I was, and where I resided.

From that evening, excepting when employed in my studies, we were almost inseparable. I told him my strange story; and he seemed to love me for it a hundredfold more. He laid all the nobility, and even the princes of the blood under contribution to procure me a father. He came to the conclusion firmly, and at once, that Mrs. Cherfeuil was my mother.

Oh! this mystery made him superlatively happy. And when he came to the knowledge of my poetical talents, he was really in an ecstasy of delight. He rhymed himself. He gave me subjects—he gave me advice—he gave me emendations, and interpolations. He re-youthed himself. In many a sequestered nook in the beautiful vicinity of the village, we have sat, each with his pencil and paper in his hand—now ranting, now conversing—and, in his converse the instruction I received was invaluable. He has confirmed me in the doctrine of the innate goodness of human nature. Since the period to which I am alluding, I have seen much of villany. I have been the victim, as well as the witness, of treachery. I have been oftentimes forced to associate with vice in every shape; and yet, when in misery, when oppressed, when writhing under tyranny, I have been sometimes tempted to curse my race, the thought, of the kind, the good old man, has come over me like a visitation from heaven, and my malediction has been changed into a prayer, if not into a blessing.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A disaster by water, is the first cause of all Ralph's future disasters upon it—He gets with his tutor out of his depth, in latitude and longitude; and finds himself rivalled by the man with the peg.

OF course, Mr. R. sought and soon gained the friendship of Mrs. Cherfeuil—and then he commenced operations systematically. Now he would endeavour to take her by surprise—now to overcome by entreaty, and then, to entrap by the most complex cross questions. He would be, by turns, tender, gallant, pathetic, insinuating; but all was of no avail—her secret, whatever it was, was firmly secured in her own bosom. With well-acted simplicity she gave

my worthy friend the same barren account about me that was at the service of all interrogators.

What poems did not Mr. R—d—n and myself write together—how he prophesied my future greatness, and how fervently he set about to convince any one of his mistake, who could not see in me the future glory of the age! The good man! His amiable *self-deception* was to him the source of the purest happiness; and never was happiness more deserved. Even at that early age, I often could not help smiling at his simplicity, that all the while he was doing his best to make me one of the vainest and most egregious coxcombs, by his unfeigned wonder at some puny effort of my puny muse, and by his injudicious praises, he would lecture me parentally, by the hour, upon the excellence of humility, and the absolute necessity of modesty, as a principal ingredient to make a great character.

However, I had my correction at home, in my wooden-legged preceptor; if I returned from R—d—n's, in my own imagination, like

poor Gil Blas, the eighth wonder of the world, he would soon, in his own refined phraseology, convince me that I was "no great shakes." Being now nearly sixteen, I began to make conjectures upon my future destiny; and a sorrowful accident at once determined in what line I should make my ineffectual attempts upon fame.

I have mentioned a noble piece of water that lay adjacent to the school. It was during the holidays, when the rest of the young gentlemen were at their respective homes, that I, accompanied by some young acquaintances who resided in the village, repaired to the water to swim. It was a fine summer's afternoon, and both Mr. and Mrs. Cherfeuil were in town. There was a little boy named Fountain, also staying with me at school during the vacation, and he too stole after us unperceived, and when I and my companions had swam to the middle of the lake, the imprudent little fellow also stripped, and went into the water. There were some idle stragglers looking on, and, when I was far, very far from the spot, the fearful

shout came along the level surface, of "Help, help, he is drowning!" and with dreadful distinctness, as if the voice had been shrieked into my very ears, I heard the poor lad's bubbling and smothered cry of "Ralph Rattlin!" Poor fellow, he thought there was safety wherever I was, for I had often borne him over the lake out of his depth, as I taught him to swim, at which art he was still too imperfect. I immediately turned to the place, and strove, and buffeted, and panted, but the distance was great; and, though a rapid, and most expert swimmer, when I arrived at the spot that the lookers on indicated, not a circle, not a ruffle appeared to show where a human soul was struggling beneath, to free itself from its mortal clay. Four or five times I dived, and stayed below the water with desperate pertinacity, and ploughed up the muddy bottom, but they had pointed out to me the wrong spot.

Finding my efforts useless, naked as I was, with the fleetness of a greyhound I started into the village and gave the alarm, and immediately that I saw the people running to the

lake, I was there before them and again diving. Mrs. —, the lady of the M.P. whom I have before mentioned, who was always the foremost in every work of humanity, was soon on the banks, accompanied by many of the most respectable inhabitants in the vicinity. Mrs. —, who never lost her presence of mind, immediately suggested that a boat that lay on the neighbouring river, and which belonged to the landlord of the principal inn, should be conveyed, on men's shoulders, across the space of land that divided one water from the other. The landlord refused—yes, actually refused—but Mrs. —, who from her station, and her many virtues, possessed a merited and commanding influence in the place, ordered the boat to be taken by force, and she was promptly and cheerfully obeyed. Whilst this was going forward, I was astonishing every body by the length of time I stayed underneath the water; and a last effort almost proved fatal to me, for, when I arose, the blood gushed from my mouth and nose; and, when I got on shore, I felt so weak, that I was obliged to be assisted in dress-

ing myself. The boat now began to sweep the bottom with ropes, but this proved as ineffectual to recover the body as were my own exertions.

It was the next day before it was found, and then it was brought up by a Newfoundland dog, very far from the spot in which we had searched for it. Had the frightened spectators, who stood on the shore, but have shown me correctly where the lad had disappeared, I have no doubt but that I should have brought the body up in time for resuscitation. To persons who have not seen what can be done by those who make water, in a manner, their own element, my boyish exertions seemed almost miraculous. My good old friend was present, betraying a curious mixture of fear and admiration; big, as I then was, he almost carried me in his arms home, that is, to the school house, and there we found all in confusion: Mrs. Cherfeuil had just arrived, and hearing that one of the boys was drowned, had given one painful shriek and fainted. When we came into the room she was still in a state of insensibility, and, as we stood around, she slowly opened her

eyes; but the moment that they became conscious of my presence, she leaped up with frantic joy and strained me in her arms, and then, laying her head upon my shoulder, burst into a passion of tears. Mr. R. cast upon me a most triumphant smile, and, as he led me away from the agitated lady, she took a silent farewell of me, with a look of intense fondness, and a depth of ineffable felicity, which I hope will be present to me in my dying hour; for assuredly it will make light the parting pang.

All this may seem very vain-glorious, but I cannot help it—the truth is dearer to me than my bashfulness—and, I believe so well of the most cynical that may condemn this egotism, as to think, that under similar circumstances, they would have acted in a similar manner. However, this affair changed the whole current of Mr. R—d—n's ideas, and altered his plans for me. I was no longer to be the future poet laureate; I was no more enticed to sing great deeds, but to do them. The sword was to displace the pen, the hero the poet. Verse was too effeminate, and rhyme was severely interdict-

ed, and to be forgiven only when it was produced by accident.

He was some time before he brought Mrs. Cherfeuil over to his opinions. It was in vain that she protested the direction of my fate was in other hands, he would not listen to it for a moment; he was obstinate, and I suppose, by what occurred, he was in the right. He declared that the navy was the only profession that deserved my spirit and my abilities. This declaration, perhaps, was not unacceptable at head quarters, wherever they might have been. For myself, I was nothing loath, and the gallant bearing and the graceful uniform of my gallant young friend, Frank ——, who had already seen some hard fighting, added fresh stimulants to my desires. My friend Riprap-ton had now the enviable task to impart to me the science of navigation, and, with his peculiar notions of longitude and latitude, there can be no question as to the merits of the tuition that I received from that very erudite person.

Shortly after I had commenced navigation under his auspices, or, more properly speaking,

that he was forced to attend to it a little under mine, the harmony of our friendship was broken by a quarrel; yes, a heart-embroiling quarrel—and, strange to say, about a lady. I concede to this paragon of ushers that he was a general favourite with the sex. I was never envious of him. All the world knows that I ever did sufficient honour to his attractions—I acknowledged always the graces that appertained to his wooden progression—but still, he was not omnipotent. Wilkes, that epitome of all manner of ugliness, often boasted that he was only an hour behind the handsomest man that ever existed, as far as regarded his position with the fair. Rip was but twenty-five minutes and a fraction. In ten minutes he would talk the generality of women into a good opinion of themselves—an easy matter some may think, for the ladies have one ready made—but it is a different thing from having it and daring to own it. In ten minutes he would make his listener, by some act or word, avow her opinion of her own excellence, in ten more he would bring her to the

same opinion as regarded himself, and the remaining five he used to occupy with his declaration of love; for he was very rapid in his execution—and the thing was done; for if he had not made a conquest, he chronicled one—and that was the same thing. He looked more for the glory than the fruition of his passions. In one respect, he followed Chesterfield's advice with wonderful accuracy; he hazarded a declaration of love to every woman between sixteen and sixty, a little under and over also; for, with his lordship, he came to the very pertinent conclusion, that, if the act were not taken as a sincerity, it would be as a compliment. This ready-made adorer, for every new comer, was as jealous as he was universal in his attachments.

Let the imaginative think, and, running over with their mind's eye all the beautiful sculptures of antiquity, endeavour to picture to themselves a personation of that commanding goddess that the ancients venerated under the title of Juno. The figure must be tall, in proportion faultless, in majesty unrivalled, in grace enchanting; all the outlines of the form

must be full yet not swelling—and, as far removed from the modern notions of *en bon point* as possible—let us add to these the bust of Venus ere she weaned her first born, the winged-boy god; and then we may have an adequate idea of the figure of Mrs. Causand. Her face was of that style of beauty that those women who think themselves delicate are pleased to slander under the name of bold—a style of beauty, however, that all men admire and most men like. Thirty-five years had only written in a stronger hand those attractions which must have undergone every phase of loveliness, and which now, without appearing matronly, seemed stamped with the signs of a long-enduring-maturity. The admiration she excited was general; as she passed, men paused to look upon her, and women whispered to each other behind her back. Never, till this paragon had made her appearance, had I heard of ladies wearing supposititious portions of the human frame—now, I found that envy, or the figure maker, had improved almost every member of Mrs. Causand's body. It was voted by all the female

scandal of the village that such perfection could not be natural—but, since, if all were true that was said upon the subject, the object of their criticism must have been as artificial as Mr. Riprapton's left leg, and she must have been nothing more than animated lay figure, I began to disbelieve these assertions, the more especially as the lady herself was as easy under them as she was in every gesture and motion. Whenever she made her appearance, so did my old friend Mr. R—d—n: he entertained a platonic attachment for her, and that the more strongly, as each visit enabled him to entertain every one who would listen to him, with a long story about the king of Prussia. As every lady expects attention and politeness as a matter of course, equally as a matter of course did she expect the assiduities and some manifestation, even stronger than gallantry—and treated it merely as a matter of course. Really, without an hyperbole, she was a woman to whom an appearance of devotion might be excusable, and looked upon more as a tribute to the abstract spirit of beauty and its divine Creator, than as a sensual testimony to the individual.

Her first appearance even silenced the hitherto dauntless loquacity of Rip—for half a minute. But he made fearful amends for this involuntary display of modesty afterwards. *Secundum artem*, he opened all the batteries of his fascination upon her. He rolled his eyes at her with a violence approaching to agony; he bowed; he displayed in every possible and captivating attitude his one living leg—but his surpassing strength was in the adulation of his serpent tongue—and she bore it all so stoically, she would smile upon him when he made a good hit, as upon an actor on the boards—she would, at times, even condescend to improve some of his compliments upon herself; and when her easy manners had perchance overset him at the very *debüt* of one of his finest speeches, she would begin it again for him; taking up the dropped sentence, and then settle herself into a complacent attitude for listening.

CHAPTER XXV.

Evidences of good taste in favour of Master Ralph—
Jealousy ushers in revenge, revenge retaliation,
which he is compelled to chronicle upon the usher's
face, and what punishment thereupon ensued.

WHEN Mrs. Causand came to Stickenham, she made universal jubilee. The orderly routine of scholastic life had no longer place. She almost ruined Riprapton in clean linen, perfumes, and Windsor soap. Cards and music enlivened every evening; and the games she played were those of the fashion of the day, and she always played high, and always won. Her ascendancy over Mrs. Cherfeuil was complete. The latter was treated with much apparent af-

fection, but still with the airs of a patroness. I do not know that the handsome schoolmistress lent her money, for I do not think that she stood in need of it; but I feel assured that her whole property was at her disposal. She stood in awe of her. *She knew her secret.*

With his usual acuteness, my good old friend discovered this immediately, and he began to woo her also, more for her secret than for her heart. But she was a perfect mystery—I never knew till her death who she was. Her residence was at no time mentioned, and I believe that no one knew it but the lady of the house, and myself, when Mrs. Causand herself gave it me at the eve of my departing for my ship. She came without notice, staid as long as she chose, and departed with an equal disregard to ceremony.

She loved me to a folly. She would hold me at her knees by the hour, and scan every feature of my countenance, as Ophelia said of Hamlet, “as she would draw it.” And then she smiled and looked grave, and sighed and laughed; and I, like a little fool, set all these symptoms of

perturbation down to my own unfledged attractions, whilst during their perusal she would often exclaim, "So like him—so like him." I do not know whether I ought to mention it, for it is a censorious world; but, as I cannot enter into, or be supposed to understand, the feelings of a fine woman of thirty-five caressing a lad of fifteen, I have a right to suppose all such demonstrations of fondness highly virtuous and purely maternal; though, perhaps, to the fair bestower a little pleasant. I found them exquisitely so. I bore all her little blandishments with a modest pleasure; for, observing the high respect in which she was generally held, I looked upon these testimonials of affection as a great honour, sought them with eagerness, and remembered them with gratitude.

Manner is perhaps more seducing than mere beauty; but where they are allied, the captivation is irresistible. That subduing alliance was to be found in perfection in the person of Mrs. Causand. As she always dressed up to the very climax of the fashion, possessed a great variety of rich bijouterie, and never came down

to us in the stage, but always posted it, I concluded that she was in very easy circumstances.

I cannot speak as to the extent of her mental powers, as her surface was so polished and dazzling, that the eye neither could nor wished to look more deeply into her. I believe that she had no other accomplishment but that gorgeous cloak for all deficiency—her inimitable manner. Her remarks were always shrewd, and replete with good sense; her language was choice; her style of conversation varying, sometimes of that joyous nature that has all the effect, without the pedantry, of wit, upon the hearer, and, at times, she could be really quite energetic. This is, after all, but an imperfect description of one who took upon herself the task of forming my address, revising my gait after the dancing-master, and making me to look the gentleman.

This person quite destroyed Riprapton's equanimity. During her three or four first visits he was all hope and animation. She permitted him, as she did every body else, as far as words were concerned, to make love as fast

as he pleased. But beyond this, even his intrepid assurance could not carry him. So his hope and animation gradually gave place to incertitude and chagrin; and then, by a very natural transition, he fell into envy and jealousy. Though but fifteen, I was certainly taller than the man who thought he honoured me by considering me as his rival. Though affairs remained in this unsatisfactory state as far as he was concerned, for certain very valid reasons he had not yet chosen to vent upon me any access of his spleen. But this procrastination of actual hostilities was terminated in the following manner.

Mrs. Causand and I were standing, one fine evening, lovingly, side by side in the summer-house that overhung the river at the bottom of the garden. Mr. Riprapton, washed, brushed, and perfumed—for the scholastic duties of the day were over—was standing directly in front of us, enacting most laboriously the agreeable, smiling with a sardonic grin, and looking actually yellow with spite, in the midst of his complimentary grimaces. As Mrs. Causand and

I stood contemplating the tranquil and beautiful scene, trying to see as little of the person before us as possible, one of her beautiful arms hung negligently over my shoulder, and now she would draw me with a fond pressure to her side, and now her exquisite hand would dally with the ringlets on my forehead, and then its velvety softness would crumple up and indent my blushing cheek, that burned certainly more with pleasure than with bashfulness. I cannot say that the usher bore all this very stoically, but he betrayed his annoyance by his countenance only. His speech was as bland as ever. His trials were not yet over: at some very silly remark of mine the joyous widow pressed some half dozen rapid kisses on the cheek that was glowing so near her own. Either this act emboldened Riprapton, or he egregiously mistook her character, and judged that a mere voluptuary stood before him, for he immediately went on the vacant side and endeavoured to possess himself of her hand.

Face, neck, and arms flushed up in one indignant crimson of the most unsophisticated

anger I ever beheld. She threw herself back with a perceptible shudder, as if she had come unexpectedly in contact with something cold, or dead, or unnatural.

"Mr. Riprapton," she exclaimed, after a space of real emotion, "I never yet boxed the ears of a gentleman; but had you been one, I should most assuredly have so far forgotten my feminine dignity, as to have expressed my deep resentment by a blow. I cannot touch any thing so mean. While you confined your persecution to words, I bore with it. Sir, I only speak from my own sensations; but judging by these, any female who could abide your touch without repugnance, must have long lost all womanly feelings; and now that we are upon this subject, let me give you a little friendly advice. When you are permitted to sit at the same table with ladies, and wish by the means of your feet to establish a secret intercourse with any one, take care, in future, that you do not use the wooden leg. Females may be more tender in the toes than in their hearts. You may go, sir; and remember, if

you wish to preserve your station in this house—know it. When you behave as a gentleman, that title may be conceded to you; but the moment your conduct is inconsistent with that character, those around you will not forget that you are no more than a hired servant, and but one degree above a menial. Here, Ralph," she continued, giving me the violated hand, "cleanse it from that fellow's profanation." I brought it to my mouth very gallantly, and covered it with kisses.

For the first time, I saw my usher-friend not only confounded, but dumb with consternation, and his whitened face became purple even into the depths of his deep pock-marks, with an emotion that no courtesy could characterise as amiable. He moved off with none of his usual grace; but retired like a very common place, wooden-legged man; in a truly miserable dot-and-go-one style. What Mrs. Causand and I said to each other on the subject, when she went and seated herself in the summer-house to recover from her excitement, would, I am sure, have formed the ground-work and argu-

ments of twelve good moral essays; but unfortunately I have forgotten every thing about it, except that we staid there till not only the dews had fallen upon the flowers, but the shades of evening upon the dews.

As my stay at school was to be so short, I was treated more as a familiar friend by all than as a pupil. I staid up with the family and took tea and supper with them. Rip made no appearance the evening after his lecture, but retired to his chamber much indisposed. While Mrs. Causand was on her visits I always breakfasted with her *tête-à-tête* in the little parlour, whose French windows opened upon the garden, and it was on those occasions that I found her most amusing. She knew every one, and every thing connected with fashionable life. Private and piquant, and I am sure authentic, anecdotes of every noble family, she possessed in an exhaustless profusion. Nor was this knowledge confined to the nobility; she knew more of the sayings and doings of some of the princes of the blood, than any other person living, out of their domestic circle, and she knew many

things with which that circle were never acquainted. I am sure she could have made splendid fortunes for twelve fashionable novel-writers.

I have, at times, endeavoured to recollect some of her *morceaux*; but though I have succeeded, it has been so imperfectly, that I do not feel authorized in making them public. In the proper place I may be tempted to violate this secrecy as respects his late Majesty, the more especially, as in the singular transaction to which I allude, his character came off, through a fiery proof of no common temptations, and through circumstances of extreme hazard and difficulty, resplendently as a man of honour and as a gentleman. Obloquy enough has been flung at that which rather deserved panegyric; but it is a too common feeling to endeavour to daub over that lustre with mud, that the rampant cannot emulate.

I had breakfasted with Mrs. Causand the morning after Rip's discomfiture, and then went to prosecute my studies in the school-room. This was the first time that my tutor and I

had met since his rebuff. Mr. Cherfeuil had not yet taken his place at his desk. As I passed the assistant who assisted me so little, I gave him my usual smile of greeting: but his countenance, instead of the good-humoured return, was black as evil passions could make it. However, I paid but little attention to this unfriendly demonstration, and taking my seat, began, as I was long privileged to do, to converse with my neighbour.

"Silence!" vociferated the man in authority. I conversed on. "Silence! I say."

Not supposing that I was included in this authoritative demand, or not caring if I were, I felt no inclination to suspend the exercise of my conversational powers. After the third order for silence, this sudden disciple of Harpocrates left his seat, cane in hand, and coming behind me, I dreaming of no such temerity on his part, he applied across my shoulders one of the most hearty *con amore* swingers that ever left a wale behind it, exclaiming, at the same time, "Silence, Master Rattlin."

Here was a stinging degradation to me,

almost an officer on the quarter-deck of one of his Majesty's frigates. However, without taking time to weigh exactly my own dignity, I seized a large slate, and turning sharply round, sent it hissing into his very teeth. I wish I had knocked one or two of them out. I wished it then fervently, and of that wish, wicked though it be, I have never repented. He was for some time occupied with holding his hand to his mouth, and in a rapid and agonizing examination of the extent of the damage. When he could spare an instant for me, he was as little satisfied with the expression of my features, as with the alteration in his, so he hopped down to Mr. Cherfeuil, while the blood was streaming between his fingers, to lay his complaint in form against me. I had two sure advocates below, so he took nothing by his motion, but a lotion to wash his mouth with; and after staying below for a couple of hours, he came up with a swelled face, but his teeth all perfect.

That morning Mr. Cherfeuil, in very excellent bad English, made a most impressive

speech; the pith of it was, that, had I not taken the law into my own hands, he would most certainly have discharged Mr. Riprapton, for having exceeded his authority in striking me; but, as my conduct had been very unjustifiable, I was sentenced to transcribe the whole of the first book of the *Æneid*. Before dinner my school-fellows had begged off one half of the task—Mrs. Cherfeuil at dinner begged off one half of that half; when things had gone thus far, Mrs. Causand interfered, and argued for a commutation of punishment; the more especially, as she thought an example ought to be made for so heinous an offence. As she spake with a very serious air, the good-natured Frenchman acquiesced in her wishes, and pledged himself to allow her to inflict the penalty, which she promulgated to the following effect: “That I should be forced to swallow an extra bumper of port for not having knocked out, at least, one of the wretch’s teeth,” and she then related enough of his conduct to bring Mr. Cherfeuil into her way of thinking upon the subject.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A reconciliation—a walk planned, and a man planted
—The latter found to grow impatient—Ralph at
length rigged out as a reefer.

For two days Mr. Rip and myself were not upon speaking terms. On the third day a Master Barnard brings me up a slate full of plusses, minusses, *x*, *y*, *z*'s, and other letters of the alphabet, in a most amiable algebraical confusion.

“Take it to Mr. Riprapton,” said I. The lad took it, and the mathematical master looked over it with a perplexed gravity, truly edifying. “Take it to Master Rattlin—I have no time,” was the result of his cogitations.

It was brought to me again. "Take it to the usher," said I.

"It is of no use; he don't know any thing about it."

"Take it then to Mr. Cherfeuil, and tell him so."

This advice was overheard by the party most concerned, and he called the boy to him, who shortly returned to me with a note, full of friendship, apology and sorrow; ending with an earnest request that I would again put him right with Mrs. Causand, as well as the sum on the slate. I replied, for I was still a little angry, that he was very ungrateful, but that, as we were so soon to part, perhaps for ever, I accepted the reconciliation. So far was well. I told Mrs. Causand what had passed, and then interceded with her for her forgiveness; for her anger debarred him from many comforts, as it obliged him to take his solitary tea and supper in the school-room. She consented, as she did to almost every thing that I requested of her, and that afternoon I brought up to her the penitent hand-presser. Her

natural good temper, and blandness of manner, soon put him again at his ease, and his love speeches flowed as fluently as ever.

We proposed a walk, and, accompanied by some half dozen of the elder boys, we began to stroll upon the common. By some *gaucherie* the conversation took a disagreeable turn on our late misunderstanding, and I could not help repeating what I had said in my note, that Mr. Rip had proved himself ungrateful, considering the many difficulties from which I had extricated him. At this last assertion before the lady, he took fire, and flatly denied it. I was too proud to enumerate the many instances of scholastic assistance that he had received at my hands, so I became sullen and silent, my opponent in an equal degree brisk and loquacious. My fair companion rather enjoyed the encounter, and began to rally me.

"Come, come," said I, "I'll lay him a crown that he will beg me to extricate him from some difficulty before the week's over."

The wager was accepted with alacrity, and Mrs. Causand begged to lay an equal stake

against me, which I took. I then purposely turned the conversation, and after some time, when we were fairly in the hollow made by the surrounding hills, I exclaimed, "Rip, if you'll give me five-and-twenty yards, I'll run you three hops and a step a hundred yards for another crown."

"Done, done!" exclaimed the usher, joyously, chuckling with the idea of exhibiting so triumphantly his prowess before the blooming widow. The ground was duly stepped, and the goal fixed, whilst my antagonist, all animation and spirits, was pouring his liquid nonsense into the lady's ear. I took care that, in about the middle of the distance, our race-ground should pass over where some rushes were growing. Now Riprapton had a most uncommon speed in this manner of progressing. He would, with his leg of flesh, take three tremendous hops, and then step down with his leg of wood one, and then three live hops again, and one dead step, the step being a kind of respite from the fatigue of the hops.

All the preliminaries being arranged, off we

started, I taking, of course, my twenty-five yards in advance. The exhibition and the gait were so singular, that Mrs. Causand could scarcely stand for laughter, whilst the boys shouted, "Go it, Ralph!"—"Well done, peg,"—"Dot-and-go-one will beat him."

In the midst of these exhilarating cries, what I had calculated upon happened. Rip, before we had gone half the distance, was close behind me; but lo! after three of his gigantic hops, that seemed to be performed with at least one seven-leagued boot turned into a slipper, he came down heavily upon his step with his wood among the rushes. The stiff clay there being full of moisture and unsound, he plunged up to his hip nearly, in the adhesive soil, and there he remained, as much a fixture, and equally astonished, as Lot's wife. First of all, taking care to go the distance, and thus win the wager, we all, frantic with laughter, gathered round the man thus firmly attached to his mother earth. Whilst the tears ran down Mrs. Causand's cheeks, and proved that her radiant colour was quite natural, she endeavoured to

assume an air of the deepest commiseration, which was interrupted, every moment, by involuntary bursts of laughter. For himself, no wretch in the pillory ever wore a more lugubrious aspect, and his sallow visage turned first to one, and then to another, with a look so ridiculously imploring that it was irresistible.

"I am sorry, very sorry," said the lady, "to see you look so pale—I may say, so livid—but, poor man, it is but natural, seeing already that you have *one foot in the grave*."

The mender of pens groaned in the spirit.

"I say," said the schoolboy wag of the party, applying an old Joe Miller to the occasion, "why is Mr. Riprapton like pens, ink, and paper?"

"Because he is stationary," vociferated five eager voices, at once, in reply.

The caster-up of sums cast a look at the delinquent, the tottle of the whole of which was, "you sha'n't be long on the debit side of our account."

"But what is to be done?" was now the question.

"I am afraid," said I, "we must dig him up like a dead tree, or an old post."

"It is, I believe, the only way," said the tutor despondingly; "I was relieved once that way before in the bog of Ballynawashy."

"O, then you are from Ireland after all," said the lady.

"Only on a visit, madam!" said the baited fixture, with much asperity.

"But really," said she, "if I may judge from the present occasion, you must have made a *long stay*."

"I hope he won't take cold in his feet," said a very silly blubber-lipped boy.

His instructor looked hot with passion.

"But really, now I think of it," chimed in the now enraptured widow, "a very serious alarm has seized me. Suppose that the piece of wood, so nicely planted in this damp clay, were to take root and throw out fibres. Gracious me! only suppose that you should begin to vegetate. I do declare that you look quite *green* about the eyes already!"

"Mercy me!" whispered the wag, "if he

should grow up, he'll certainly turn to a *plane* tree; for really, he is a very plain man."

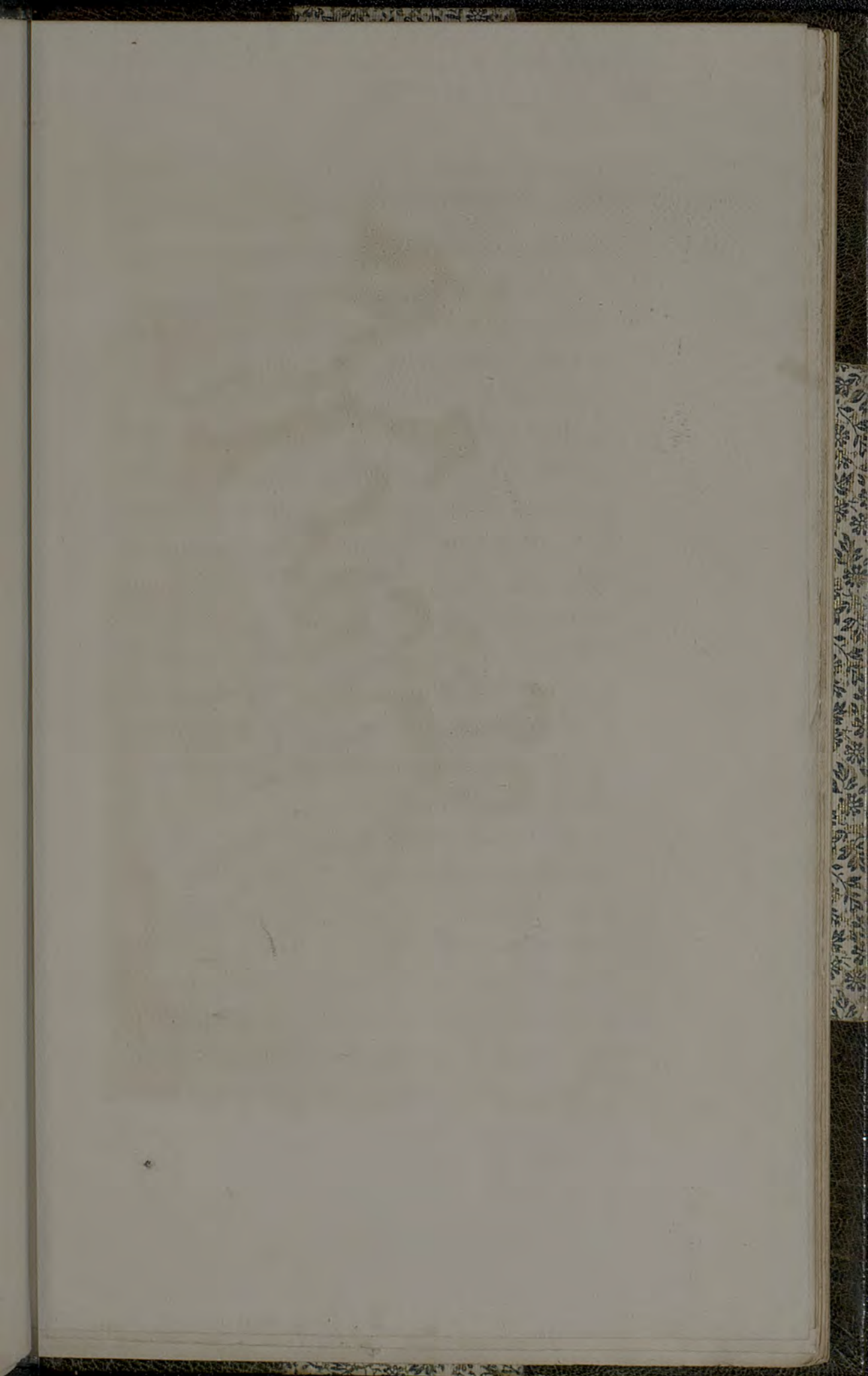
The wielder of the ruler gave a tremendous wriggle with the whole body, which proved as ineffectual as it was violent.

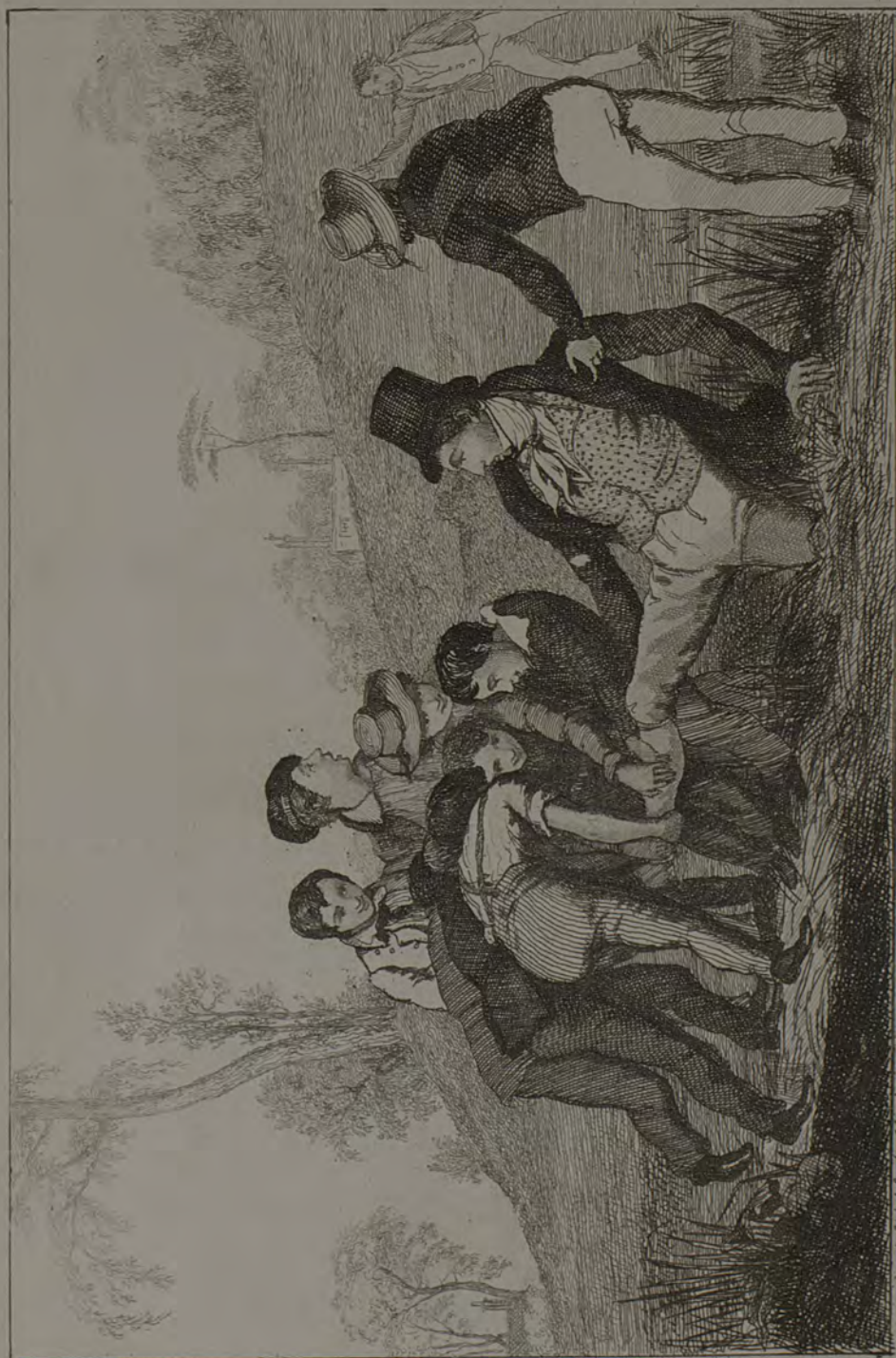
"But don't you think, Ralph," said his tormentor, "as the evening is drawing in, that something should be done for the poor gentleman; he will most certainly take cold if he remain here all night; couldn't you and your schoolfellows contrive to build a sort of hut over him? I am sure I should be very happy to help to carry the boughs—if the man won't go to the house, the house must go to the man."

"What a fine cock-shy he would make!" said Master Blubberlips.

"O, I should so like to see it," said the lady. "It will be the first time he has been made *shy* in his life."

He was certainly like an Indian bound to the stake, and made to suffer mental torture—but he did not bear it with an Indian's equanimity. As a few stragglers had been drawn to the funny scene, and more might be expected,





Drawn and Engraved by A. Horsley

THE COCK LEG.

I, and I only, of all the spectators, began to feel some pity for him; the more especially, as I heard a stout grinning chaw-bacon say to the baker's boy of the village, who asked him what was the matter, "Whoy, Jim, it ben't nothink less than Frenchman's usherman ha drawn all Thickenham common on his'n roight leg for a stocking loike."

"Come," thought I, "it's quite time, after that, for the honour of the academy, to beat a retreat, or we shall be beaten hollow by this heavy-shod clodpole. Mr. Riprapton," said I, "I don't bear you any malice—but I recollect my wager. If I extricate you out of the difficulty, will you own that I've won it?"

"Gladly," said he, very sorrowfully.

"Come here, my lads, out knives and cut away the turf." We soon removed the earth as far down as to where the bole of the wooden leg joined to the shank. "Now, my lads," said I, "we must unscrew him." Round and round we twirled him, his outstretched living leg forming as pretty a fairy ring on the green sod, with its circumgyrations, as can be ima-

gined. At last, after having had a very tolerable foretaste of the pillory, we fairly unscrewed him, and he was once more disengaged from his partial burial-place. I certainly cannot say that he received our congratulations with the grace of a Chesterfield, but he begged us to continue our exertions to recover for him his shank, or otherwise he would have to follow Petruchio's orders to the tailor—to "hop me over every kennel home." For the sake of the quotation, we agreed to assist, and, as many of us catching hold of it, as could find a grip, we tugged, and tugged, and tugged. Still, the stiff clay did not seem at all inclined to relinquish the prize it had so fairly won. At length, by one tremendous and simultaneous effort, we plucked it forth; but, in doing so, those who retained the trophy in their hands were flung flat on their backs, whilst the newly-gained leg pointed upwards to the zenith. Having first wiped a little of the deep yellow adhesion away from it, we joined the various parts of the man together; and, he taking singular care to avoid those spots where rushes grew, we all reached

our home, with one exception, in the highest glee—as to the two wagers, he behaved like a gentleman, and *acknowledged* the debt—which was a great deal more than I ever expected.

After having worked some fifty problems out of Hamilton Moore, of blessed memory, and having drawn an infinity of triangles with all possible degrees of incidence, with very neat little ships, now upon the base, now upon the hypotenuse, and now upon the perpendicular, my erudite usher pronounced me to be a perfect master of the noble science of navigation in all its branches, for the which he glorified himself exceedingly. As I had made many friends there was no difficulty in procuring for me a ship, and I was to have joined the *Sappho*, a first class brig of war, as soon as she arrived, and she was expected almost immediately. However, as at that particular time we were relieving the Danes from the onerous care of their navy, the sloop was sent as soon as she arrived to assist in the amiable action. I was much grieved at this disappointment, as the *Sappho* was commanded by the son of that

dignified divine who took so much interest in my welfare.

Having many who interested themselves about me, some apparent and others hidden, a ship was soon found for me, but by what chain of recommendation, I never could unravel. As far as the ship was concerned, I certainly had nothing to complain of. She was a fine frigate, and every way worthy to career over the ocean, that was, at that time, almost completely an English dominion. The usual quantity of hopes and wishes were expressed, and my final leave was taken of all my village friends. Mr. R. enjoining me to correspond with him on every opportunity, gave me his blessing, and some urgent advice to eschew poetry, and prophesied that he should live to see me posted. There was nothing outwardly very remarkable in the manner of Mrs. Cherfeuil on the eve of my departure. I went to bed a school-boy and was to rise next morning an officer—that is to say, I was to mount my uniform for the first time. I believe that I was already on the ship's books; for at the time of which I am writing,

the clerk of the cheque was not so very frequent in his visits, and so particular when he visited, as he is at present. Notwithstanding the important change that was about to take place in every thing connected with myself, I did sleep that night, though I often awoke,—there was a female hovering round my bed almost the whole of the night.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ralph commences his public career by accepting an I. O. U., he hardly knows why—He finds his future Captain based on a bottle—He is not taken by the hand.

So ignorant were those few, on whom devolved my fitting out, of what my station required, that I had made for me three suits of uniform, all of which had the lion upon the buttons instead of the anchor, and from which the weekly account was absent. My transmission from school to town was by the stage; at town I was told to call on a lawyer in the King's-bench Walk, in the Temple, who furnished me with twenty pounds, and a letter for my future cap-

tain, telling me I might draw upon him for a yearly sum, which was more than double the amount I ought to have been entrusted with, then coldly wishing me success, he recommended me to go down that evening by the mail, and join my ship immediately, and wished me a good morning.

I certainly was a little astonished at my sudden isolation in the midst of a vast city. I felt that, from that moment, I must commence man. I knew several persons in London, parents of my school-fellows, but I was too proud to parade my pride before them, for I felt, at the same time, ashamed of wearing ostentatiously, whilst I gloried in, my uniform.

I dined at the inn where I alighted on coming to town, called for what I wanted in a humble semi-tone, said "If you please, sir," to the waiter, paid my bill without giving him a gratuity, for fear of giving him offence, took my place in the mail, and got down without accident to Chatham, and slept at the house where the coach stopped. On account of my hybrid uniform and my asserting myself of the navy,

the people of the establishment knew not what to make of me. I wished to deliver my credentials immediately ; but my considerate landlord advised me to take time to think about it --and dinner. I followed his advice.

It is uncertain how long I should have remained in this uncertainty, had not a brother midshipman, in the coffee-room, accosted me, and kindly helped me out with my pint of port, which I thought I showed my manliness in calling for. He did not roast me very unmercifully, but what he spared in gibes he made up in drinking. I abstained with a great deal of firmness from following his example ; he warmly praised my abstinence, I suppose with much sincerity, as it certainly appeared to be a virtue which he was incapable of practising. About seven o'clock my ready-made friend began to be more minute in his inquiries. I showed him my introductory letter, and he told me directly at what hotel the captain was established, and enforced upon me the necessity of immediately waiting upon him ; telling me I might think myself extremely lucky in having

had to entertain only one officer, when so many thirsty and penniless ones were cruizing about to sponge upon the Jonny Raws. For himself, he said, he was a man of honour, quite a gentleman, and insisted upon paying his share of the two bottles of port consumed, of which I certainly had not drunk more than four glasses. Secretly praising my man of honour for his disinterestedness, for I had asked him to take a glass of wine, which he had read as a couple of bottles, I ordered my bill, among the items of which stood conspicuously forth, "two bottles of old crusted port, fourteen shillings."

"D——d imposition!" said my hitherto anonymous friend. "Of all vices, I abominate imposition the most. I shall pay for all this wine myself. Here, *wai-terre*, pen and ink. Banking hours are over now; I have nothing but a fifty-pound bill about me. However, you shall have my I. O. U. You see that I have made it out for one pound—you'll just hand me the difference, six shillings. Your name, I think you said, was Rattlin—Ralph Rattlin. A good name, a very good purser's name indeed.

There, Mr. Rattlin, you have only to present that piece of paper when you get on board to the head swabwasher, and he'll give you either cash for it, or slops."

I gave the gentleman who so much abhorred imposition, six shillings in return for his paper, which contained these words; "I. O. U. twenty shillings. Josiah Cheeks, Major General of the Horse Marines, of his Majesty's Ship, the Merry Dun, of Dover.—To Mr. Ralph Rattlin."

I carefully placed this precious document in my pocket-book, among my one-pound notes, at that time the principal currency of the country; yet could not help thinking that my friend cast an awfully hungry eye at the pieces of paper. He had already commenced a very elaborate speech prefatory to the request of a loan, when I cut him short, by telling him that I had promised my godmamma not to lend any one a single penny until I had been on board my ship six months, which was really the case. He commended my sense of duty, and said it was of no manner of consequence, as next morning he

should be in possession of more than he should have occasion for, and then a five or a ten pound note would be at my service. After vainly endeavouring to seduce me to the theatre, he made a virtue of my obstinacy, and taking me by the arm, showed me to the door of the hotel, where Captain Reud of H. M. S. Eos was located.

I was announced, and immediately ushered into a room, where I saw a sallow-visaged, compact, well-made little man, apparently not older than two or three-and-twenty, sitting in the middle of the room, upon a black quart bottle, the neck of which was on the floor, and the bottom forming the uneasy and unstable seat. Without paying much attention to me, every now and then he would give himself an impetus, and flinging out his arms, spin round like a turnstile. It certainly was very amusing, and, no doubt, so thought his companion, a fine, manly, handsome looking fellow, of thirty-five or thirty-eight, by his long-continued and vociferous applause. The little spinner was habited in a plain but handsome uniform, with one gold epaulet on his right shoulder, whilst the de-

lighted approver had a coat splendid with broad white casimere facings.

I could observe that both parties were deeply immersed in the many-coloured delirium of much drink. I looked first at one, then at the other, undecided as to which of the two was my captain. However, I could not augur ill of one who laughed so heartily, nor of the other, who seemed so happy in making himself a teetotum. Taking advantage of a pause in this singular exhibition, I delivered my credentials to the former, and more imposing-looking of the two, who immediately handed them over to Captain Reud. I was graciously received, a few questions of courtesy asked, and a glass of wine poured out for me.

My presence was soon totally disregarded, and my captain and his first lieutenant began conversing on all manner of subjects, in a jargon to me entirely incomprehensible. The decanter flew across and across the table with wonderful rapidity, and the flow of assertion increased with the captain, and that of assentation with his lieutenant. At length, the little

man with the epaulet commenced a very prurient tale. Mr. Farmer cast a look full of meaning upon myself, when Captain Reud addressed me thus, in a sharp, shrill tone, that I thought impossible to a person who told such pleasant stories, and who could spin so prettily upon a quart bottle. "Do you hear, younker, you'll ship your traps in a wherry the first thing to-morrow morning, and get on board early enough to be victualled that day. Tell the commanding officer to order the ship's tailor to clap the curse of God upon you—(I started with horror at the impiety)—to unship those poodles from your jacket, and rig you out with the foul anchor."

"Yes, sir," said I; "but I hope the tailor won't be so wicked, because I am sure I wish the gentleman no harm."

"Piously brought up," said the captain.

"We'll teach him to look aloft, any how," said the lieutenant, striving to be original.

"A well-built young dog," said the former, looking at me approvingly.

“Who is he, may I ask?” said the latter, in a most sonorous aside.

“Mum,” said Captain Reud, putting his finger to his nose, and endeavouring to look very mysterious, and full of important meaning; “but when I get him in blue water—if he were the king’s son—heh! Farmer?”

“To be sure. Then he is the son of somebody, sir?”

“More likely the son of nobody—according to the law of the land, whoever launched him: but I’ll never breathe a word, or give so much as a hint that he is illegitimate. I scorn, like a British sailor, to do that by a side-wind, Farmer, that I ought not to do openly; but there are two sides to a blanket. A Popish priest must not marry in England. Norman Will was not a whit the worse because his mother never stood outside the canonical rail. Pass your wine, Farmer; I despise a man, a scoundrel, who deals in inuendoes. O it’s despicable, d—d despicable. I don’t like however, to be trusted by halves—shall keep a

sharp look out on the joker—with me, a secret is always perfectly safe.”

“O, then there is a secret, I see,” said Mr. Farmer. “You had better go now, Mr. Rattlin, and attend to the captain’s orders to-morrow.”

The word Mister sounded sharply, yet not unpleasingly, to my ear: it was the first time I had been so designated or so dignified. Here was another evidence that I had, or ought to, cast from me the slough of boyhood, and enact, boldly, the man. I therefore summoned up courage to say that I did not perfectly understand the purport of the captain’s order, and solicited an explanation.

“Yes,” said he; “the service has come to a pretty pass, when the youngest officer of my ship asks me to explain my orders, instead of obeying them.”

“I had better give him a note to the commanding officer, for I may not happen to be on board when he arrives.”

A note was written and given me.

“Good night, Mr. Rattlin,” said the captain.

“Good night, sir,” said I, advancing

very amiably to shake hands with my little commander. My action took him more aback than a heavy squall would have done the beautiful frigate he commanded. The prestige of rank, and the pride of discipline struggled with his sense of the common courtesies of life. He half held out his hand ; he withdrew it—it was again proffered, and again withdrawn ! He really looked confused. At length, as if he had rallied up all his energies to act courageously, he thrust them resolutely into his pocket ; and then said, “ There, younker, that will do. Go and turn in.”

“ Turned out,” I muttered, as I left the room. From this brief incident, young as I was, I augured badly of Captain Reud. I at once felt that I had broken some rule of etiquette, but I knew that he had sinned against the dictates of mere humanity. There was a littleness in his conduct, and an indecision in his manner, quite at variance with my untutored notions of the gallant bearing of a British sailor.

As I lay in bed at my inn, my mind re-

enacted all the scenes of the previous day. I was certainly dissatisfied with every occurrence. I was dissatisfied with the security of my friend Josiah Cheeks, the Major-General of the Horse Marines of His Majesty's Ship, the Merry Dun of Dover. I was dissatisfied with my reception by Captain Reud, of His Majesty's ship Eos, notwithstanding his skill at spinning upon a bottle; nor was I altogether satisfied with the blustering, half-protecting, half-overbearing conduct towards me, of his first lieutenant, Mr. Farmer. But all these dissatisfactions united were as nothing to the disgust I felt at the broad inuendoes, so liberally flung out, concerning the mystery of my birth,

END OF VOL. I.

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