HD WIDENER
HW J9BA C

Digitized by Google
Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

PAGE NOT AVAILABLE

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

PAGE NOT AVAILABLE

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

PAGE NOT AVAILABLE

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

PAGE NOT AVAILABLE

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

PAGE NOT AVAILABLE

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

HD WIDENER
HW J9BA C

Digitized by Google
Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

21434.62.3

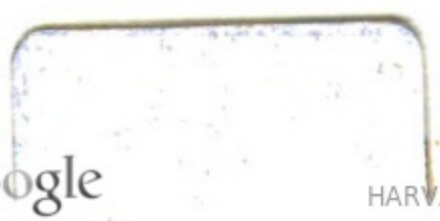
Harvard College Library

FROM

Mrs.Gwendolyn W.Parker

.....

.....



Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

MERRY-GARDEN

AND OTHER STORIES

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE WHITE WOLF

THE MAYOR OF TROY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

MERRY-GARDEN

AND OTHER STORIES

BY "Q"

(A. T. QUILLER-COUCH)

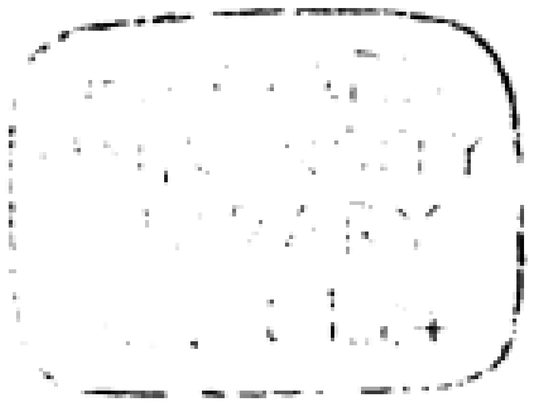
METHUEN & CO.

36 ESSEX STREET W.C.

LONDON

Digitized by Google

Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY



First Published in 1907

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

MERRY-GARDEN	1
THE BEND OF THE ROAD	61
HI-SPY-HI!	105
HIS EXCELLENCY'S PRIZE-FIGHT	147
THE *BLACK JOKE*	205
WHERE THE TREASURE IS	255
A JEST OF AMBIALET	283

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

MERRY-GARDEN AND OTHER STORIES

MERRY GARDEN

I

PROLOGUE

BESIDE a winding creek of the Lynher River, and not far from the Cornish borough of Saltash, you may find a roofless building so closely backed with cherry-orchards that the trees seem by their slow pressure to be thrusting the mud-walls down to the river's brink, there to topple and fall into the tide. The old trees, though sheeted with white blossom in the spring, bear little fruit, and that of so poor a flavour as to be scarcely worth picking. They have, in fact, almost reverted to savagery, even as the cottage itself is crumbling back to the earth out of which it was built. On

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the slope above the cherry-orchards, if you moor your boat at the tumble-down quay and climb by half-obliterated pathways, you will come to a hedge of brambles, and to a broken gate with a well beside it; and beyond the gate to an orchard of apple-trees, planted in times when, regularly as Christmas Eve came round, Aunt Barbree Furnace, her maid Susannah, and the boy Nandy, would mount by this same path with a bowl of cider, and anoint the stems one by one, reciting—

Here's to thee, good apple-tree—
Pockets full, hats full, great bushel-bags full!
Amen, an' vire off the gun!

—whereupon Nandy, always after a caution to be extry-careful, would shut his eyes, pull the trigger of his blunderbuss, and wake all the echoes of the creek in an uproar which, as Susannah never failed to remark, was fit to frighten every war-ship down in Hamoaze. The trees, grey with lichen, sprawl as they have fallen under the weight of past crops. They go on blossoming, year after year; even those that lie almost horizontally remember their due season and burst into blowth, pouring (as it were) in rosy-white cascades

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

down the slope and through the rank grasses. But as often as not the tenant neglects to gather the fruit. Nor is it worth his while to grub up the old roots; for you cannot plant a new orchard where an old one has decayed. One of these days (he tells me) he means to do something with the wisht old place: meanwhile I doubt if he sets foot in it once a year.

For me, I find it worth visiting at least twice a year: in spring when the Poet's Narcissus flowers in great clumps under the north hedge, and the columbines grow breast-high—pink, blue, and blood-red; and again in autumn, for the sake of an apple which we call the gillyflower—small and shy, but of incomparable flavour—and for a gentle melancholy which haunts the spot like—yes, like a human face, and with faint companionable smiles and murmurs of dead-and-gone laughter.

The tenant was right: it was a wisht old place, and the more wisht because it lies so near to a world that has forgotten it. Above, if you row past the bend of the creek, you will come upon trim villas with well-kept gardens; below, and beyond the entrance to the creek, you look down a broad river to the Hamoaze, crowded with

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

torpedo-boats, powder-hulks, training-ships, and great vessels of war. Around and behind Merry-Garden—for that is its name—stretches a parish given up to the cultivation of fruit and flowers; and across the creek another parish "clothed"—I quote the local historian—"in flowers like a bride"; and both parishes learned their prosperity from Merry-Garden the now deserted. In mazzard time ("mazzards" are sweet black cherries) the sound of young laughter floats across Merry-Garden; but the girls and boys who make the laughter seldom wander that way. No longer to its quay come boats with holiday-parties from the Fleet and the Garrison at Plymouth, as they came by scores a hundred years ago.

In those days Merry-Garden was a cherry-garden. The cottage was faced with a verandah overlooking the tide. In the wide stone chimney-place, where now, standing knee-deep in nettles, you may look up and see blue sky beyond the starlings' nests, as many as twenty milk-pans have stood together over the fire, that the visitors might have clotted cream to eat with their straw-berries and raspberries. In the orchards, from under masses of traveller's joy, you may pull

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

away rotten pieces of timber that once made arbours and summer-houses.

The present tenant will sub-let you the whole of Merry-Garden, if you wish, for two pounds ten shillings per annum. He is an old man, with an amazing memory and about as much sentiment as my boot. From him I learned the following story: and, with your leave, I will repeat it in his words.

I

Aunt Barbree Furnace was a widow woman, and held Merry-Garden upon a tenancy of a kind you don't often come across nowadays—and good riddance to it!—though common enough when I was a boy. The whole lease was but for three pounds a year for the term of three lives—her husband, William John Furnace; her husband's younger sister Tryphena, that had married a man called Jewell and buried him within six months; and Tryphena's only child Ferdinando, otherwise known as Nandy. When the lease was drawn, all three lives seemed good enough for another fifty years. The Furnaces came of a long-lived

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

stock, and William John with any ordinary care might hope to reach eighty. His sister had been specially put into the lease on the strength of her constitution; and six months of married life had given her a distaste for it, which made things all the safer. As for Nandy, there's always a risk, of course, with very young lives, 'specially with boys: but if he did happen to pull through, 'twas like as not he might lengthen out the lease for another thirty years.

At any rate Mr. and Mrs. Furnace took the risk with a cheerful mind. The woman came from Saltash, where she and her mother had driven a thriving trade in cockles and other shell-fish, particularly with the Royal Marines; and being a busy spirit and childless, she hit on the notion of turning her old trade to account. Her husband, William John, had tilled Merry-Garden and stocked it with fruits and sallets with no eye but to the sale of them in Saltash market. But the house was handy for pleasure-takers by water, and by and by the board she put up—*Mrs. Barbree Furnace. Cockles and Cream in Season. Water Boiled and Tea if You Wish*—attracted the picnickers by scores; and the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

picnickers began to ask for fruit with their teas, till William John, at his wife's advice, planted half an acre of strawberries, and laid out another half-acre in currant and raspberry bushes. By this time, too, the cherry-trees were beginning to yield. So by little and little, feeling sure of their lease, they extended the business. William John, one winter, put up a brand-new chimney, and bought three cows which he pastured up along in the meadow behind the woods; and next spring the pair hung out a fresh board and painted on it — *Furnace's Merry-Garden Tea-House. Patronised by the Naval and Military. Teas, with Fruit and Cream, Sixpence per head:* and another board which they hoisted in the mazzard-season, saying—*Sixpence at the Gate, and eat so Much as you Mind to. All are Welcome.* With all this, Aunt Barbree (as she came to be called) didn't neglect the cockles, which were her native trade. In busy times she could afford to hire over one of the Saltash fish-women—the Johnses or the Glanvilles; you'll have heard of them, maybe? — to lend her a hand: but in anything like a slack season she'd be down at low water, with her petticoat trussed

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

over her knees, raking cockles with her own hands. Yes, yes, a powerful, a remarkable woman! and a pity it was (I've heard my mother say) to see such a healthy, strong couple prospering in all they touched, and hauling in money hand-over-fist, with neither chick nor child to leave it to.

Prosper they did, at any rate; and terrible popular the place became with the Fleet and the Army, till by the year eighteen-nought-five—the same in which Admiral Nelson fought the Battle of Trafalgar—there wasn't an officer in either service that had ever found himself at Plymouth, but could tell something of Merry-Garden and its teas, with their cockles and cream and strawberries in June and mazzards in July month. By this time the Furnaces had built a new landing-quay—the same to which your boat is moored at this moment—and rigged up arbours and come-sit-by-me's in every corner of the garden and under every plum-tree and laylock-bush: for William John was extending his season by degrees, and had gone so far as to set up a board in May-time by Admiral's Hard, down at Devonport, and on it "*Officers of the*

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

United Services will Kindly take Notice that the Laylocks in Merry-Garden are in Bloom. Cockles Warranted, and Cream from best Channel Island Cows. Patronised also by the Nobility and Gentry of Plymouth, Plymouth Dock, Saltash, and East Cornwall."

You may wonder that the Furnaces' success didn't encourage others to set up in opposition? But a cherry-garden isn't grown in a day. Mrs. Furnace had dropped into it (so to speak) when the trees that William John had planted were already on the way to yield good profit. Also she was a woman who knew how to keep a pleasure-garden decent, however near it might lie to a great town and a naval port. Simple woman though she seemed, she understood scandal.

But in the midst of life we are in death. One day, at the height of his prosperity, William John drove over to Menheniot Churchtown (where his sister Tryphena resided with her boy Nandy and kept a general shop) to fetch them over to Merry-Garden for a visit. Aunt Barbree loved children, you understand: besides which, Tryphena's husband had left her poor, and 'twas

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the first week in August after a good season, and the mazzards wanted eating if they weren't to perish for want of it. . . . So William John, who by this time was rich enough to set up a tax-cart, but inexperienced to manage it, drove over to Menheniot and fetched his sister and the boy: and on the way home the horse bolted and scattered the lot, with the result that William John was flung against a milestone and sister Tryphena across a hedge. The pair succumbed to their injuries: but the boy Nandy (aged fourteen) was picked up with no worse than a stunning, and a bump at the back of his head which hardened so that he was ever afterwards able to crack nuts with it, and even Brazil nuts, by hammering with his skull against a door or any other suitable object. Of course, when they picked him up he hadn't a notion he possessed any such gift.

Well here, as you might say, was a pretty kettle of fish for Aunt Barbree. Here not only was a loving husband killed, and a sister-in-law, but at one stroke two out of the three healthy lives on which the whole lease of Merry-Garden depended. She mourned William John for his

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

own sake, because, as husbands go, she had reason to regret him; and Tryphena Jewell, for a poor relation, had never been pushing. Tryphena's fault rather had been that she gave herself airs. Having no money to speak of, she stood up against Aunt Barbree's riches by flaunting herself as a mother: "though," as Aunt Barbree would complain to her husband, "I can't see what she finds uncommon in the child, unless 'tis the number of his pimples: and I've a mind, the next time, to recommend Wessel's Antiscorbutic Drops. The boy looks unhealthy: and, come to think of it, with his life in the lease, 'tis only due to ourselves to advise the woman." She only said this to ease her feelings: but the truth was (and William John knew it) she yearned for a child of her own, even to the extent sometimes of wanting to adopt one.

Well, this terrible accident not only widowed the poor soul, but brought all her little jealousies, as you might say, home to roost. She couldn't abide Nandy, and Nandy had reached an age when boys aren't at their best. But adopt him she had to; and, what tried her worse, she was

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

forced to look after his health with more than a mother's care. For, outside of a stockingful of guineas, all her capital was sunk in Merry-Garden, and all Merry-Garden hung now on the boy's life.

The worst trial of all was that, somehow or other, Nandy got to know his value and the reason of it, and from that day he gave Aunt Barbree no peace. He wouldn't go to school; study gave him a headache. His mother had taught him to read and write, but under Aunt Barbree's roof he learned no more than he was minded to, and among the things he taught himself was a tolerable imitation of a hacking cough. With this and the help of a hollow tooth he could spit blood whenever he wanted a shilling. He played this game for about six months, until the poor woman—who was losing flesh with lying awake at night and wondering what would happen to her when cast out in the cold world—fixed up her courage to know the worst, and carried him off to a Plymouth doctor. The doctor advised her to take the boy home and give him the strap.

Aunt Barbree applied this treatment for a

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

time, but dropped it in the end. The boy was growing too tall for it. The visit to the doctor, however, worked like a miracle in one way.

"Auntie," said the penitent one day, "I'm feeling a different boy altogether, this last week or two."

"I reckoned you would," said Aunt Barbree.

"My appetite's improving. Have you noticed my appetite?"

"Heaven is my witness!" said Aunt Barbree. The cherry season was beginning. She had consulted with a friend of hers in Saltash, the wife of a confectioner. It seems that apprentices in the confectionery trade are allowed to eat pastry and lollypops without let or hindrance, until they take a surfeit and are cured for ever after. Aunt Barbree was beginning to wonder why the cure worked so slow in the case of fresh fruit. "Heaven is my witness, I *have!*" said Aunt Barbree.

"There's a complete change coming over my constitution," said Nandy, pensive-like. "I feel it hardening every day: and as for my skull, why—talk about Brazil nuts!—I believe I could crack cherry-stones with it."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"I beg you won't try," pleaded Aunt Barbree, for this trick of Nandy's always gave her the shivers.

"A head like mine was meant for something worthier than civil life. I've been turnin' it over——"

"Turnin' *what* over?"

"Things in general," said Nandy; "and the upshot is, I've a great mind to 'list for a sojer."

"The good Lord forbid!" cried Aunt Barbree.

"The Frenchies might shoot me, to be sure," Nandy allowed. "That's one way of looking at it. But King George would take the risk o' that, and give me a shilling down for it."

"O Nandy, Nandy—here's a shillin' for 'ee, if that's what you want! But be a good boy, and don't talk so irreligious!"

Well, sir, the lad knew he had the whip-hand of the poor woman, and the taller he grew the more the lazy good-for-nothing used it. Enlistment was his trump card, and he went to the length of buying a drill-book and practising the motions in odd corners of the garden, but always

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

so that his aunt should catch him at it. If she was slow in catching him, the young villain would draw attention by calling out words from the manual in a hollow voice, mixed up with desperate ones of his own composing—"*At the word of command the rear rank steps back one pace, the whole facing to the left, the left files then taking a side step to the left and a pace to the rear. Ready, p'sent! Ha, what do I see afore me? Is't the hated foeman?*"—and so on, and so on. Aunt Barbree, with tears in her eyes, would purse out sums varying from sixpence to half a crown, coaxing him to dismiss such murderous thoughts from his mind; and thereupon he'd take another turn and mope, saying that it ill became a lad of his inches, let alone his tremendjous spirit, to idle out his days while others were dying for their country; to oblige his aunt he would stand it as long as he could, but nobody need be surprised if he ended by drowning himself, And this frightened Aunt Barbree almost worse than did his talk of enlisting, and drove her one day, when Nandy had just turned seventeen, to take a walk up the valley to consult Dr. Clatworthy.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

II

Dr. Clatworthy was a man in many respects uncommon. To begin with, he had plenty of money; and next, he was as full of crazes as of learning. One of these crazes was astronomy, and another was mud-baths, and another was open windows and long walks in the open air, and another was skin-diseases and nervous disorders, and another was the Lost Tribes, and another was Woman's Education; with the Second Advent and Vegetable Diet to fill up the spaces. Some of these he had picked up at Oxford, and others in his travels abroad, especially in Moravia: but the sum total was that you'd call him a crank. Coming by chance into Cornwall, he had taken an uncommon fancy to our climate and its "humidity"—that was the word. There was nothing like it (he said) for the skin—leastways, if taken along with mud-baths. He had bought half a dozen acres of land at the head of the creek, a mile above Merry-Garden, and built a whacking great house upon it, full of bathrooms and adorned upon the outside with statues in baked earth to

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

represent Trigonometry and the other heathen gods. He had given the contract to an up-country builder, and brought the material (which was mainly brick and Bath-stone) from the Lord knows where; but it was delivered up the creek by barges. There were days, in the year before William John's death, when these barges used to sail up past Merry-Garden at high springs in procession without end. But now the house had been standing furnished for three good years, with fruit-gardens planted on the slopes below it, and basins full of gold-fish: and there Dr. Clatworthy lived with half a score of male patients as mad as himself. For, though rich, he didn't spend his money in enjoyment only, but charged his guests six guineas a week, while he taught 'em the secret of perfect health.

Well, you may laugh at the man, but I've heard my mother (who remembers him) say that, with all his faults, he had the complexion of a baby. She would describe him as an un-married man, of the age of fifty,—he had a prejudice against marrying under fifty,—dressed in nankeen for all weathers, with no other

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

II

Dr. Clatworthy was a man in many respects uncommon. To begin with, he had plenty of money; and next, he was as full of crazes as of learning. One of these crazes was astronomy, and another was mud-baths, and another was open windows and long walks in the open air, and another was skin-diseases and nervous disorders, and another was the Lost Tribes, and another was Woman's Education; with the Second Advent and Vegetable Diet to fill up the spaces. Some of these he had picked up at Oxford, and others in his travels abroad, especially in Moravia: but the sum total was that you'd call him a crank. Coming by chance into Cornwall, he had taken an uncommon fancy to our climate and its "humidity"—that was the word. There was nothing like it (he [illegible] the skin—leastways, if taken alo[illegible] baths. He had bought half [illegible] land at the head of the c[illegible]ve Merry-Garden, and built a [illegible] upon it, full of bathroo[illegible] the outside with statu[illegible]

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

represent Trigonometry and the other heathen gods. He had given the contract to an up-country builder, and brought the material which was mainly brick and Bath-stone from the Lord knows where; but it was delivered up the creek by barges. There were days in the year before William John's death when these barges used to sail up past Merry-Garden at high springs in procession without end. But now the house had been standing furnished for three good years, with fruit-gardens planted on the slopes below it, and basins full of good fish, and there Dr. Clatworthy lived with half a score of male patients as mad as himself. For though rich, he didn't spend his money in enjoyment only, but charged his guests six guineas a week, while he taught 'em the secret of perfect health.

you ma[illegible] at the man, but I've [illegible]y motl[illegible] remembers him say [illegible] all h[illegible]e had the complexion of [illegible]. Sh[illegible] describe him as an un-[illegible]rried ma[illegible] age of fifty,—he had a [illegible]ejudice [illegible]rying under fifty,—dressed [illegible] manl[illegible] weathers, with no other

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the first week in August after a good season, and the mazzards wanted eating if they weren't to perish for want of it. . . . So William John, who by this time was rich enough to set up a tax-cart, but inexperienced to manage it, drove over to Menheniot and fetched his sister and the boy: and on the way home the horse bolted and scattered the lot, with the result that William John was flung against a milestone and sister Tryphena across a hedge. The pair succumbed to their injuries: but the boy Nandy (aged fourteen) was picked up with no worse than a stunning, and a bump at the back of his head which hardened so that he was ever afterwards able to crack nuts with it, and even Brazil nuts, by hammering with his skull against a door or any other suitable object. Of course, when they picked him up he hadn't a notion he possessed any such gift.

Well here, as you might say, was a pretty kettle of fish for Aunt Barbree. Here not only was a loving husband killed, and a sister-in-law, but at one stroke two out of the three healthy lives on which the whole lease of Merry-Garden depended. She mourned William John for his

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

own sake, because, as husbands go, she had reason to regret him; and Tryphena Jewell, for a poor relation, had never been pushing. Tryphena's fault rather had been that she gave herself airs. Having no money to speak of, she stood up against Aunt Barbree's riches by flaunting herself as a mother: "though," as Aunt Barbree would complain to her husband, "I can't see what she finds uncommon in the child, unless 'tis the number of his pimples: and I've a mind, the next time, to recommend Wessel's Antiscorbutic Drops. The boy looks unhealthy: and, come to think of it, with his life in the lease, 'tis only due to ourselves to advise the woman." She only said this to ease her feelings: but the truth was (and William John knew it) she yearned for a child of her own, even to the extent sometimes of wanting to adopt one.

Well, this terrible accident not only widowed the poor soul, but brought all her little jealousies, as you might say, home to roost. She couldn't abide Nandy, and Nandy had reached an age when boys aren't at their best. But adopt him she had to; and, what tried her worse, she was

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

forced to look after his health with more than a mother's care. For, outside of a stockingful of guineas, all her capital was sunk in Merry-Garden, and all Merry-Garden hung now on the boy's life.

The worst trial of all was that, somehow or other, Nandy got to know his value and the reason of it, and from that day he gave Aunt Barbree no peace. He wouldn't go to school; study gave him a headache. His mother had taught him to read and write, but under Aunt Barbree's roof he learned no more than he was minded to, and among the things he taught himself was a tolerable imitation of a hacking cough. With this and the help of a hollow tooth he could spit blood whenever he wanted a shilling. He played this game for about six months, until the poor woman—who was losing flesh with lying awake at night and wondering what would happen to her when cast out in the cold world—fixed up her courage to know the worst, and carried him off to a Plymouth doctor. The doctor advised her to take the boy home and give him the strap.

Aunt Barbree applied this treatment for a

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

time, but dropped it in the end. The boy was growing too tall for it. The visit to the doctor, however, worked like a miracle in one way.

"Auntie," said the penitent one day, "I'm feeling a different boy altogether, this last week or two."

"I reckoned you would," said Aunt Barbree.

"My appetite's improving. Have you noticed my appetite?"

"Heaven is my witness!" said Aunt Barbree. The cherry season was beginning. She had consulted with a friend of hers in Saltash, the wife of a confectioner. It seems that apprentices in the confectionery trade are allowed to eat pastry and lollypops without let or hindrance, until they take a surfeit and are cured for ever after. Aunt Barbree was beginning to wonder why the cure worked so slow in the case of fresh fruit. "Heaven is my witness, I *have!*" said Aunt Barbree.

"There's a complete change coming over my constitution," said Nandy, pensive-like. "I feel it hardening every day: and as for my skull, why—talk about Brazil nuts!—I believe I could crack cherry-stones with it."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"I beg you won't try," pleaded Aunt Barbree, for this trick of Nandy's always gave her the shivers.

"A head like mine was meant for something worthier than civil life. I've been turnin' it over——"

"Turnin' *what* over?"

"Things in general," said Nandy; "and the upshot is, I've a great mind to 'list for a sojer."

"The good Lord forbid!" cried Aunt Barbree.

"The Frenchies might shoot me, to be sure," Nandy allowed. "That's one way of looking at it. But King George would take the risk o' that, and give me a shilling down for it."

"O Nandy, Nandy—here's a shillin' for 'ee, if that's what you want! But be a good boy, and don't talk so irreligious!"

Well, sir, the lad knew he had the whip-hand of the poor woman, and the taller he grew the more the lazy good-for-nothing used it. Enlistment was his trump card, and he went to the length of buying a drill-book and practising the motions in odd corners of the garden, but always

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

so that his aunt should catch him at it. If she was slow in catching him, the young villain would draw attention by calling out words from the manual in a hollow voice, mixed up with desperate ones of his own composing—"*At the word of command the rear rank steps back one pace, the whole facing to the left, the left files then taking a side step to the left and a pace to the rear. Ready, p'sent! Ha, what do I see afore me? Is't the hated foeman?*"—and so on, and so on. Aunt Barbree, with tears in her eyes, would purse out sums varying from sixpence to half a crown, coaxing him to dismiss such murderous thoughts from his mind; and thereupon he'd take another turn and mope, saying that it ill became a lad of his inches, let alone his tremenjous spirit, to idle out his days while others were dying for their country; to oblige his aunt he would stand it as long as he could, but nobody need be surprised if he ended by drowning himself, And this frightened Aunt Barbree almost worse than did his talk of enlisting, and drove her one day, when Nandy had just turned seventeen, to take a walk up the valley to consult Dr. Clatworthy.

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

II

Dr. Clatworthy was a man in many respects uncommon. To begin with, he had plenty of money; and next, he was as full of crazes as of learning. One of these crazes was astronomy, and another was mud-baths, and another was open windows and long walks in the open air, and another was skin-diseases and nervous disorders, and another was the Lost Tribes, and another was Woman's Education; with the Second Advent and Vegetable Diet to fill up the spaces. Some of these he had picked up at Oxford, and others in his travels abroad, especially in Moravia: but the sum total was that you'd call him a crank. Coming by chance into Cornwall, he had taken an uncommon fancy to our climate and its "humidity"—that was the word. There was nothing like it (he said) for the skin—leastways, if taken along with mud-baths. He had bought half a dozen acres of land at the head of the creek, a mile above Merry-Garden, and built a whacking great house upon it, full of bathrooms and adorned upon the outside with statues in baked earth to

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

represent Trigonometry and the other heathen gods. He had given the contract to an up-country builder, and brought the material (which was mainly brick and Bath-stone) from the Lord knows where; but it was delivered up the creek by barges. There were days, in the year before William John's death, when these barges used to sail up past Merry-Garden at high springs in procession without end. But now the house had been standing furnished for three good years, with fruit-gardens planted on the slopes below it, and basins full of gold-fish: and there Dr. Clatworthy lived with half a score of male patients as mad as himself. For, though rich, he didn't spend his money in enjoyment only, but charged his guests six guineas a week, while he taught 'em the secret of perfect health.

Well, you may laugh at the man, but I've heard my mother (who remembers him) say that, with all his faults, he had the complexion of a baby. She would describe him as an un-married man, of the age of fifty,—he had a prejudice against marrying under fifty,—dressed in nankeen for all weathers, with no other

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

protection than a whalebone umbrella, and likewise remarkable for a fine Roman nose. 'Twas this Clatworthy, by the way, that a discharged gardener advised to go down to Merry-Garden and make a second fortune by picking cherries, "for," said he, "having such a nose as yours you can hook on to a bough with it and pick with both hands." I don't myself believe that he came to visit Merry-Garden on any such recommendation; but visit it he did, and often, while his own trees were growing; and there his noble deportment and his lordly way with money made an impression on Aunt Barbree, who had already heard talk of his capabilities.

So—as I was saying—one day, being near upon driven to her wits' end, Aunt Barbree marched the boy up to Hi-jeen Villa (as the new great house was called), and begged for Dr. Clatworthy's advice; "for I do believe," she wound up, "the boy is sinking into a very low state of despondency."

"And so should I be despondent," said the doctor, eyeing Nandy, "if I had that number of pimples and didn't know a sure way to cure them."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"Fresh fruit don't seem to do no good," said Aunt Barbree, "though I've heard it confidently recommended."

The doctor made Nandy take off his shirt. "Why," said he, enthusiastic-like, "the boy's a perfect treasure!"

"You think so?" said Aunt Barbree, a bit dubious, not quite catching his drift.

"A case, ma'am, like this wouldn't yield to fresh fruit, not in ten years. It's throwing away your time. Mud is the cure, ma'am—mud-bathing and constant doses of sulphur-water, varied with a plenty of exercise to open the pores of the skin."

"Sulphur-water?" Aunt Barbree had used it now and then upon her fruit-trees, to keep away mildew. She doubted Nandy's taking kindly to it. "He's easier led, sir, than driven," she said.

"My good woman," said the doctor, "you leave him to me. I'll take up this case for nothing but the honour and glory of it. He shall board and lodge here and live like a fighting-cock, and not a penny-piece to pay. As for curing him—if it'll give you any con-

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

fidence, look at my complexion, ma'am. What d'ye think of it?"

"Handsome, sure 'nough," said Aunt Barbree.

"Satin, ma'am—complete satin!" said the doctor. "And I'm like that all over."

"Well to be sure, if Nandy don't object——" said Aunt Barbree, hurried-like.

Nandy thought that to live for a while in a fine house and be fed like a fighting-cock would be a pleasant change; and so the bargain was struck.

Poor lad, he repented it before the first week was out. He couldn't abide the mud-baths, which he took in the garden, planted up to the chin in a ring with a dozen old gentlemen, stuck out there like cabbages, and with Clatworthy planted in the middle and haranguing by the hour, sometimes on politics and Napoleon Bonaparte, sometimes on education, but oftenest on his system and the good they ought to be deriving from it. Moreover, though they fed him well enough, according to promise, the sulphur-water acted on his stomach in a way that prevented any lasting satisfaction with his vittles. In short, before the week was out he

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

wanted to run away home; and only one thing hindered him—that he'd fallen in love.

This was the way it happened. Dr. Clatworthy, having notions of his own upon matrimony, and money to carry them out, had picked out a pretty child and adopted her, and set her to school with a Miss St. Maur of Saltash, to be trained up in his principles, till of an age to make him "a perfect helpmeet," as he called it.

The poor child—she was called Jessica Venning to begin with, but the doctor had rechristened her Sophia—was grown by this time into a young lady of seventeen, pretty and graceful. She could play upon the harp and paint in water-colours, and her needlework was a picture, but not half so pretty a picture as her face. She came from Devonshire, from the edge of the moors behind Newton Abbot, where the folks have complexions all cream-and-roses. She'd a figure like a wand for grace, and an eye half-melting, half-roguish. People might call Clatworthy a crank, or whatever word answered to it in those days: but he had made no mistake in choosing the material to make him a bride—

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

or only this, that the poor girl couldn't bear the look or the thought of him. Well, the time was drawing on when Clatworthy, according to his plans, was to marry her, and to prepare her for it he had taken to writing her a letter every day, full of duty and mental improvement. Part of Nandy's business was to walk over with these letters to Saltash. The doctor explained to him that it would open the pores of his skin, and he must wait for an answer. And so it came about that Nandy saw Miss Sophia, and fell over head and ears in love with her.

But towards the end of the second week he felt that he could stand life at Hi-jeen Villa no longer—no, not even for the sake of seeing Miss Sophia daily.

"It's no use, miss," he told her very dolefully, as he delivered Friday's letter; "I've a-got to run for it, and I'm going to run for it to-morrow." He heaved a great sigh.

"But how foolish of you, Nandy!" said Miss Sophia, glancing up from the letter. "When you know it's doing you so much good!"

"Good?" said Nandy, savage-like. "How would *you* like it? There now — I'm sorry,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Miss Sophia. I forgot — and now I've made you cry!"

"I—I sh—shan't like it at all," quavered Miss Sophia, blinking away her tears. "And—and it's not at all the same thing."

"No," agreed Nandy; "no, o' course not: you ha'n't got no pimples. Oh, Miss Sophia," he went on, speaking very earnest, "would you really like me better if I weren't so speckity?"

"Ever so much better, Nandy. You can't think what an improvement it would be."

"'Tis only skin-deep," said Nandy. "At the bottom of my heart, miss, I'd die for you. . . . But I can't stand it no longer. To-morrow I've made up my mind to run home to Merry-Garden: and there, if it gives you any pleasure, I can go on taking mud-baths on my own account."

"Merry-Garden?" said Miss Sophia. "Why, that's where Dr. Clatworthy wants us to take tea with him to-morrow! He writes that he is inviting Miss St. Maur to bring all the girls in the top class, and he will meet us there. . . . See, here's the letter enclosed."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"That settles it," said Nandy.

He walked home that afternoon with two letters—a hypocritical little note from Sophia, a high polite one from Miss St. Maur. Miss St. Maur accepted, on behalf of her senior young ladies, Dr. Clatworthy's truly delightful invitation to take tea with him on the morrow. She herself—she regretted to say—would be detained until late in the afternoon by some troublesome tradesmen who were fixing new window-sashes in the schoolroom. She could not trust them to do the work correctly except under her supervision, and to defer it would entail a week's delay, the schoolroom being vacant only on Saturday afternoons. The young ladies should arrive, however, punctually at 3.30 p.m., in charge of Miss de la Porcheraie, her excellent French instructress: she herself would follow at 5 o'clock or thereabouts, and meanwhile she would leave her charges, in perfect confidence, to Dr. Clatworthy's polished hospitality. . . . Those were the words. My mother—who was fond of telling the story—had 'em by heart.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

III

Nandy kept his word.

Breakfast next morning was no sooner over than he made a bolt across the pleasure-grounds, crept through the hedge at the bottom, and went singing down the woods towards Merry-Garden, with his heart half-lovesick and half-gleeful, and with two thick sandwiches of bread-and-butter in his pocket to provide against accidents. But he didn't feel altogether easy at the thought of facing Aunt Barbree: and by and by, drawing near to the house and catching sight of his aunt's sun-bonnet up among the raspberry-canes, he decided (as they say) to play for safety. So, creeping down to the front door, he slipped under it a letter which he had spent a solid hour last night in composing; and made his way to the fore-shore, to loaf and smoke a pipe of stolen tobacco and, generally speaking, make the most of his holiday. The note said—

"DEAR AUNT,—Do not weep for me. The sulphur-water made me sick and I could stand it

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

no longer. So am gone for a Soger. Letters and remittances will doubtless find me if addressed to the Citadel, Plymouth. A loving heart is what I hunger for—Your affect. nephew,

"FERDINANDO JEWELL.

"P.S.—On 2nd thoughts I may be able to come back this evening to say farewell for ever.

"P.S.—Don't sit up."

Now a boy may be a lazy good-for-nothing, and yet (if you'll understand me) be missed from a garden where there are ladders to fix and mazzard cherries to pick; and likewise, though liable to be grumbled at, a boy has his uses in the gathering of cockles. Though she knew him to be an anointed young humbug, there's no denying that Aunt Barbree had missed Nandy and his help. She was getting past fifty, and somehow the last ten days had reminded her of it. . . . The long and short of it was that, after a couple of hours fruit-picking—and it took her no less to get together the supply she'd reckoned on for her afternoon customers—she entered the house with a feeling of stiffness in her

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

back and a feeling that answered to it elsewhere, that maybe Nandy was a better boy than she'd given him credit for. Upon top of this feeling she pushed open the door and spied his letter lying on the mat.

The reading of it turned her hot and cold. She marched straight to the dairy, where Susannah was busy with the cream-pans, and says she, loosening her bonnet-strings as she dropped upon a bench, "He was but an orphan, after all, Susannah: and now we've driven 'en to desperation!"

"Who's been driven to desperation?" asked Susannah.

"Why, Nandy," answered Aunt Barbree, tears brimming her eyes. "Who elst?"

"Piggywig's tail!" said Susannah. "What new yarn has the cheeld been tellin'?"

"He's my own nephew, and a Furnace upon his mother's side," said Aunt Barbree; "and I'll trouble you to speak more respectful of your employer's kin. And he hasn't been tellin' it; he've *written* it, here in pen and ink. He've cut and run to take the King's shilling and be a sojer: and if I can't overtake him before he gets

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

to Plymouth Citadel the deed will he done, and the Frenchies will knock him upon the head and I shall be without a roof to cover me. Get me my shawl and bonnet."

"You baint goin' to tell me," said Susannah, "that you act'lly mean to take and trapse to Plymouth in all this heat?"

"I do," said Barbree. "Get me my shawl and bonnet."

"What, on a Saturday afternoon! And me left single-handed to tend the customers!"

"Drat the customers!" said Aunt Barbree. "And drat everything, includin' the boy, if you like! But fetch to Plymouth I must and will. So, for the third time of askin', get me my shawl and bonnet."

It cost a mort of coaxing even to persuade her to a bite of dinner before setting forth. By half-past noon she was dressed and ready, and took the road toward Saltash Ferry. Nandy didn't see her start. He was lying stretched, just then, under the cliff by the foreshore, getting rid of the effects of his pipe of tobacco.

It left him so exhausted that, when the worst was over, he rolled on his stomach on the warm

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

stones of the foreshore and fell into a doze; by consequence of which he knew nothing more till the tide crept up and wetted his ankles; and with that he heard voices—uproarious voices on the water—and sat up to see a boatload of people pass by him and draw to the landing-stage under Merry-Garden.

Nandy rubbed his eyes, studied the visitors—that is, as well as he could at fifty yards' distance—and chuckled. He knew that his aunt was a respectable woman, and particular about the folks she admitted to her gardens. But it was too late to interfere—even if he'd wanted to interfere, which he didn't. So he watched the visitors draw to land and disembark; and sat and waited, still chuckling.

IV

Susannah, having fitted forth Aunt Barbree and watched her from the gate as she took the road to Saltash, had returned to the house in an unpleasant temper. She was a good servant and would stand any amount of ordering about, but she hated responsibility. To be left alone on a

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Saturday afternoon in the height of the mazzard season to cope with Heaven-knew-how-many-customers—to lay the tables in the arbours, boil the water, take orders and, worst of all, give change (Susannah had never learnt arithmetic)—was an outlook that fairly daunted her spirit. Her temper, too, for a week past had not been at its best. She, like her mistress, had missed Nandy. In spite of his faults he was a help: and, as for faults, who in this wicked world is without 'em? It's by means of their faults that you grow accustomed to folks.

The early afternoon was hot and thundery, and the hum of the bees (Aunt Barbree was famous for her honey) came lazy-like through the open window. Susannah prayed to the Lord that this quiet might last—until four o'clock, at any rate. Short of an earthquake in Plymouth (which, being pious, she didn't dare to pray for) nothing would ward off visitors beyond that hour, but, with luck, Aunt Barbree might be expected back soon after five, when the giving of change would begin. Susannah looked at the clock. The time was close upon half-past two. She might, with any luck, count on another hour.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

But it wasn't to be.

She had scarcely turned from studying the clock to open the sliding door of the china-cupboard and set out her stock of plates and cups and saucers, before her ear caught the sound of voices —of loud voices too—on the steps above the landing-quay: and almost before she could catch her breath there came a knock on the door fit to wake the dead. Susannah whipped up her best apron off the chair where she had laid it ready to hand, and hurried out, pinning it about her.

The first sight she saw when she opened the door was a sailorman standing there under the verandah, and smiling at her with a shiny, good-natured face. He was rigged out in best shore-going clothes — tarpaulin hat, blue coat and waistcoat, and duck trousers, with a broad waist-belt of leather. Behind him stood another sailorman, older and more gloomy looking; and behind the pair of them Susannah's eye ranged over half a dozen seedy tide-waiters and longshore-men, all very bashful-looking, and crowded among a bevy of damsels of the sort that you might best describe as painted hussies.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"Good afternoon, ma'am," said the sailorman, with a pacifying sort of smile.

"Good afternoon," said Susannah, catching her breath. "But, all the same, this isn't Babylon."

"You serve teas here, ma'am?"

"No, we don't," answers Susannah, very sturdy.

"Then the board hav' made a mistake," said the sailor, scratching the back of his head and pushing his tarpaulin hat forward and sideways over his eyebrows. "It *said* that you was patronised by the naval and military, and that teas was provided."

"But we're a respectable house," said Susannah.

The sailorman gazed at her, long and earnest, and turned to his mate. "Good Lord, Bill!" said he, "what a dreadful mistake!"

"Ho!" said one of the ladies, tossing her chin. "Ho, I see what it is! The likes of us ain't good enough for the likes of her!"

"Not by a long chalk, ma'am," agreed Susannah, her temper rising.

"It's this way, ma'am," put in the sailorman very peaceable-like. "My name's Ben Jope, of the *Vesuvius* bomb, and this here's my mate Bill Adams. We was paid off this morning at half-

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

past nine, and picked up a few hasty friends ashore for a Feet-Sham-Peter. But o' course if this here is a respectable house there's no more to be said—except that maybe you'll be good enough to recommend us to one that isn't."

The poor fellow meant it well, but somehow or other his words so annoyed Susannah that she bounced in and slammed the door in his face. He stood for a while staring at it, and then turned and led the way down the steps again to the quay, walking like a man in a dream, and not seeming to hear the ladies—though one or two were telling him that he hadn't the pluck of a louse: and down at the quay the company came upon Master Nandy, dandering towards them with his hands in his pockets.

"Hullo!" said Nandy.

"Hullo to *you!*" said Mr. Jope.

"Turned you out?" asked Nandy.

Mr. Jope glanced back at the roof of Merry-Garden, which from the quay could be seen just overtopping the laylocks. "She's a sperrited woman," he said; and after that there was a pause until Nandy asked him who he thought he was staring at. "I dunno," said Mr. Jope. "You

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

puts me in mind of a boy I knew, one time. I stood godfather to him, and he grew up to be afflicted in much the same manner."

"I've been unwell," said Nandy, "and I haven't got over the effects of it."

"No, by George, you haven't," agreed Mr. Jope. "I've heard tar-water recommended."

"Is it worse tasted than sulphur-water?" asked Nandy, and with that a wicked thought came into his mind, for he still nursed a spite against all that he had suffered under Dr. Clatworthy's care. "If you can't get taken in at Merry-Garden," said he, "why don't you try Hi-jeen Villa, up the creek?"

"What's that?"

"It's—it's another establishment," said Nandy.

"Respectable? You'll excuse my askin'——"

"'Tisn' for me to judge," said Nandy; "but they sit about the garden in their nightshirts, with a footman carryin' round the drinks."

V

Well, sir, half an hour later Dr. Clatworthy and his patients were enjoying their mud-baths

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

in the garden, up at Hi-jeen Villa, and the doctor had just begun to think about getting his water-douche and dressing himself to keep his appointment with Miss Sophia and the rest of the young ladies, when the back-door opened and what should he see entering the garden but Mr. Jope, with all his bedizened company!

"Hi, you there!" shouted the doctor from his bath. "Get out of this garden at once! Who are you? and what do you mean by walking into private premises?"

For a moment Mr. Jope stared about him, wondering where in the world the voice came from. But when he traced it to the garden-beds, and there, in the midst of the flowers, spied a dozen human heads all a-blowing and a-growing with the stocks and carnations, his face turned white and red, and his eyes grew round, and he turned and stared at Bill Adams, and Bill Adams stared at Mr. Jope.

"Bill," said Mr. Jope, "is it—is it an earth-quake?"

"'Tis a Visitation o' some kind," said Bill. "I've heard o' such things in Ireland."

"Oh, Bill! an' to think that in another minute,

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

if we hadn' arrived——" Mr. Jope caught hold of his mate's arm and hurried him forward to the rescue.

"Go away! Get out of this, I tell you!" yelled Clatworthy.

"Not me, sir! Not a British sailor!" hurrahed back Mr. Jope. "Bill! Bill! Cast your eyes around and see if you can find a bit of rope anywheres in this blessed garden—and you, behind there, stop the women's screeching!"—for 'tis a fact that by this time two or three were falling about in the hysterics—"What! Not a loose end o' rope anywheres? Lord, how these landsmen do live unprovided! But never you mind, sir!—reach out a hand to me an' don't struggle—that is, if you're touching bottom. Strugglin' only makes it worse——"

"You silly fool!" shouted Clatworthy. "We're in no danger, I tell you! Begone, and take the women away with you. These grounds are private, once more!"

"Hey?" Mr. Jope by this time had one foot planted, very gingerly, on a flower-bed, and was reaching forth a hand to Clatworthy; and Clatworthy, squatting up to his chin in the warm

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

mud, was lifting two naked arms to beat him off. "Private, hey?" says Mr. Jope, looking around and seeing the rest of the patients bobbing up and down in their baths between the rage of it and shame to show themselves too far. "Private? Then it oughtn't to be—that's all I say. But what in thunder are ye doing it for?"

"Oh, get you gone, man!" groaned Clatworthy. "I've an appointment to keep!"

"Not in that state, sure-ly?"

"No, sir! But how am I to get out of this and dress, till you lead off the women? And your cursed intrusion has made me fill my hair with mud, and to cleanse and dress it again will cost me half an hour at least. Man, man, for pity's sake get out of this and take your women with you! Sir, when I tell you that in less than twenty minutes I am due to be at Merry-Garden—if you know where that is——"

"*To* be sure," put in Mr. Jope.

"—To meet a company of ladies——"

"Avast there! Why, 'tis less than a half-hour ago they turned *me* out o' that very place. *You* —and in *that* state! Oh, be ashamed o' your-self!"

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

But just then a patient behind Clatworthy set up a yell so full of terror that even the doctor slewed round his head and splashed more mud over his hair, all combed as it was in full pigeon-wing style.

"Bill!" said Mr. Jope, sharp-like. "Bill Adams! What are you doin' with that there water-pot?"

"Helpin'," said Bill. "Helpin' 'em to grow!"

VI

'Tis time, though, that we went back to Merry-Garden.

The rising tide—and I ought to have told you that the tides that day were close upon the top of the springs, with high-water at five o'clock or thereabouts—the rising tide had barely carried Mr. Jope and his party from Nandy's sight, round the bend, before another boatload of pleasure-seekers hove in sight at the mouth of the creek. They were twelve in all, and the boat a twenty-foot galley belonging to one of the war-ships in the Hamoaze. She had been borrowed for the afternoon by the ship's second lieutenant, a Mr.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Hardcastle, and with him he had brought the third lieutenant, besides a score of young officers belonging to the garrison—a captain and two cornets of the 4th Dragoons, a couple of gunners —officers, that is, of the Artillery—an elderly major and an ensign of the Marines, and the rest belonging to the Thirty-second Regiment of Foot (one of 'em, if I recollect, the Doctor). The last of the party was a slip of an officer of the French Navy—Raynold by name—that had been taken prisoner by Mr. Hardcastle's ship, and bore no malice for it: a cheerful, good-natured lad, and (now that he hadn't an excuse for fighting 'em) as merry with these young Britons as they were glad to have him of their party.

Nandy, of course, knew no more about them than what his eyes told him, that they were a party of officers from Plymouth come to enjoy themselves at Merry-Garden. But the sight of them as they brought their boat to the quay and landed—the first customers of the afternoon—put him in mind that the time was drawing near for Miss Sophia to arrive with her class-mates, and that Dr. Clatworthy would soon be turning up to squire them around the orchard and entertain

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

them at tea. He wickedly hoped that the doctor hadn't left home before Mr. Jope reached Hi-jeen Villa. But the thought of Mr. Jope reminded him of what Mr. Jope had said concerning his pimples; and this again reminded him of what his beloved Miss Sophia had said on the same subject. He had promised her to continue taking mud-baths on his own account, even after he had cut his lucky (as he put it) from Hi-jeen Villa. . . . To be sure, one bath wouldn't produce any immediate result. *That* wasn't to be expected. But it would be a guarantee of good faith, as they say in the newspapers: and though he hadn't time to dig a pit after the fashion of the baths in the doctor's garden, still there was plenty of mud along the lower foreshore to give him a nice soft roll; and a plenty of water for a swim, to wash himself clean: and lastly (as he reckoned, having no watch) a plenty of time to do this and be dressed again before the dear creature arrived. So Nandy, with a stomach full of virtue, turned his back on the quay and started to walk down the creek along the foreshore, to a corner where he might reckon on being free from observation.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Meantime the young officers, that had landed and strolled up to the cottage, were being received by Susannah, and in a twitter, poor soul! "Her mistress was out — called away upon sudden business. Still, if they would take the ups with the downs, she would do her best to have tea ready in half an hour's time: and meanwhile they might roam the orchards and eat as many cherries as they had a mind to, and all for sixpence a head. Thirteen sixpences came — yes, surely — to six-and-sixpence. She would rather they paid when Aunt Barbree returned. Or, if they preferred it, there was a skittle-alley at the end of the garden, with a small bowling-green . . ."

They preferred the bowling-green. Susannah conducted them to it, unlocked the box of bowls, and was returning to the house in a fluster, when, in the verandah before the front door, she came plump upon a bevy of young ladies, all as pretty as you please in muslin frocks and great summer hats to shield their complexions: whereof one, a little older than the rest (but pretty, notwithstanding), stepped forward and inquired, in a foreign-speaking voice, for Dr. Clatworthy.

"But he is in retard then!" this lady cried,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

when Susannah answered that, although she knew Dr. Clatworthy well, not a fur or feather of him had she seen that day (which was her way of putting it). "Ah, but how vexing! And Miss St. Maur was positive he would be beforehand!"

"Lor' bless you, my pretty!" said Susannah, "If the doctor promised to be here, you may be sure he will be here."

She went on to explain, as she had explained to the officers, that she was alone on the premises —her mistress had been called away upon sudden business—but if they would take the ups with the downs. . . . Then, her curiosity overcoming her—for, of course, she had heard gossip of the doctor's intentions—"And which of you," she asked, "is he going to marry, making so bold?"

"If Dr. Clatworthy is so ungallant——" began Miss Sophia, jabbing with the point of her parasol at a crevice in the flagstones of the verandah.

"Fie, dear!" cried Ma'amselle Julie, interrupting.

"Well, at any rate, the mazzards are ripe," said Miss Sophia, "and I see no fun in waiting."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"So *that's* the maid," said Susannah to herself, and pitied her—having herself no great admiration for Dr. Clatworthy, in spite of his riches: but she assured them that the doctor—the most punctual of men—would certainly arrive within a few minutes. And the mazzards were crying out to be eaten. If the young ladies would make free of the orchards while she fit and boiled the kettle . . .

. . . . . .

"The fun of it is," said Miss Sophia to Ma'amselle Julie ten minutes later, as they were staining their pretty lips with the juice of the black mazzards, "that if Dr. Clatworthy doesn't appear——"

"But he will, dear."

"The fun of it is that we haven't, I believe, eighteenpence between us all."

"Miss St. Maur was positive that he would be punctual," said Ma'amselle Julie.

"But he isn't, you see: and—oh, my dear, is it so wicked?—you can't think how I wish he would never come—never, never, never!"

"Sophia!"

"Even," went on Miss Sophia, nodding her

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

head, "if I've eaten all these cherries under false pretences, and have to go to prison for it!"

Well, somehow, in all this the young ladies had been drawing nearer and nearer to the bowling-green, where the young officers were skylarking and trundling the bowls at the fat major at three shots a penny, and the pool going to the player who caught him on the ankles. When they were tired of this they came strolling forth in a body, the most of them with arms linked, just as Susannah appeared at the end of the path carrying a tray piled with tea-things.

"Hallo! Petticoats, begad!" said the youngest ensign among them; and Ma'amselle Julie, linking an arm in Miss Sophia's, was turning away with a proper show of ignorance that any such thing as a party of young men existed in the world, when a voice cried out—

"Julie!"

"Eh?" the lady turned, all white in the face. "Eh? What — Edoo-ard? My cousin Edoo-ard?"

"Dear Julie!" It was the young French officer, and he ran and caught her by both hands and kissed them. "To think of meeting

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

you, here in England! But let me introduce my friends—my friends the enemy." And here he rattled off their names in a hurry.

"Really, one would suppose that Dr. Clatworthy was lost!" said Miss Sophia with a cold-seeming bow and a glance along the path.

"You have ordered tea here?" asked the young naval lieutenant, Mr. Hardcastle.

"There *was* to have been tea."

"I do hope, miss," said he, "that we are not ousting you from your table?"

"To tell the truth," said Miss Sophia, "I know nothing about the arrangements. A gentleman was to have been here to receive us—indeed we have come at his invitation; but he is in no hurry, it seems."

"Indeed, miss," put in Susannah, "and I'm sure I don't know what to do! The gentlemen, here, have engaged the big summer-house, which holds forty at a pinch, and there's no other place that'll seat more than half a dozen. Of course," said she, "the two parties could sit at the long table, one at each end——"

But here young Mr. Hardcastle, after a glance at Miss Julie and her young Frenchman—that

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

were already deep in talk together—cut Susannah short with a sly wink. He was a lad of great presence of mind, and rose in later life to be an Admiral.

"Ladies," said he, "I feel sure that if we leave the arrangements entirely to this good woman, your worthy squire—whenever he chooses to put in an appearance—will find nothing to complain of."

Well, well . . . I can't tell you just how it happened: but happen it did, and I daresay you've seen enough of the ways of young folk to understand it. While Susannah bustled back to the house to fetch the relays, the two parties fell to talking of the weather and the pretty flowers, and from that to strolling little by little along the pathway; in a body at first; but afterwards, as one young lady stopped to smell at a carnation, and another to admire the splashes of colour on Aunt Barbree's York and Lancaster roses, the company got separated into twos and fours, and the fours broke up into twos, and the distance between pair and pair kept getting wider and wider. Ma'amselle Julie ought to have hindered it, overcome though she was with joy at meeting

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

her kinsman. But she wasn't to blame for what followed, and for my part I've a kind of notion that Mr. Hardcastle must have found an opportunity and slipped half a crown into Susannah's hand. . . . At any rate when Susannah rang a bell along the lower path to announce that tea was ready, they came strolling back (and from the variousest corners of the garden) to find that the silly woman had gone and laid the tables, not in the big summer-house at all, but all along in a line of little arbours.

Then, of course, began the prettiest confusion, Ma'amselle Julie protesting that she couldn't think of allowing such a thing, and Mr. Hardcastle pointing out what a shame it would be to overwork poor Susannah by making her lay the tables over again; and the young ladies in a flutter between laughing and making believe to be angry, and one or two couples agreeing that the dispute was all about nothing, and that they might as well find a quiet arbour and wait till it was over.

Yes, yes . . . you understand? . . . And in the midst of it all, and just as Mr. Hardcastle had carried his point and Ma'amselle Julie gave

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

way, declaring that never in this world would she be able to look Miss St. Maur in the face again, who should come hurrying past the verandah but Dr. Clatworthy himself!

In the babel of talking and laughing no one had heard his footstep; and he came to a halt by a laylock-bush at the end of the verandah and stood staring: and while he stared his face went red, and then white, and he reeled back behind the bush and put both hands to his head.

What had he seen? His bride—his chosen Sophia — disappearing into an arbour with a young man! And her youthful companions—pupils of an establishment he had chosen with such care—making merry with a group of uniformed officers—of soldiers—well known to be the most profligate of men!

Oh, monstrous!

But what was to be done? Could he stalk into the midst of the party and raise a scene? The young men might laugh at him. . . . Even supposing he put them to rout, what next was he to do? He would find himself with those abandoned girls left on his hands. A pleasant tea-party, that! And Miss St. Maur might not

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

be arriving for another hour. Could he spend all that time in lecturing them? Could he even trust himself to speak to Sophia? Dr. Clatworthy, still with his hands to his head, staggered down the steps and forth from the garden.

He had done with Sophia for ever! His first demand of a woman worthy to be his wife was that she should never have looked upon another man to make eyes at him, and he had distinctly seen (Oh, monstrous, monstrous, to be sure!). . . . He would go straight home and write Miss St. Maur a letter the like of which that lady had never received in her life.

With these terrible thoughts working in his head, the poor man had crossed a couple of fields on his way home when he looked up and saw Miss St. Maur herself coming towards him along the footpath over the knap of the hill.

"Dr. Clatworthy!" cried Miss St. Maur.

"Ma'am," said Dr. Clatworthy.

"Why—why, wherever have you left dear Sophia and the rest of my charges?"

"At Merry-Garden, ma'am—and in various summer-houses, ma'am—and making free, ma'am, with a vicious soldiery!"

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"But it is impossible!" cried Miss St. Maur when he had told his tale of horror. "I refuse to believe it. Indeed, sir, I can only think you have taken leave of your senses!"

"Come and see for yourself, ma'am," said the doctor, cold as ice to look at, but with an inside like a furnace.

He was forced almost to a run to keep pace with Miss St. Maur: but at the steps leading up to the garden he made her promise him to go quiet, and the pair tiptoed up and through the verandah and peered around the laylock-bush.

"There!" cried Miss St. Maur, turning to him and pointing up the path with her parasol.

To and fro along the path a party of young ladies was strolling disconsolate. They walked in pairs, to be sure: and the hum of their voices reached to the laylock-bush as they bent and discussed the flowers in Aunt Barbree's border. Not a uniform, not a man, was in sight.

"There!" said Miss St. Maur. "There, sir! What did I tell you?"

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

VII

The cause of it all was Nandy. Nandy had found a nice out-of-the-way corner of the fore-shore, with a patch of mud above the water's edge, and, after a good roll in it (it was a trifle smellier than the baths at Hi-jeen Villa, but nothing amiss), had waded out into the tide for a thorough wash. He was standing in water up to his arm-pits and rinsing the mud out of his hair, when, happening to glance shorewards, he caught a glimpse of scarlet, and rubbed his eyes to see a red-coated soldier standing on the beach and overhauling his clothes, which he had left there in a heap.

"Hi!" sang out Nandy. "You leave those clothes alone: they're mine!"

The soldier put up a hand and seemed to be beckoning, cautious-like.

Nandy waded nearer. "Looky-here, lobster—none of your tricks!" he said. "They-there clothes belong to me."

"I ain't goin' to be a lobster, as you put it, much longer," said the soldier. "I'm a-goin' to

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

cast my shell." And with that he begins to unbutton his tunic. "If you try to interfere, young man, I'll wring your neck; and if you cry out, I carry a pistol upon me——" and sure enough he pulled a pistol from his pocket and laid it on the stones between his feet. "I'm a desperate man," he said.

"Hullo!" said Nandy, beginning to understand. "Desertin', eh?"

The soldier nodded as he flung the tunic down on the beach—and Nandy took note of the figures 32 in brass on the collar. It's all along of a woman," said he.

"Ah!" said Nandy, sympathetic. "There's lots of us in the world taken that way."

"Looky-here," said the soldier, "if you try any sauce with me, you'll be sorry for it; and, what's more, you won't get this pretty suit o' scarlet clothes I was minded to leave you for a present."

"Thank you," said Nandy.

"They won't fit so badly if you turn up the bottoms o' the pantaloons: and you can't look worse than you do in a state o' nature."

"All right," said Nandy; "only make haste

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

about it; for 'tis cold standin' here in the water."

To tell the truth a rare notion had crept into his head. This scarlet uniform—for scarlet it was, with white and yellow facings—had come as a godsend. He would walk home in it, and if it didn't frighten twenty shillings out of Aunt Barbree he must have lost the knack of lying.

"You can't be in more of a hurry than I am," answered the soldier, stripping to the very buff—for everything he wore, down to his shirt, carried the regimental mark. The only part of Nandy's wardrobe he spared were the boots, which wouldn't fit him at all.

"So long!" said the soldier, having lit his pipe: and with that he gave a shake to settle himself down in Nandy's clothes, picked up his pistol and scrambled up through the bushes. In thirty seconds he was over the cliff and out of sight, and Nandy left to stare at his new uniform.

He picked up the articles gingerly and slipped them on, one by one. There was a coarse flannel shirt with a leather stock, a pair of woollen socks,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

black pantaloons with a line of red piping, spatterdashes, a tunic such as I've described—with pipe-clayed belt and crossbelt—and last of all a great japanned shako mounted with a brass plate and chin-strap and a scarlet-and-white cockade like a shaving-brush. When his toilet was finished, Nandy stepped down to the edge of the tide to take a look at his own reflection. It seemed to him that he cut a fine figure; but somehow he couldn't fetch up stomach to wear that rory-tory shako, but took his way towards Merry-Garden carrying it a-dangle by the chin-strap. However, by the time he reached the gate he had begun to feel more accustomed to his grandeur, and likewise that in for a penny was in for a pound: so, clapping the blessed thing tight on his head and pulling down the strap, he marched up the steps with a bold face.

The verandah was empty, and he strode along it and past the laylock-bush where—scarce ten minutes before—Dr. Clatworthy had received such a desperate shock. A little way beyond it was a path leading round to the back door, and Nandy was making for this when his ears caught

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the sound of laughing and the jingling of tea-cups from the line of arbours, and he spied Susannah coming towards the house with a teapot in one hand and an empty cream-dish in the other. For the moment she didn't recognise him.

"Attention! Stand at ease!" said Nandy, drawing himself up to the salute.

"The Lord deliver us!" screamed Susannah, dropping teapot and cream-dish together: and at the sound of it a dozen gentlemen in regimentals came rushing out from their arbours. Before Nandy knew whether he stood on his heels or his head one of these gentlemen had gripped him by the collar, and was requiring him to say instanter what the devil he meant by it.

"Why, damme," shouted someone, "if 'tisn't the uniform of the Thirty-second! Here! Shilston! Appleshaw!"

"What's wrong?"

"The fellow belongs to yours."

"The deuce he does! Slew him round and show his face."

"Oh, Nandy, Nandy!"—this was Miss Sophia's

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

voice—"Have you really been and gone and enlisted!"

"No, miss, I ha'n't"—by this time Nandy was blubbering for very fright. He tore himself loose and fell at Miss Sophia's feet. "But I was takin' a bath, miss—for my skin's sake, as advised by you—and a sojer came and took my clothes by main force"—here Nandy sobbed aloud—"I—I think, miss, he must ha' meant to desert!"

"Hey!" One of the officers took him again by the collar. "What's that you're saying? A deserter . . . left you these clothes and bolted? . . . Oh, stop your whining and answer! When? Where?"

Nandy checked his tears—but not his sobs—and pointed. "Down by the foreshore, sir . . . not a quarter of an hour since . . . he took the way up the Lynher, towards St. Germans . . ."

"Here, Appleshaw, this is serious! Trehane, Drury—you'll help us? A man of ours, deserted. . . . You'll excuse us, ladies—we'll bring the fellow back to you if we catch him. Show us the way, youngster—down by the creek, did you say? Tallyho, boys! One and all! Yoicks

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

forra'd! Go-one away!"—and, dragging Nandy with them, the pack pelted out of the garden.

VIII

Now you understand how it was that Dr. Clatworthy and Miss St. Maur, entering the garden ten minutes later, saw but a bevy of disconsolate maidens strolling the paths, and no uniform nor sign of one.

"There!" said Miss St. Maur, pointing with her parasol. "There, sir! What did I tell you?"

Dr. Clatworthy stared about him and mopped the crown of his head. "But when I assure you, madam——"

"Oh, cruel, cruel!" Miss St. Maur burst into tears.

"Madam!" Dr. Clatworthy looked about him again. The young ladies had turned and were withdrawing slowly to the far end of the walk. By this time, you must know, the light had fallen dim, but with the moon rising and the sun not gone altogether. "Madam! Dear

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

madam!" said Dr. Clatworthy, and was pressing her, polite as a lamb, towards the nearest arbour to seat her there and persuade her. But before he could pilot her past the laylock-bush, forth from that very arbour stepped a couple, and from the next arbour another couple, and both couples took the garden path, and in each couple the heads were closer together than necessary for ordinary talk, and the eyes of them seemingly too well occupied to notice the doctor and Miss St. Maur by the laylock-bush.

You see, Mr. Hardcastle, who belonged to the Navy, hadn't felt the need to trouble himself about a deserter from the sister service; and Mounseer Raynold had found a cousin, and naturally felt no concern in chasing a man to strengthen the British army.

"My dear madam!" said Dr. Clatworthy, and led Miss St. Maur towards the arbour. For certain he had recognised Miss Sophia; but maybe he let her go then and there from his thoughts. And Miss St. Maur by his side was weeping bitterly.

Dr. Clatworthy wasn't used to a woman in

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

tears. He took Miss St. Maur's hand, and by and by, finding her sobs didn't stop, he pressed it, and . . .

Well, that's all the story. I've heard my mother tell it a score of times, and always when she came to this point, she'd laugh and tell me to marry for choice before I came to fifty, or else trust to luck and buy a handkerchief.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Digitized by Google

Original from
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

THE BEND OF THE ROAD

I

JUST outside the small country station of M—— in Cornwall, a viaduct carries the Great Western Railway line across a coombe, or narrow valley, through which a tributary trout-stream runs southward to meet the tides of the L—— River. From the carriage-window as you pass you look down the coombe for half a mile perhaps, and also down a road which, leading out from M—— Station a few yards below the viaduct, descends the left-hand slope at a sharp incline to the stream; but whether to cross it or run close beside it down the valley bottom you cannot tell, since, before they meet, an eastward curve of the coombe shuts off the view.

Both slopes are pleasantly wooded, and tall beeches, interset here and there with pines—a pretty contrast in the spring—spread their boughs

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

over the road; which is cut cornice-wise, with a low parapet hedge to protect it along the outer side, where the ground falls steeply to the water-meadows, that wind like a narrow green riband edged by the stream with twinkling silver.

For the rest, there appears nothing remarkable in the valley: and certainly Mr. Molesworth, who crossed and recrossed it regularly on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, on his way to and from his banking business in Plymouth, would have been puzzled to explain why, three times out of four, as his train rattled over the viaduct, he laid down his newspaper, took the cigar from his mouth, and gazed down from the window of his first-class smoking carriage upon the green water-meadows and the curving road. The Great Western line for thirty miles or so on the far side of Plymouth runs through scenery singularly beautiful, and its many viaducts carry it over at least a dozen coombes more strikingly picturesque than this particular one which alone engaged his curiosity. The secret, perhaps, lay with the road. Mr. Molesworth, who had never set foot on it, sometimes wondered whither it led and into what

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

country it disappeared around the base of the slope to which at times his eyes travelled always wistfully. He had passed his forty-fifth year, and forgotten that he was an imaginative man. Nevertheless, and quite unconsciously, he let his imagination play for a few moments every morning — in the evening, jaded with business, he forgot as often as not to look — along this country road. Somehow it had come to wear a friendly smile, inviting him: and he on his part regarded it with quite a friendly interest. Once or twice, half-amused by the fancy, he had promised himself to take a holiday and explore it.

Years had gone by, and the promise remained unredeemed, nor appeared likely to be redeemed; yet at the back of his mind he was always aware of it. Daily, as the train slowed down and stopped at M—— Station, he spared a look for the folks on the platform. They had come by the road; and others, alighting, were about to take the road.

They were few enough, as a rule: apple-cheeked farmers and country-wives with their baskets, bound for Plymouth market; on summer mornings, as likely as not, an angler or two,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

thick-booted, carying rods and creels, their hats wreathed with March-browns or palmers on silvery lines of gut; in the autumn, now and then, a sportsman with his gun; on Monday mornings half a dozen Navy lads returning from furlough, with stains of native earth on their shoes and the edges of their wide trousers. . . . The faces of all these people wore an innocent friendliness: to Mr. Molesworth, a childless man, they seemed a childlike race, and mysterious as children, carrying with them like an aura the preoccupations of the valley from which they emerged. He decided that the country below the road must be worth exploring; that spring or early summer must be the proper season, and angling his pretext. He had been an accomplished fly-fisher in his youth, and wondered how much of the art would return to his hand when, after many years, it balanced the rod again.

Together with his fly-fishing, Mr. Molesworth had forgotten most of the propensities of his youth. He had been born an only son of rich parents, who shrank from exposing him to the rigours and temptations of a public school. Consequently, when the time came for him to

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

go up to Oxford, he had found no friends there and had made few, being sensitive, shy, entirely unskilled in games, and but moderately interested in learning. His vacations, which he spent at home, were as dull as he had always found them under a succession of well-meaning, middle-aged tutors—until, one August day, as he played a twelve-pound salmon, he glanced up at the farther bank and into a pair of brown eyes which were watching him with unconcealed interest.

The eyes belonged to a yeoman-farmer's daughter: and young Molesworth lost his fish, but returned next day, and again day after day, to try for him. At the end of three weeks or so, his parents—he was a poor hand at dissimulation—discovered what was happening, and interfered with promptness and resolution. He had not learnt the art of disobedience, and while he considered how to begin (having, indeed, taken his passion with a thoroughness that did him credit), Miss Margaret, sorely weeping, was packed off on a visit to her mother's relations near Exeter, where, three months later, she married a young farmer-cousin and emigrated to Canada.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

In this way Mr. Molesworth's love-making and his fly-fishing had come to an end together. Like Gibbon, he had sighed as a lover, and (Miss Margaret's faithlessness assisting) obeyed as a son. Nevertheless, the sequel did not quite fulfil the hopes of his parents, who, having acted with decision in a situation which took them unawares, were willing enough to make amends by providing him with quite a large choice of suitable partners. To their dismay it appeared that he had done with all thoughts of matrimony: and I am not sure that, as the years went on, their dismay did not deepen into regret. To the end he made them an admirable son, but they went down to their graves and left him unmarried.

In all other respects he followed irreproachably the line of life they had marked out for him. He succeeded to the directorate of the Bank in which the family had made its money, and to those unpaid offices of local distinction which his father had adorned. As a banker he was eminently "sound" — that is to say, cautious, but not obstinately conservative; as a Justice of the Peace, scrupulous, fair, inclined to mercy,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

exact in the performance of all his duties. As High Sheriff he filled his term of office and discharged it adequately, but without ostentation. Respecting wealth, but not greatly caring for it —as why should he?—every year without effort he put aside a thousand or two. Men liked him, in spite of his shyness: his good manners hiding a certain fastidiousness of which he was aware without being at all proud of it. No one had ever treated him with familiarity. One or two at the most called him friend, and these probably enjoyed a deeper friendship than they knew. Everyone felt him to be, behind his reserve, a good fellow.

Regularly thrice a week he drove down in his phaeton to the small country station at the foot of his park, and caught the 10.27 up-train: regularly as the train started he lit the cigar which, carefully smoked, was regularly three-parts consumed by the time he crossed the M—— viaduct; and regularly, as he lit it, he was conscious of a faint feeling of resentment at the presence of Sir John Crang.

Nine mornings out of ten, Sir John Crang (who lived two stations down the line) would be his

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

fellow-traveller; and, three times out of five, his only companion. Sir John was an ex-Civil Servant, knighted for what were known vaguely as "services in Burmah," and, now retired upon a derelict country seat in Cornwall, was making a bold push for local importance, and dividing his leisure between the cultivation of roses (in which he excelled) and the directorship of a large soap-factory near the Plymouth docks. Mr. Molesworth did not like him, and might have accounted for his dislike by a variety of reasons. He himself, for example, grew roses in a small way as an amateur, and had been used to achieve successes at the local flower-shows until Sir John arrived and in one season beat him out of the field. This, as an essentially generous man, he might have forgiven; but not the loud dogmatic air of patronage with which, on venturing to congratulate his rival and discuss some question of culture, he had been bullied and set right, and generally treated as an ignorant junior. Moreover, he seemed to observe—but he may have been mistaken—that, whatever rose he selected for his buttonhole, Sir John would take note of it and trump next day with a finer bloom.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

But these were trifles. Putting them aside, Mr. Molesworth felt that he could never like the man who—to be short—was less of a gentleman than a highly coloured and somewhat aggressive imitation of one. Most of all, perhaps, he abhorred Sir John's bulging glassy eyeballs, of a hard white by contrast with his coppery skin —surest sign of the cold sensualist. But in fact he took no pains to analyse his aversion, which extended even to the smell of Sir John's excellent but Burmese cigars. The two men nodded when they met, and usually exchanged a remark or two on the weather. Beyond this they rarely conversed, even upon politics, although both were Conservatives and voters in the same electoral division.

The day of which this story tells was a Saturday in the month of May 188—, a warm and cloudless morning, which seemed to mark the real beginning of summer after an unusually cold spring. The year, indeed, had reached that exact point when for a week or so the young leaves are as fragrant as flowers, and the rush of the train swept a thousand delicious scents in at the open windows. Mr. Molesworth had

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

donned a white waistcoat in honour of the weather, and wore a bud of a Capucine rose in his buttonhole. Sir John had adorned himself with an enormous glowing Sénateur Vaisse. (Why not a Paul Neyron while he was about it? wondered Mr. Molesworth, as he surveyed the globular bloom.)

"Now in the breast a door flings wide——"

It may have been the weather that disposed Sir John to talk to-day. After commending it, and adding a word or two in general in praise of the West-country climate, he paused and watched Mr. Molesworth lighting his cigar.

"You're a man of regular habits?" he observed unexpectedly, with a shade of interrogation in his voice.

Mr. Molesworth frowned and tossed his match out of window.

"I believe in regular habits myself." Sir John, bent on affability, laid down his newspaper on his knee. "There's one danger about them, though: they're deadening. They save a man the bother of thinking, and persuade him he's doing right, when all the reason is that he's done

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the same thing a hundred times before. I came across that in a book once, and it seemed to me dashed sound sense. Now here's something I'd like to ask you—have you any theory at all about dreams?"

"Dreams?" echoed Mr. Molesworth, taken aback by the inconsequent question.

"There's a Society—isn't there?—that makes a study of 'em and collects evidence. Man wakes up, having dreamt that friend whom he knows to be abroad is standing by his bed; lights his candle or turns on the electric-light and looks at his watch; goes to sleep again, tells his family all about it at breakfast, and a week or two later learns that his friend died at such-and-such an hour, and the very minute his watch pointed to. That's the sort of thing."

"You mean the Psychical Society?"

"That's the name. Well, I'm a case for 'em. Anyway, I can knock the inside out of one of their theories, that dreams are a sort of memory-game, made up of scenes and scraps and suchlike out of your waking consciousness—isn't that the lingo? Now, I've never had but one dream in

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

my life; but I've dreamt it two or three score of times, and I dreamt it last night."

"Indeed?" Mr. Molesworth was getting mildly interested.

"And I'm not what you'd call a fanciful sort of person," went on Sir John, with obvious veracity. "Regular habits—rise early and to bed early; never a day's trouble with my digestion; off to sleep as soon as my head touches the pillow. You can't call my dream a nightmare, and yet it's unpleasant, somehow."

"But what is it?"

"Well"—Sir John seemed to hesitate—"you might call it a scene. Yes, that's it—a scene. There's a piece of water and a church beside it—just an ordinary-looking little parish church, with a tower but no pinnacles. Outside the porch there's a tallish stone cross—you can just see it between the elms from the churchyard gate; and going through the gate you step over a sort of grid—half a dozen granite stones laid parallel, with spaces between."

"Then it must be a Cornish church. You never see that contrivance outside the Duchy: though it's worth copying. It keeps out sheep

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

and cattle, while even a child can step across it easily."

"But, my dear sir, I never saw Cornwall—and certainly never saw or heard of this contrivance—until I came and settled here, eight years ago: whereas I've been dreaming this, off and on, ever since I was fifteen."

"And you never actually saw the rest of the scene? the church itself, for instance?"

"Neither stick nor stone of it: I'll take my oath. Mind you, it isn't *like* a church made up of different scraps of memory. It's just that particular church, and I know it by heart, down to a scaffold-hole, partly hidden with grass, close under the lowest string-course of the tower, facing the gate."

"And inside?"

"I don't know. I've never been inside. But stop a moment—you haven't heard the half of it yet! There's a road comes downhill to the shore, between the churchyard wall—there's a heap of greyish silvery-looking stuff, by the way, growing on the coping—something like lavender, with yellow blossoms—— Where was I? Oh yes, and on the other side of the road there's a tall

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

hedge with elms above it. It breaks off where the road takes a bend around and in front of the churchyard gate, with a yard or two of turf on the side towards the water, and from the turf a clean drop of three feet, or a little less, on to the foreshore. The foreshore is all grey stones, round and flat, the sort you'd choose to play what's called ducks-and-drakes. It goes curving along, and the road with it, until the beach ends with a spit of rock, and over the rock a kind of cottage (only bigger, but thatched and white-washed just like a cottage) with a garden, and in the garden a laburnum in flower, leaning slantwise"—Sir John raised his open hand and bent his forefinger to indicate the angle—"and behind the cottage a reddish cliff with a few clumps of furze overhanging it, and the turf on it stretching up to a larch plantation. . . ."

Sir John paused and rubbed his forehead meditatively.

"At least," he resumed, "I *think* it's a larch plantation; but the scene gets confused above a certain height. It's the foreshore, and the church and the cottage that I always see clearest. Yes, and I forgot to tell you—I'm a poor hand at

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

description—that there's a splash of whitewash on the spit of rock, and an iron ring fixed there, for warping-in a vessel, maybe: and sometimes there's a boat, out on the water. . . ."

"You describe it vividly enough," said Mr. Molesworth as Sir John paused and, apparently on the point of resuming his story, checked himself, tossed his cigar out of the window, and chose a fresh one from his pocket-case. "Well, and what happens in your dream?"

Sir John struck a match, puffed his fresh cigar alight, deliberately examined the ignited end, and flung the match away. "Nothing happens. I told you it was just a scene, didn't I?"

"You said that somehow the dream was an unpleasant one."

"So I did. So it is. It makes me damnably uncomfortable every time I dream it; though for the life of me I can't tell you why."

"The picture as you draw it seems to me quite a pleasant one."

"So it is, again."

"And you say nothing happens?"

"Well—" Sir John took the cigar from his mouth and looked at it—"nothing ever

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

happens in it, definitely: nothing at all. But always in the dream there's a smell of lemon verbena—it comes from the garden—and a curious hissing noise—and a sense of a black man's being somehow mixed up in it all. . . ."

"A black man?"

"Black or brown . . . in the dream I don't think I've ever actually seen him. The hissing sound—it's like the hiss of a snake, only ten times louder—may have come into the dream of late years. As to that I won't swear. But I'm dead certain there was always a black man mixed up in it, or what I may call a sense of one: and that, as you will say, is the most curious part of the whole business."

Sir John flipped away the ash of his cigar and leant forward impressively.

"If I wasn't, as I say, dead sure of his having been in it from the first," he went on, "I could tell you the exact date when he took a hand in the game: because," he resumed after another pause, "I once actually saw what I'm telling you."

"But you told me," objected Mr. Molesworth, "that you had never actually seen it."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"I was wrong then. I saw it once, in a Burmese boy's hand at Maulmain. The old Eastern trick, you know: palmful of ink and the rest of it. There was nothing particular about the boy except an ugly scar on his cheek (caused, I believe, by his mother having put him down to sleep in the fireplace while the clay floor of it was nearly red-hot under the ashes). His master called himself his grandfather—a holy-looking man with a white beard down to his loins: and the pair of them used to come up every year from Mergui or some such part, at the Full Moon of Taboung, which happens at the end of March and is the big feast in Maulmain. The pair of them stood close by the great entrance of the Shway Dagone, where the three roads meet, and just below the long flights of steps leading up to the pagoda. The second day of the feast I was making for the entrance with a couple of naval officers I had picked up at the Club, and my man, Moung Gway, following as close as he could keep in the crowd. Just as we were going up the steps, the old impostor challenged me, and, partly to show my friends what the game was like—for they were new to the country—I stopped and

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

found a coin for him. He poured the usual dollop of ink into the boy's hand, and, by George, sir, next minute I was staring at the very thing I'd seen a score of times in my dreams but never out of them. I tell you, there's more in that Eastern hanky-panky than meets the eye; beyond that I'll offer no opinion. Outside the magic I believe the whole business was a put-up job, to catch my attention and take me unawares. For when I stepped back, pretty well startled, and blinking from the strain of keeping my attention fixed on the boy's palm, a man jumped forward from the crowd and precious nearly knifed me. If it hadn't been for Moung Gway, who tripped him up and knocked him sideways, I should have been a dead man in two twos—for my friends were taken aback by the suddenness of it. But in less than a minute we had him down and the handcuffs on him; and the end was, he got five years' hard, which means hefting chain-shot from one end to another of the prison square and then hefting it back again. There was a rather neat little Burmese girl, you see—a sort of niece of Moung Gway's—who had taken a fancy to me; and this turned out to be a disappointed lover, just turned up from a voyage

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

to Cagayan in a paddy-boat. I believed he had fixed it up with the venerable one to hold me with the magic until he got in his stroke. Venomous beggars, those Burmans, if you cross 'em in the wrong way! The fellow got his release a week before I left Maulmain for good, and the very next day Moung Gway was found, down by the quays, dead as a haddock, with a wound between the shoulder-blades as neat as if he'd been measured for it. Oh, I could tell you a story or two about those fellows!"

"It's easily explained, at any rate," Mr. Molesworth suggested, "why you see a dark-skinned man in your dream."

"But I tell you, my dear sir, he has been a part of the dream from the beginning . . . before I went to Wren's, and long before ever I thought of Burmah. He's as old as the church itself, and the foreshore and the cottage—the whole scene, in fact—though I can't say he's half as distinct. I can't tell you in the least, for instance, what his features are like. I've said that the upper part of the dream is vague to me; at the end of the foreshore, that is, where the cottage stands; the church tower I can see plainly enough to the very

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

top. But over by the cottage—above the porch, as you may say—everything seems to swim in a mist: and it's up in that mist the fellow's head and shoulders appear and vanish. Sometimes I think he's looking out of the window at me, and draws back into the room as if he didn't want to be seen; and the mist itself gathers and floats away with the hissing sound I told you about. . . ."

Sir John's voice paused abruptly. The train was drawing near the M—— viaduct, and Mr. Molesworth from force of habit had turned his eyes to the window, to gaze down the green valley. He withdrew them suddenly, and looked around at his companion.

"Ah, to be sure," he said vaguely; "I had forgotten the hissing sound."

It was curious, but as he spoke he himself became aware of a loud hissing sound filling his ears. The train lurched and jolted heavily.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Sir John, half rising in his seat, "something's wrong." He was staring past Mr. Molesworth and out of the window. "Nasty place for an accident, too," he added in a slow, strained voice.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The two men looked at each other for a moment. Sir John's face wore a tense expression —a kind of galvanised smile. Mr. Molesworth closed his eyes, instinctively concealing his sudden sickening terror of what an accident just there must mean: and for a second or so he actually had a sensation of dropping into space. He remembered having felt something like it in dreams three or four times in his life: and at the same instant he remembered a country superstition gravely imparted to him in childhood by his old nurse, that if you dreamt of falling and didn't wake up before reaching the bottom, you would surely die. The absurdity of it chased away his terror, and he opened his eyes and looked about him with a short laugh. . . .

The train still jolted heavily, but had begun to slow down, and Mr. Molesworth drew a long breath as a glance told him that they were past the viaduct. Sir John had risen, and was leaning out of the farther window. Something had gone amiss, then. But what?

He put the question aloud. Sir John, his head and shoulders well outside the carriage-window, did not answer. Probably he did not hear.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

As the train ran into M—— Station and came to a standstill, Mr. Molesworth caught a glimpse of the station-master, in his gold-braided cap, by the door of the booking-office. He wore a grave, almost a scared look. The three or four country-people on the sunny platform seemed to have their gaze drawn by the engine, and somebody ahead there was shouting. Sir John Crang, without a backward look, flung the door open and stepped out. Mr. Molesworth was preparing to follow—and by the cramped feeling in his fingers was aware at the same instant that he had been gripping the arm-rest almost desperately—when the guard of the train came running by and paused to thrust his head in at the open doorway to explain.

"Engine's broken her coupling-rod, sir—just before we came to the viaduct. Mercy for us she didn't leave the rails."

"Mercy indeed, as you say," Mr. Molesworth assented. "I suppose we shall be hung up here until they send a relief down?"

The guard—Mr. Molesworth knew him as "George" by name, and by habit constantly polite—turned and waved his flag hurriedly, in

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

acknowledgment of the shouting ahead, before answering——

"You may count on half an hour's delay, sir. Lucky it's no worse. You'll excuse me—they're calling for me down yonder."

He ran on, and Mr. Molesworth stepped out upon the platform, of which this end was already deserted, all the passengers having alighted and hurried forward to inspect the damaged engine. A few paces beyond the door he met the station-master racing back to despatch a telegram.

"It seems that we've had a narrow escape," said Mr. Molesworth.

The station-master touched his hat and plunged into his office. Mr. Molesworth, instead of joining the crowd around the engine, halted before a small pile of luggage on a bench outside the waiting-room and absent-mindedly scanned the labels.

Among the parcels lay a fishing-rod in a canvas case and a wicker creel, the pair of them labelled and bearing the name of an acquaintance of his—a certain Sir Warwick Moyle, baronet and county magistrate, beside whom he habitually sat at Quarter Sessions.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"I had no idea," Mr. Molesworth mused, "that Moyle was an angler. It would be a fair joke, anyway, to borrow his rod and fill up the time.—How long before the relief comes down?" he asked, intercepting the station-master as he came rushing out from his office and slammed the door behind him.

"Maybe an hour, sir, before we get you started again. I can't honestly promise you less than forty minutes."

"Very well, then: I'm going to borrow Sir Warwick's rod, there, and fill up the time," said Mr. Molesworth, pointing at it.

The station-master apparently did not hear; at any rate he passed on without remonstrance. Mr. Molesworth slung the creel over his shoulder, picked up the rod, and stepped out beyond the station gateway upon the road.

II

The road ran through a cutting, sunless, cooled by many small springs of water trickling down the rock-face, green with draperies of the hart's-tongue and common polypody ferns; and emerged

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

again into warmth upon a curve of the hillside facing southward down the coombe, and almost close under the second span of the viaduct, where the tall trestles plunged down among the tree-tops like gigantic stilts, and the railway left earth and spun itself across the chasm like a line of gossamer, its criss-crossed timbers so delicately pencilled against the blue that the whole structure seemed to swing there in the morning breeze. Above it, in heights yet more giddy, the larks were chiming; and Mr. Molesworth's heart went up to those clear heights with a sudden lift.

In all the many times he had crossed the viaduct he had never once guessed—he could not have imagined—how beautiful it looked from below. He stood and gazed, and drew a long breath. Was it the escape from dreadful peril, with its blessed revulsion of feeling, that so quickened all his senses dulled by years of habit? He could not tell. He gave himself up to the strange and innocent excitement.

Why had he never till now—and now only by accident—obeyed the impulse to descend this road and explore? He was rich: he had

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

not even the excuse of children to be provided for: the Bank might surely have waited for one day. He did not want much money. His tastes were simple—Was not the happiness at this moment thrilling him a proof that his tastes were simple as a child's? Lo, too, his eyes were looking on the world as freshly as a child's! Why had he so long denied them a holiday? Why do men chain themselves in prisons of their own making?

What had the station-master said? It might be an hour—certainly not less than forty minutes—before the train could be restarted. Mr. Molesworth looked at his watch. Forty minutes to explore the road: forty minutes' holiday! He laughed, pocketed the watch again, and took the road briskly, humming a song.

Suppose he missed his train? Why, then, the Bank must do without him to-day, as it would have to do without him, one of these days, when he was dead. He thought of his fellow-directors' faces, and laughed again. He felt morally certain of missing that train. What kind of world would it be if money grew in birds' nests, or if leaves were currency and

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

withered in autumn? Would it include truant-schools for bankers? . . .

"He that is down needs fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.

Fulness to such a burden is
That go on pilgrimage——"

Mr. Molesworth did not actually sing these words. The tune he hummed was a wordless one, and, for that matter, not even much of a tune. But he afterwards declared very positively that he sang the sense of them, being challenged by the birds calling in contention louder and louder as the road dipped towards the stream, and by the music of lapsing water which now began to possess his ear. For some five or six furlongs the road descended under beech-boughs, between slopes carpeted with last year's leaves: but by and by the beeches gave place to an oak coppice with a matted undergrowth of the whortleberry; and where these in turn broke off, and a plantation of green young larches climbed the hill, the wild hyacinths ran down to the stream in sheet upon sheet of blue.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Mr. Molesworth rested his creel on the low hedge above one of these sheets of blue, and with the music of the stream in his ears began to unpack Sir Warwick Moyle's fishing-rod. For a moment he paused, bethinking himself, with another short laugh, that, without flies, neither rod nor line would catch him a fish. But decidedly fortune was kind to him to-day: for, opening the creel, he found Sir Warwick's fly-book within it, bulging with hooks and flies by the score—nay, by the hundred. He unbuckled the strap and was turning the leaves to make his choice, when his ear caught the sound of footsteps, and he lifted his eyes to see Sir John Crang coming down the road.

"Hullo!" hailed Sir John. "I saw you slip out of the station and took a fancy that I'd follow. Pretty little out-of-the-way spot, this. Eh? Why, where on earth did you pick up those angling traps?"

"I stole them," answered Mr. Molesworth deliberately, choosing a fly. He did not in the least desire Sir John's company, but somehow found himself too full of good-nature to resent it actively.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"Stole 'em?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, they belong to a friend of mine. They were lying ready to hand in the station, and I borrowed them without leave. He won't mind."

"You're a cool one, I must say." It may be that the recent agitation of his feelings had shaken Sir John's native vulgarity to the surface. Certainly he spoke now with a commonness of idiom and accent he was usually at pains to conceal. "You must have a fair nerve altogether, for all you're such a quiet-looking chap. Hadn't even the curiosity—had you?—to find out what had gone wrong; but just picked up a handy fishing-rod and strolled off to fill up the time till damages were repaired. Look here. Do you know, or don't you, that 'twasn't by more than a hair's-breadth we missed going over that viaduct?"

"I knew we must have had a narrow escape."

"And you can be tying the fly there on to that gut as steady as a doctor picking up an artery! Well, I envy you. Look at *that!*" Sir John held out a brown, hairy, shaking

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

hand. "And I don't reckon myself a coward, either."

Mr. Molesworth knew that the man's record had established at any rate his reputation for courage. He had, in fact, been a famous hunter-out of Dacoity.

"I didn't know you went in for that sort of thing," pursued Sir John, watching Mr. Molesworth, who, with a penknife, was trimming the ends of gut. "Don't mind my watching your first cast or two, I hope? I won't talk. Anglers don't like being interrupted, I know."

"I shall be glad of your company: and please talk as much as you choose. To tell the truth, I haven't handled a rod for years, and I'm making this little experiment to see if I've quite lost the knack, rather than with any hope of catching fish."

It appeared, however, that he had not lost the knack, and after the first cast or two, in the pleasure of recovered skill, his senses abandoned themselves entirely to the sport. Sir John had lit a cigar and seated himself amid the bracken a short distance back from the brink, to watch: but whether he conversed

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

or not Mr. Molesworth could not tell. He remembered afterwards that at the end of twenty minutes or so—probably when his cigar was finished—Sir John rose and announced his intention of strolling some way farther down the valley—"to soothe his nerves a bit," as he said, adding, "So long! I see you're going to miss that train, to a certainty."

Yes, it was certain enough that Mr. Molesworth would miss his train. He fished down the stream slowly, the song and dazzle of the water filling his ears, his vision; his whole being soothed and lulled less by the actual scene than by a hundred memories it awakened or set stirring. He was young again—a youth of twenty with romance in his heart. The plants and grasses he trod were the asphodels, sundew, water-mint his feet had crushed—crushed into fragrance—five-and-twenty years ago. . . .

So deeply preoccupied was he that, coming to a bend where the coombe suddenly widened, and the stream without warning cast its green fringe of alders like a slough and slipped down a beach of flat pebbles to the head waters of a tidal creek, Mr. Molesworth rubbed his eyes

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

with a start. Had the stream been a Naiad she could not have given him the go-by more coquettishly.

He rubbed his eyes, and then with a short gasp of wonder—almost of terror—involuntarily looked around for Sir John. Here before him was a shore, with a church beside it, and at the far end a whitewashed cottage—surely the very shore, church, cottage, of Sir John's dream! Yes, there was the stone cross before the porch; and here the grid-fashioned church stile; and yonder under the string-course the scaffold-hole with the grass growing out of it!

If Mr. Molesworth's hands had been steady when he tied on his May-fly, they trembled enough now as he hurriedly put up his tackle and disjointed his rod: and still, and again while he hastened across to the cottage above the rocky spit—the cottage with the larch plantation above and in the garden a laburnum aslant and in bloom—his eyes sought the beach for Sir John.

The cottage was a large one, as Sir John had described. It was, in fact, a waterside inn, with its name, The Saracen's Head, painted in black

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

letters along its whitewashed front and under a swinging signboard. Looking up at the board Mr. Molesworth discerned, beneath its dark varnish, the shoulders, scimitar, and grinning face of a turbaned Saracen, and laughed aloud between incredulity and a sense of terror absurdly relieved. This, then, was Sir John's black man!

But almost at the same moment another face looked over the low hedge—the face of a young girl in a blue sun-bonnet: and Mr. Molesworth put out a hand to the gate to steady himself.

The girl—she had heard his laugh, perhaps—gazed down at him with a frank curiosity. Her eyes were honest, clear, untroubled: they were also extremely beautiful eyes: and they were more. As Mr. Molesworth to his last day was prepared to take oath, here were the very eyes, as here was the very face and here the very form, of the Margaret whom he had suffered for, and suffered to be lost to him, twenty-five years ago. It was Margaret, and she had not aged one day.

In Margaret's voice, too, seeing that he made no motion to enter, she spoke down to him across the hedge.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"Are you a friend, sir, of the gentleman that was here just now?"

"Sir John Crang?" Mr. Molesworth just managed to command his voice.

"I don't know his name, sir. But he left his cigar-case behind. I found it on the settle five minutes after he had gone, and ran out to search for him. . . ."

Mr. Molesworth opened the gate and held out a hand for the case. Yes: he recognised it. It bore Sir John's monogram in silver.

"I will give it to him," he said. Without exactly knowing why, he followed her into the inn-kitchen. Yes, he would take a pint of her ale. "The home-brewed?" Yes, certainly, the home-brewed.

She brought it in a pewter tankard, exquisitely polished. The polish of it caught and cast back the sunlight in prismatic circles on the scoured deal table. The girl — Margaret — stood for a moment in the fuller sunlight by the window, lingering there to pick a dead leaf from a geranium on the ledge.

"Which way did Sir John go?"

"I *thought* he took the turning along the shore;

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

but I didn't notice particularly which way he went. He said he had come down the valley, and I took it for granted he would be going on."

Mr. Molesworth drank his beer and stood up. "There are only two ways, then, out of this valley?"

"Thank you, sir——" As he paid her she dropped a small curtsey—"Yes, only two ways—up the valley or along the shore. The road up the valley leads to the railway station."

"By the way, there was an accident at the station this morning?"

"Indeed, sir?" Her beautiful eyes grew round. "Nothing serious, I hope?"

"It might have been a very nasty one indeed," said Mr. Molesworth, and paused. "I think I'll take a look along the shore before returning. I don't want to miss my friend, if I can help it."

"You can see right along it from the rock beyond the garden," said the girl, and Mr. Molesworth went out.

As he reached the spit of rock, the sunlight playing down the waters of the creek dazzled him for a moment. Rubbing his eyes, he saw, about two hundred yards along the foreshore, a boat

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

grounded, and two figures beside it on the beach: and either his sight was playing him a trick or these two were struggling together.

He ran towards them. Almost as he started, in one of the figures he recognised Sir John. The other had him by the shoulders, and seemed to be dragging him by main force towards the boat. Mr. Molesworth shouted as he rushed up to the fray. The assailant turned—turned with a loud hissing sound—and, releasing Sir John, swung up a hand with something in it that flashed in the sun as he struck at the new-comer: and as Mr. Molesworth fell, he saw a fierce brown face and a cage of white, gleaming teeth bared in a savage grin. . . .

He picked himself up, the blood running warm over his eyes, and, as he stood erect for a moment, down over his white waistcoat. But the dusky face of his antagonist had vanished, and, with it, the whole scene. In place of the foreshore with its flat grey stones, his eye travelled down a steep green slope. The hissing sound continued in his ears, louder than ever, but it came with violent jets of steam from a locomotive, grotesquely overturned some twenty yards below him. Fainting,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

he saw and sank across the body of Sir John Crang, which lay with face upturned among the June grasses, staring at the sky.

III

Statement by W. Pitt Ferguson, M.D., of Lockyer Street, Plymouth

The foregoing narrative has been submitted to me by the writer, who was well acquainted with the late Mr. Molesworth. In my opinion it conveys a correct impression of that gentleman's temperament and character: and I can testify that in the details of his psychical adventures on the valley road leading to St. A——'s Church it adheres strictly to the account given me by Mr. Molesworth himself shortly after the accident on the M—— viaduct, and repeated by him several times with insistence during the illness which terminated mortally some four months later. The manner in which the narrative is presented may be open to criticism: but of this, as one who has for some years eschewed the reading of fiction, I am not a fair judge. It adds, at any

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

rate, nothing in the way of "sensation" to the story as Mr. Molesworth told it: and of its improbability I should be the last to complain, who am to add, of my own positive observation, some evidence which will make it appear yet more startling, if not wholly incredible.

The accident was actually witnessed by two men, cattle-jobbers, who were driving down the valley road in a light cart or "trap," and were within two hundred yards of the viaduct when they saw the train crash through the parapet over the second span (counting from the west), and strike and plunge down the slope. In their evidence at the inquest, and again at the Board of Trade inquiry, these men agree that it took them from five to eight minutes only to alight, run down and across the valley (fording the stream on their way), and scramble up to the scene of the disaster: and they further agree that one of the first sad objects on which their eyes fell was the dead body of Sir John Crang with Mr. Molesworth, alive but sadly injured and bleeding, stretched across it. Apparently they had managed to crawl from the wreck of the carriage before Sir John succumbed, or Mr. Molesworth had managed

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

to drag his companion out—whether dead or alive cannot be told—before himself fainting from loss of blood.

The toll of the disaster, as is generally known, amounted to twelve killed and seventeen more or less seriously injured. Help having been summoned from M—— Station, the injured—or as many of them as could be removed—were conveyed in an ambulance train to Plymouth. Among them was Mr. Molesworth, whose apparent injuries were a broken hip, a laceration of the thigh, and an ugly, jagged scalp-wound. Of all these he made, in time, a fair recovery: but what brought him under my care was the nervous shock from which his brain, even while his body healed, never made any promising attempt to rally. For some time after the surgeon had pronounced him cured he lingered on, a visibly dying man, and died in the end of utter nervous collapse.

Yet even within a few days of the end his brain kept an astonishing clearness: and to me, as well as to the friends who visited him in hospital and afterwards in his Plymouth lodgings —for he never returned home again, being unable

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

to face another railway journey — he would maintain, and with astonishing vigour and lucidity of description, that he had actually in very truth travelled down the valley in company with Sir John Crang, and seen with his own eyes everything related in the foregoing paper. Now, as a record of what did undeniably pass through the brain of a cultivated man in some catastrophic moments, I found these recollections of his exceedingly interesting. As no evidence is harder to collect, so almost none can be of higher importance, than that of man's sensations at the exact moment when he passes, naturally or violently, out of this present life into whatever may be beyond. Partly because Mr. Molesworth's story, which he persisted in, had this scientific value; partly in the hope of diverting his mind from the lethargy into which I perceived it to be sinking; I once begged him to write the whole story down. To this, however, he was unequal. His will betrayed him as soon as he took pen and paper.

The entire veracity of his recollection he none the less affirmed again and again, and with something like passion, although aware that his friends

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

were but humouring him while they listened and made pretence to believe. The strong card—if I may so term it—in his evidence was undoubtedly Sir John Crang's cigar-case. It was found in Mr. Molesworth's breast-pocket when they undressed him at the hospital, and how it came there I confess I cannot explain. It may be that it had dropped on the grass from Sir John's pocket, and that Mr. Molesworth, under the hallucination which undoubtedly possessed him, picked it up, and pocketed it before the two cattle-drovers found him. It is an unlikely hypothesis, but I cannot suggest a likelier.

A fortnight before his death he sent for a lawyer and made his will, the sanity of which no one can challenge. At the end he directed that his body should be interred in the parish churchyard of St. A——, "as close as may be to the cross by the church porch." As a last challenge to scepticism this surely was defiant enough.

It was my duty to attend the funeral. The coffin, conveyed by train to M—— Station, was there transferred to a hearse, and the procession followed the valley road. I forget at what point

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

it began to be impressed upon me, who had never travelled the road before, that Mr. Molesworth's "recollections" of it had been so exact that they compelled a choice between the impossibility of accepting his story and the impossibility of doubting the assurance of so entirely honourable a man that he had never travelled the road in his life. At first I tried to believe that his recollections of it—detailed as they were—might one by one have been suggested by the view from the viaduct. But, honestly, I was soon obliged to give this up: and when we arrived at the creek's head and the small churchyard beside it, I confessed myself confounded. Point by point, and at every point, the actual scene reproduced Mr. Molesworth's description.

I prefer to make no comment on my last discovery. After the funeral, being curious to satisfy myself in every particular, I walked across the track to the inn—The Saracen's Head—which again answered Mr. Molesworth's description to the last detail. The house was kept by a widow and her daughter: and the girl—an extremely good-looking young person—made me welcome. I concluded she must be the original

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of Mr. Molesworth's illusion—perhaps the strangest of all his illusions—and took occasion to ask her (I confess not without a touch of trepidation) if she remembered the day of the accident. She answered that she remembered it well. I asked if she remembered any visitor, or visitors, coming to the inn on that day. She answered, None: but that now I happened to speak of it, somebody must have come that day while she was absent on an errand to the Vicarage (which lies some way along the shore to the westward): for on returning she found a fishing-rod and creel on the settle of the inn-kitchen.

The creel had a luggage-label tied to it, and on the label was written "Sir W. Moyle." She had written to Sir Warwick about it more than a month ago, but had not heard from him in answer. [It turned out that Sir Warwick had left England, three days after the accident, on a yachting excursion to Norway.]

"And a cigar-case?" I asked. "You don't remember seeing a cigar-case?"

She shook her head, evidently puzzled. "I know nothing about a cigar-case," she said. "But you shall see the rod and fishing-basket."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

She ran at once and fetched them. Now that rod and that creel (and the fly-book within it) have since been restored to Sir Warwick Moyle. He had left them in care of the station-master at M——, whence they had been missing since the day of the accident. It was suspected that they had been stolen, in the confusion that day prevailing at the little station, by some ganger on the relief-train.

The girl, I am convinced, was honest, and had no notion how they found their way to the kitchen of The Saracen's Head: nor — to be equally honest—have I.

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

HI-SPY-HI!

AN EPISODE IN THE HISTORY OF THE LOOE DIE-HARDS

MAYBE you have never heard of the East and West Looe Volunteer Artillery—the famous Looe Die-hards? "The iniquity of oblivion," says Sir Thomas Browne, "blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity." "Time," writes Dr. Isaac Watts—

> "Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
> Bears all its sons away!"

and this fine hymn was a favourite with Captain Æneas Pond, the commanding-officer of the Die-hards. Yet am I sure that while singing it Captain Pond in his heart excepted his own renowned corps. For were not the Die-hards an exception to every rule?

In the spring of the year 1803, when King

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

George had to tell his faithful subjects that the Treaty of Amiens was no better than waste-paper, and Bonaparte began to assemble his troops and flat-bottomed boats in the camp and off the coast by Boulogne with intent to invade us, public excitement in the twin towns of East and West Looe rose to a very painful pitch. Of this excitement was begotten the East and West Looe Volunteer Artillery, which the Government kept in pay for six years and then reluctantly disbanded. The company on an average numbered sixty or seventy men, commanded by a Captain and two Lieutenants of their own choosing. They learned the exercise of the great guns and of small arms; they wore a uniform consisting of blue coat and pantaloons, with scarlet facings and yellow wings and tassels, and a white waistcoat; and the ladies of Looe embroidered two flags for them, with an inscription on each—"*Death or Victory*" on the one—on the other, "*We Choose the Latter*."

They meant it, too. If the course of events between 1803 and 1809 denied them the chance of achieving victory, 'tis at least remarkable how they avoided the alternative. Indeed it was

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

their tenacity in keeping death at arm's length which won for them their famous sobriquet.

The Doctor invented it. (He was surgeon to the corps as well as to its senior Lieutenant.) The Doctor made the great discovery, and imparted it to Captain Pond on a memorable evening in the late summer of 1808 as the two strolled homeward from parade — the Captain moodily, as became a soldier who for five years had carried a sword engraved with the motto, "*My Life's Blood for the Two Looes*," and as yet had been granted no opportunity to flesh it.

"But look here, Pond," said the Doctor. "Has it ever occurred to you to reflect that in all these five years since you first enlisted your company, not a single man of it has died?"

"Why the devil should he?" asked Captain Pond.

"Why? Why, by every law of probability!" answered the Doctor. "Take any collection of seventy men the sum of whose ages divided by seventy gives an average age of thirty-four— which is the mean age of our corps, for I've worked it out: then by the most favourable rates

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

of mortality three at least should die every year."

"War is a fearful thing!" commented Captain Pond.

"But, dammit, I'm putting the argument on a *civilian* basis! I say that even in time of peace, if you take any seventy men the sum of whose ages divided by seventy gives thirty-four, you ought in five years to average a loss of fifteen men."

"Then," murmured Captain Pond, "all I can say is that peace is a fearful thing too."

"Yes, yes, Pond! But my point is that in all these five years *we* have not yet lost a single man."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Captain Pond, after a moment's thought. "How do you account for it?"

Professionally the Doctor was the most modest of men. "I do not seek to account for it," said he. "I only know that you, my old friend, well deserve the distinction which you have characteristically overlooked—that of commanding the most remarkable company in the Duchy; nay, I will venture to say, in the whole of England."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

They had reached the brow of the hill overlooking the town. Captain Pond halted and gazed for a moment on the veil of smoke above the peaceful chimneys, then into the sunset fading far down the Channel. A sudden moisture clouded his gaze, but in the moisture quivered a new-born light of pride.

Yes, it was true. He—he in five years' command—had never lost a man!

The discovery elated and yet humbled him. His was a simple soul, and took its responsibilities seriously. He sought not to inquire for what high purpose Providence had so signally intervened to stave off from the East and West Looe Artillery the doom of common men. He only prayed to be equal to it. The Doctor's statistics had, in fact, scared him a little. I am positive that he never boasted.

And yet—I will say this for the credit of us Cornishmen, that we rejoice one in another's good fortune. Captain Pond might walk humbly and "touch wood" to avert Nemesis: he could not prevent the whisper spreading, nor, as it spread, could he silence the congratulations of his fellow-townsmen. "One and All" is our

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

motto, and Looe quickly made Captain Pond's singular distinction its own—

There's Horse, there's Foot, there's Artiller-y,
Yet none comes up with Looe;
For the rest of the Army never says *die,*
But our chaps never do!

You may realise something of the public enthusiasm when I tell you that it gave an entirely new trend to the small-talk on the Town Quay. Hitherto, the male population which resorted there had admitted but four subjects as worthy of sensible men's discussion—the weather, the shipping intelligence, religion, and politics: but in a few days the health of the "Die-hards" took precedence of all these, and even threatened to monopolise public gossip. Captain Pond, as the first reward of notoriety, found himself severely criticised for having at the outset enlisted a dozen gunners of ripe age, although he had chosen them for no worse reason than that they had served in his Majesty's Navy and were by consequence the best marksmen in the two towns. Not even this excuse, however, could be pleaded on behalf of Gunner Israel Spettigew (commonly known as Uncle Issy), a

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

septuagenarian who owed his inclusion entirely to the jokes he cracked. They had been greatly relished on parade: as indeed they had made him for forty years past the one indispensable man at Mayor-choosings, Church-feasts, Carol-practices, Guise-dancings, and all public occasions; and because they varied little with the years, no one had taken the trouble to remark until now that Uncle Issy himself was ageing. But now the poor old fellow found himself the object of a solicitude which (as he grumbled) made the Town Quay as melancholy as a house in a warren.

The change in the public attitude came on him with a sudden shock. "Good-mornin', Uncle," said Sergeant Pengelly of the Sloop Inn, as the veteran joined the usual group on the Quay for the usual "crack" after breakfast. "There was a touch o' frost in the air this mornin'. I hope it didn't affect you."

"What?" said Uncle Issy.

"We're in for a hard winter this season," went on Sergeant Pengelly lugubriously. "A touch o' frost so early in October you may take as one o' Natur's warnings."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"Ay," chimed in Gunner Tripconey, shaking his head. "What is man, when all's said an' done? One moment he's gallivantin' about in beauty and majesty, an' the next—*phut!* as you might say."

Uncle Issy stared at him with neighbourly interest. "Been eatin' anything to disagree with you, Tripconey?" he asked.

"I have not," Mr. Tripconey answered; "and what's more, though born so recent as the very year his Majesty came to the throne, I've ordained to be extry careful over my diet this winter an' go slow over such delicacies as fried 'taties for breakfast. If these things happen in the green tree, Mr. Spettigew, what shall be done in the dry?"

Mr. Spettigew cheerfully ignored the hint. "Talkin' of frost and 'taties," he said, "have you ever tried storin' them in hard weather under your bed-tie? 'Tis a bit nubbly till the sleeper gets used to it, but it benefits the man if he's anyway given to lumbago, an' for the 'taties themselves 'tis salvation. I tried it through the hard winter of the year 'five by the advice o' Parson Buller, and a better Christian never missed

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the point of a joke. 'Well, Israel,' says he that January, 'how be the potatoes getting along?' 'Your honour,' says I, 'like the Apostles themselves, thirteen to the dozen; and likewise of whom it was said that many are cold but few are frozen'—hee-hee!"

Nobody smiled. "If you go strainin' yourself over little witticisms like that," observed young Gunner Oke gloomily, "one of these days you'll be heving the Dead March played over you before you know what's happenin': and then, perhaps, you'll laugh on t'other side of your mouth."

Uncle Issy gazed around upon the company. They were eyeing him, one and all, in deadly earnest, and he crept away. Until that moment he had carried his years without feeling the burden. He went home, raked together the embers of the fire over which he had cooked his breakfast, drew his chair close to the hearth, and sat down to warm himself. Yes: Sergeant Pengelly had spoken the truth. There *was* an unnatural touch of frost in the air this morning.

By and by, when William Henry Phippin's

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

son, Archelaus, bugler to the corps (aged fifteen), took the whooping-cough, public opinion blamed Captain Pond no less severely for having enlisted a recruit who was still an undergraduate in such infantile disorders: and although the poor child took it in the mildest form, his father (not hitherto remarkable for parental tenderness) ostentatiously practised the favourite local cure and conveyed him to and fro for three days and all day long in the ferry-boat which plied under Captain Pond's windows. The demonstration, which was conducted in mufti, could not be construed as mutiny; but the spirit which prompted it, and the public feeling it evoked, galled the worthy Captain more than he cared to confess.

Still, and when all was said and done, the sweets of notoriety outflavoured the sours. The Troy Artillery, down the coast, had betrayed its envy in a spiteful epigram; and this neighbourly acid, infused upon the pride of Looe, had crystallised it, so to speak, into the name now openly and defiantly given to the corps. They were the Die-hards henceforth, jealous of the title and of all that it implied. The ladies of Looe, with whom Captain Pond (an unmarried man) had ever been

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

a favourite, used during the next few weeks far severer language towards their neighbours of Troy than they had ever found for the distant but imminent Gaul and his lascivious advances.

All this was well enough; but Looe had a Thersites in its camp.

His name was Scantlebury; he kept a small general shop in the rear of the Town Quay, and he bore Captain Pond a grudge of five years' standing for having declined to enlist him on the pretext of his legs being so malformed that the children of the town drove their hoops between them.

In his nasty spite this Scantlebury sat down and indited a letter, addressed—

"TO THE RIGHT HONBLE PERSON AS LOOKS AFTER THE ARTILLERY.

"HORSE GUARDS,
"LONDON.

"HONBLE SIR,—This comes hoping to find you well as it leaves me at present and I beg leave to tell you there be some dam funny goings-on, down here to Looe. The E. & W. Looe Volunteer Artllry have took to calling themselves

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

the Die-hards and the way they coddle is a public scandal, when I tell you that for six weeks there has been no drill in the fresh air and 16/8 public money has been paid to T. Tripconey carpenter (a member of the corps) for fastening up the windows of the Town Hall against draughts. Likewise a number of sandbags have been taken from the upper battery and moved down to the said room (which they use for a drill hall) to stop out the wind from coming under the door. Likewise also to my knowledge for three months the company have not been allowed to move at the double because Gunner Spettigew (who owns to seventy-three) cant manage a step of thirty-six inches without his heart being effected.

"I wish you could see the place where they have been and moved the said upper Battery. It would make you laugh. They have put it round the corner to the eastward where it would have to blow away seven or eight hundred ton of Squire Trelawny's cliff before it could get a clear shot at a vessel entering the haven. Trusting you will excuse the length of this letter and come down and have a look for yourself,

I remain yours truly A WELL-WISHER."

The clerk in Whitehall who opened this

Digitized by Google Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

unconventional letter passed it up to his chief, who in turn passed it on to the Adjutant-General, who thrust it into a pigeon-hole reserved for such curiosities. Now, as it happened, a week later the Adjutant-General received a visit from a certain Colonel Taubmann of the Royal Artillery, who was just leaving London for Plymouth, to make a tour of inspection through the West, and report on the state of the coast-defences; and during the interview, as the Adjutant-General glanced down the Colonel's list of batteries, his eye fell on the name "Looe"; whereby being reminded of the letter, he pulled it out and read it for his visitor's amusement.

You may say then that Colonel Taubmann had fair warning. Yet it was far from preparing him for the welcome he received, three weeks later, when he drove down to Plymouth to hold his inspection, due notice of which had been received by Captain Pond ten days before.

"What the devil's the meaning of this?" demanded Colonel Taubmann as his post-boy reined up on the knap of the hill above the town. By "this" he meant a triumphal arch, packed with evergreens, and adorned with the motto

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

"*Death to the Invader*" in white letters on a scarlet ground.

He repeated the question to Captain Pond, who appeared a minute later in full regimentals advancing up the hill with his Die-hards behind him and a large and excited crowd in the rear.

"Good-morning, sir!" Captain Pond halted beneath the archway and saluted, beaming with pride and satisfaction and hospitable goodwill. "I am addressing Colonel Taubmann, I believe? Permit me to bid you welcome to Looe, Colonel, and to congratulate you upon this perfect weather. Nature, as one might say, has endued her gayest garb. You have enjoyed a pleasant drive, I hope?"

"What the devil is the meaning of this, sir?" repeated the Colonel.

Captain Pond looked up at the motto and smiled. "The reference is to Bonaparte. Dear me, I trust—I sincerely trust—you did not even for a moment mistake the application? You must pardon us, Colonel. We are awkward perhaps in our country way—awkward no doubt; but hearty, I assure you."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The Colonel, though choleric, was a good-natured man, and too much of a gentleman to let his temper loose, though sorely tried, when at the bottom of the hill the Die-hards halted his carriage that he might receive not only an address from the Doctor as Mayor, but a large bouquet from the hands of the Doctor's four-year-old daughter, little Miss Sophronia, whom her mother led forward amid the plaudits of the crowd. (The Doctor, I should explain, was a married man of but five years' standing, and his wife and he doted on one another and on little Miss Sophronia, their only child.) This item of the programme, carefully rehearsed beforehand, and executed pat on the moment with the prettiest air of impromptu, took Colonel Taubmann so fairly aback that he found himself stammering thanks before he well knew what had happened: and from that moment he was at the town's mercy. Before he could drop back in the chaise, and almost before the Mayor, casting off his robe and throwing it upon the arm of the town-crier, had exchanged his civic for his military rôle, the horses were unharnessed and a dozen able-bodied men tugging at the

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

traces: and so, desperately gripping a stout bunch of scarlet geraniums, Colonel Taubmann was rattled off amid a whirl of cheering through the narrow streets, over the cobbles, beneath arches and strings of flags and flag-bedecked windows, from which the women leaned and showered rice upon him, with a band playing ahead and a rabble shouting astern, up the hill to the battery, where willing hands had wreathed Looe's four eighteen-pounders with trusses of laurel. The very mark moored off for a target had been decorated with an enormous bunch of holly and a motto—decipherable, as Captain Bond, offering his field-glass, pointed out—

Our compliments to Bonyparty:
He'll find us well and likewise hearty!

The moment for resistance, for effective protest, had passed. There was really nothing for the Colonel to do but accept the situation with the best face he could muster. As the chaise drew up alongside the battery, he did indeed cast one wild look around and behind him, but only to catch a bewitching smile from the Mayoress—a young and extremely good-looking woman,

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

with that soft brilliance of complexion which sometimes marks the early days of motherhood. And Captain Pond, with the Doctor and Second Lieutenant Clogg at his elbow, was standing hat in hand by the carriage-step; and the weather was perfect, and every face in the crowd and along the line of the Die-hards so unaffectedly happy, that—to be brief—the Colonel lost his head for the moment and walked through the inspection as in a dream, accepting—or at least seeming to accept—it in the genial holiday spirit in which it was so honestly presented. Bang-Bang! went the eighteen-pounders, and through the smoke Colonel Taubmann saw the pretty Mayoress put up both hands to her ears.

"Damme!" said Gunner Spettigew that evening, "the practice, if a man can speak professionally, was a disgrace. Oke, there, at Number Two gun, must ha' lost his head altogether; for I marked the shot strike the water, and 'twas a good hundred yards short if an inch. 'Hullo!' says I, and glances toward the chap to apologise. If you'll believe me, I'd fairly opened my mouth to tell 'en that nine times out of ten you weren't such a blamed fool as you looked, when a glance

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

at his eye told me he hadn' noticed. The man looked so pleased with everythin', I felt like nudgin' him under the ribs with a rammer: but I dessay 'twas as well I thought better of it. The regular forces be terrible on their dignity at times."

Colonel Taubmann had, however, made a note of the Die-hards' marksmanship, and attempted to tackle Captain Pond on the subject later in the afternoon—albeit gently—over a cup of tea provided by the Mayoress.

"There is a spirit about your men, Captain——" he began.

"You take sugar?" interposed Captain Pond.

"Thank you: three lumps."

"You find it agrees with you? Now in the Duchy, sir, you'll find it the rarest exception for anyone to take sugar."

"As I was saying, there is certainly a spirit about your men——"

"Health and spirits, sir! In my experience the two go together. Health and spirits—the first requisites for success in the military calling, and both alike indispensable! If a soldier enjoy bad health, how can he march? If his liver

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY

be out of order, if his hand tremble, if he see black spots before his eyes, with what accuracy will he shoot? Rheumatism, stone, gout in the system——"

Colonel Taubmann stared. Could he believe his eyes, or had he not, less than an hour ago, seen the Looe Artillery plumping shot into the barren sea a good fifty yards short of their target? Could he trust his ears, or was it in a dream he had listened, just now, to Captain Pond's reasons for marching his men home at a pace reserved, in other regiments, for funerals? — "In my judgment, sir, a step of twenty-four to thirty inches is as much as any man over sixty years of age can indulge in without risk of overstrain, and even so I should prescribe forty-eight steps a minute as the maximum. Some criticism has been levelled at me—not perhaps without excuse —for having enlisted men of that age. It is easy to be wise after the event, but at the time other considerations weighed with me —as for instance that the men were sober and steady-going, and that I knew their ways, which is a great help in commanding a company."

Digitized by Google
Original from HARVARD UNIVERSITY