EVERETT-GREEN EVELYN

TOM TUFTON'S TRAVELS

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I. AN ONLY SON

Good Squire Tufton of Gablehurst lay dying. He had been ailing for many months, knowing his end to be near; and yet, as is so often the case in lingering declines, death was long in coming, so that those about him had grown used to the sight of the strong figure wasted to a shadow, and the face shadowed by the wings of the hovering messenger.

Some members of the household, indeed, had begun to cherish the hope that the master might yet recover, and be seen amongst them once more; but that hope was not shared by the patient himself, nor by the two devoted women who nursed him with tender love.

His wife and daughter were always with him, relieving each other in turn, and occasionally both yielding place to one of the many faithful servants, who were all eager to do what they could for the master they loved; but in his waking hours the squire seldom missed the best-loved faces about him. Rachel and her mother seemed to live their lives about his sick bed, soothing his weariness and pain, and striving with patient resignation to school themselves to submission to the will of God, who was about to take their loved one from them.

And yet they had kept him with them longer than once seemed possible. The bright days of summer were doubtless favourable to the patient. When he could lie with open windows, breathing the pure soft air from woodland and field, he seemed able to make a stand against the grim enemy of human nature. But the summer was now upon the wane; the golden sunshine was obscured by the first driving rains of the approaching equinox; and it seemed to those who watched at the sufferer's bedside that his life was ebbing away as slowly and as steadily as the hours of sunshine in the shortening day.

Today there was a look upon his face which caused Rachel many times to turn anxious and beseeching eyes upon her mother, and yet what she read in the expression of that worn and gentle countenance only confirmed her own impressions.

The Squire lay very still and quiet, dozing as it seemed, whilst the fire crackled cheerfully up the wide chimney, and the rain dashed ceaselessly against the windows. He had not spoken for many hours. There had come into Rachel's heart a terrible fear lest he should never speak again. The shadow on his face looked so gray; the features had taken so strange and pinched a look.

Rachel had seen death before in many humble homes, although it had, so far, not touched any of her own nearest and dearest. She had watched that creeping shadow before now, for her heart always went out to the sick and the suffering, and her feet led her to the homes of those who stood in need of tender sympathy and womanly aid. But when the shadow gathered upon the face of her own loved father, the pressure upon her heart seemed almost more than she could bear. The tears stole down her cheeks, and her eyes sought those of her mother with a glance of almost pitiful appeal.

The leech had stolen into the room, had stood beside the patient, had shaken his head, and stolen away. He knew that his skill, such as it was, could avail nothing now; it was but the question of a few hours.

All day that stupor had continued. Rachel had feared they would never hear his voice, or see the loving glance of his eyes again. She had passed the time between a study of that wasted face, and an eager and restless looking forth from the casement, as though in search of something or somebody who came not.

Often she saw servants and messengers hastening this way and that, exchanging words with each other, and starting off afresh; but the one stalwart figure, for which she gazed with aching eyes,

appeared not, and often a sigh would break from her lips, whilst from time to time a tear forced its way to her eyes.

Dusk was falling now. She could no longer see across the expanse of park land which surrounded Gablehurst. She drew the curtains at last with gentle hands, and piled up the logs upon the hearth. There was a glint of something in her eyes not altogether accounted for by the tears in them. It was a sparkle which bespoke wounded sensibility-something approaching to anger.

"O brother, brother," she whispered, with dry lips, "how can you treat him so? Have you a heart? How terrible a judgment you seem to be seeking to draw down upon yourself! What will the end be like, if this is the beginning?"

The flames leapt up with a sudden ruddy glow. The room had been dark before; now it was suddenly flooded with a brilliant palpitating light. As Rachel turned back to the bed, she saw that her father's eyes had opened. The mists of weakness no longer seemed to cloud his sight. He was looking round him with comprehension and observation.

"Where is Tom?"

It was the question they had been expecting all day. It was in anticipation of this that messengers had been scouring the neighbourhood in search of that young ne'er-do-well, Tom Tufton, the good Squire's unworthy son.

And yet, unworthy as he was-idle, reckless, dissipated, a source of pain and anxiety to father, mother, and sister-young Tom was beloved by the people in and about his home, albeit they all shook their heads over his follies and wildness, and wondered with bated breath what would befall Gablehurst when the young master should be lord of all.

"Where is Tom?" asked the Squire, in a firmer voice than they had thought to hear again.

"Dear father, we have sent for him," answered Rachel soothingly; "he will be here anon."

"I would speak with Tom," said the Squire. "There are things I needs must say to him ere I close my eyes for ever. Perchance I have already delayed too long. Yet I have waited and waited, hoping for signs of seriousness in one so soon to lose a parent. But seriousness and Tom have no dealings together, it would seem. God forgive us if it be any lack on our part that has made our son the wild young blade that he seems like to be!"

A little sob broke from the mother's lips. It was the bitterest thought of all to the parents; and yet they could not see wherein they had erred. They had striven to bring up the boy well. He had had the same training as his father before him. There had been no lack of firmness, and no lack of love, but the result, as at present seen, was terrible to the father and mother.

The squire heard the stifled sound of grief, and put out his hand to clasp that of his wife.

"Remember he is the child of many prayers," he said. "We must believe that those prayers will be answered. We must have faith in God."

"I will try-I will try," answered the poor mother; "but oh, my husband, how shall I hope to cope with that wild spirit when you are gone?"

It was a hard question to answer, for the Squire himself had found his son more than a match for him many a time. It was true that he had done all that man can do to protect wife and daughter from the reckless extravagance of an ungoverned nature; but he knew well that Tom was not one to see himself tamely set aside. There were difficulties ahead for these two women, and the future of his son lay like a load upon his spirit.

"I would speak with Tom," he said, after a brief pause, during which Rachel administered a draught of the cordial which did most to support the failing strength of the dying man. Just at this moment the lamp of life seemed to be glowing with fresh strength. It was but the last flicker before extinction, and the wife knew it, but Rachel experienced a glow of hope that perhaps it might mean a temporary improvement.

"I will go and see if he has come," she said. "Perchance they have found and brought him by now."

She glided from the room, just giving one backward glance in so doing, when the expression on her mother's face brought a quick spasm of pain to her heart. There was a strange conflict of feeling going on within her, as she trod the corridor with swift steps, and passed rapidly down into the hall beneath.

This hall was a great square place, with a glowing fire illuminating it, the dancing shadows falling grotesquely upon the pictured Tuftons that lined the walls, and upon the weapons which hung, together with trophies of game, between them. In the centre of the hall was an oak table, heavily carved about the legs, and at this table stood a tall, broad-shouldered young man, clad in the stout leathern breeches and full coat of the period, tossing off a steaming tankard of some spirituous liquor, although the flush on his face, and the slightly unsteady way in which he held the vessel, seemed to indicate that he stood in no further need of strong drink.

Rachel came swiftly down the staircase, her footfall making scarcely any sound upon the shallow polished steps.

"Tom!" she exclaimed, in a voice full of repressed feeling, "how can you delay drinking here, when your father upstairs is dying, and is asking for you?"

"Dying, quotha!" returned the young man, with a foolish laugh; "methinks I have heard that tale somewhat too often to be scared by it now, sweet sister!" and he patted her shoulder with a gesture from which she instinctively recoiled.

"Tom, have you no heart? He will not last the night through. Got you not our messages, sent hours ago? How can you show yourself so careless-so cruel? But tarry no longer now you are here. He has asked for you twice. Take care lest you dally too long!"

Something in Rachel's face and in her manner of speaking seemed to make an impression upon the young roisterer. Tom was not drunk, although he had been spending the day with comrades who seasoned every sentence with an oath, and flavoured every pastime with strong drink. A man with a weaker head might have been overcome by the libations in which he had indulged, but Tom was a seasoned vessel by that time, and he could stand a good deal.

He was in a noisy and reckless mood, but he had the command of his faculties. He saw that his sister was speaking with conviction, and he prepared to do her bidding.

At the same time, Tom was not seriously alarmed about his father. The Squire's long illness had bred in him a sort of disbelief in any fatal termination. He had made up his mind that women and doctors were all fools together, and frightened themselves for nothing. He had resolved against letting himself be scared by their long faces and doleful prognostications, and had gone on in his wonted courses with reckless bravado. He was not altogether an undutiful son. He had some affection for both father and mother. But his affection was not strong enough to keep him from following out his own wishes. He had long been a sort of leader amongst the young men of the place and neighbourhood, and he enjoyed the reputation he held of being a daring young blade, not far inferior in prowess and recklessness to those young bloods about town, reports of whose doings sometimes reached the wilds of Essex, stirring up Tom Tufton's ambition to follow in their wake.

He always declared that he meant no harm, and did no harm, to any. The natives of the place were certainly proud of him, even if they sometimes fell to rating and crying shame upon him. He knew his popularity; he knew that he had a fine figure and a handsome face; he knew that he had the sort of address which carried him through his scrapes and adventures with flying colours. He found the world a pleasant place, and saw no reason why he should not enjoy himself in his own way whilst he was young. Some day he would marry and sober down, and live as his fathers had done before him; but, meantime, he meant to have his fling.

There were other Tuftons who had done the like before him, as his father knew to his cost. Several times had the estate been sadly impoverished by the demands made upon it by some of the wild younger brothers, who had bequeathed (as it seemed) their characteristics to this young scion, Tom. The Squire himself had been living with great economy, that he might pay off a mortgage which

had been contracted by his own father, in order to save the honour of the family, which had been imperilled by the extravagance of his brother.

Tom never troubled himself about these things. He cared little how his father scraped and saved, if he had but money in his pockets sufficient for the needs of the day. Extravagance in money was less Tom's foible than recklessness in his exploits, and a daring disregard of authority. No doubt he would have made away with money had he possessed it; but as everybody knew that he did not possess a long purse, and that the Squire would not be likely to pay his son's debts of honour, he was saved from the temptation of plunging deeply into debt. People did not care to trust him too far.

So, as he climbed the shallow stairs three at once, he told himself that his father had no need to speak severely to him. He had only been as other young men, and had not got into serious debt or trouble. Tom had almost persuaded himself, in fact, that he had been on the whole a very estimable sort of youth, and he entered the sick room with something of a swaggering air, as much as to say that he had no cause for shame.

But at the sight which greeted his eyes, as they met those of the sick man, a sobering change came over him. He had seen death sometimes, and the sight of it had always painfully affected him. He hated to be brought up short, as it were, and forced to see the serious, the solemn, the awe inspiring in life. He wanted to live in the present; he did not want to be forced to face the inevitable future.

"Tom," said his father's voice, in weak but distinct accents, "you have come, and it is well. I have things to say to you which may not longer be delayed. Take that chair beside me. I would see your face once again."

Tom would far rather have lingered in the shadows of the background; but his mother had risen and motioned him to take her place. He sat down rather awkwardly; and mother and daughter, without leaving the room, retired to the background, and sat together upon a distant settle, holding each other by the hand.

"Tom," said the dying man, "I have sent for you because there are things which I would rather you should hear from my lips than learn from others after my death."

"Oh, you will not die yet, father; you will be better soon," said Tom uneasily, letting his glance wander restlessly round the room to avoid the searching gaze of those luminous eyes.

"Life and death are in God's hands, boy; and I think my summons has come. Tom, have you been counting upon being master here when I am gone?"

"I don't know that I ever thought much about it," answered Tom, rather taken aback; "but I suppose I come after you."

"Yes, Tom, you come after me; but not immediately. I have so settled my affairs that your mother remains here and administers the estate until you are five and twenty-that will be three years hence. By that time the burdens will be cleared away-and I fear you would never clear them off were you in power. By that time it will be possible for you to come and live here (I trust a wiser and a better man), whilst the estate can bear the charge upon it of a sufficient income to be paid to your mother and sister to live in comfort at Little Gables, which has been willed absolutely to your mother and to Rachel after her. At present the estate could not bear that drain-unless only to get into fresh difficulties; but three more years will put things right. During those three years, Tom, you will not be master of Gablehurst. You will have no more power than you have had in my lifetime. But I hope and trust you will be a dutiful son to your mother, and will cause her no heart-breaking anxieties, and oppose no vexatious obstacles to her management of the estate."

It cannot be denied that Tom was taken aback at this. He had naturally supposed that he would succeed to his father's position as squire of Gablehurst without let or hindrance; and it was a decided blow to him to feel that he was still to occupy a subordinate position, squire only in name. It was all very well when his father lived-that was right and natural enough-but to see his mother ruling, and himself submitting to her rule! – that was a thing he had not bargained for. He felt as though he would be the laughing-stock of all his friends.

The father saw the look upon his face, and it pained him.

"You do not like the arrangement, Tom; and yet I know it is the best which can be made."

"Oh yes, in a way. I see what you mean. I don't understand scraping and paring myself; yet, of course, it will be best to get the mortgage paid off once and for all. I can see that well enough. But I confess it will be poor fun living at Gablehurst as a little boy tied to his mother's apron strings. I would rather go away altogether, and see the world for myself."

"Well, Tom," answered the father in the same low, even tones, "your mother and I have sometimes asked ourselves seriously whether you might not do better away from home; whether it might not be the best thing we could do for you to sever you from your present companions, and see if you could not find better ones elsewhere."

"I have no fault to find with my friends," said Tom quickly.

"No, my son, I fear not. But we have much to complain of."

"I don't see what!" cried young Tom rather hotly.

"That is the worst of it. Did you see greater harm, our anxieties would be less. But what are we to think of these cruel sports in which you indulge, these scenes of vice and drunkenness where you are constantly found? Even the Sabbath is not sacred to you. What is this story we hear of you-that no girl may even go to church without paying 'Tom Tufton's toll' at the lych gate?"

Tom broke into a sudden laugh.

"They like that toll well enough, father, I can tell you; else they could go round the other way. Why, you yourself salute the farmers' little wenches on the cheek sometimes-I have seen you do it; and why not I the older ones?"

The Squire looked at his son with mournful intensity of gaze.

"Tom, Tom, I think sometimes that thou dost err more from thoughtlessness than from wickedness; but, my son, thoughtlessness, if carried to excess, may become wickedness, and may breed vice. I verily believe that in half thy pranks thou dost mean no great harm; but thou art growing to man's estate, Tom. It is time that thou didst put away childish things. What is pardoned to youth, may not so easily be pardoned to manhood. Have a care, Tom, have a care! Oh, my son, remember that the day will come when thou too must lie face to face with death, even as I do tonight. Let not the record upon which thou wilt then look be one of vice and profligacy. It needs must be that in such a moment our lives seem deeply stained by sin; but strive so to live that thou mayest at least be able to say, 'I have striven to do my duty-the Lord pardon all my imperfections!' For, Tom, if thou dost persevere in careless and evil courses, it may be that the power to ask the Lord's forgiveness may pass from thee; and if it comes to such a pass, may the Lord have mercy upon thy wretched soul!"

The dying man stopped short, a spasm of suffering passing over his face. The thought had been a terrible one to him. Yet he had been bred up in the somewhat stern Puritan tenets, and it was not in his creed to speak so much of the everlasting mercy as the everlasting judgment.

Tom put the cup of cordial to his father's lips, himself somewhat sobered by the words heard and the visions called up. He was neither callous nor hard-hearted; and his father was dying. In that moment he really longed to turn over a new leaf, and cut adrift from former temptations.

"Then, father, let me go," he said; "let me try afresh in a new place. I could not do it here perhaps; but I think I could elsewhere."

"If that be so, my son, then thou hadst better go," said the dying man. "I would that thou couldst have remained to be the stay and support of thy mother; but if not, then it may be thou wilt be better elsewhere. I have thought often of this. I and thy mother have talked it over many times. I have even made provision for it, as she will tell thee and show thee. But, Tom, if thou go hence, linger not in London, where, I fear me, thou wouldst soon be ruined body and soul. There be stirring things passing in the great world beyond the seas. Take ship, and go and see some of these things. Linger not in idleness in the haunts of vice. The world is a bigger place than thou canst know. Go forth and see it, and learn and find thy manhood's strength."

Tom's eyes glistened at the thought. It had never occurred to him as possible to leave his native place. Now it suddenly seemed as though a new life were opening out before him.

"Where shall I go, father?" he asked.

The Squire was silent for a while. He had exhausted himself by the energy with which he had spoken hitherto. When next he opened his lips his words came more slowly and languidly.

"If I were in your place, boy, I should go forth and see what is doing at the seat of war. I love not war for its own sake. It is a cruel and terrible thing. Yet there be times when it becomes a righteous thing; and methinks England is doing right to ally herself with the foes of France to crush the tyranny of that proud nation, whose king would fain be monarch of all Europe if he could. I know not whether men untrained to arms may enlist themselves in the ranks of the great Duke of Marlborough, whose genius is winning renown for England's sons. But were I young, methinks I would go forth and see some of the great things that are doing in the world; and it might well be that a fine grown young fellow, with stalwart limbs, a firm seat on a horse, and a knowledge of sword play and the use of firearms, might even find a place in the ranks of the great general. Whether or not, he would see life as he had never seen it before, and learn lessons which might make a man of him all his life."

The prospect was attractive and exciting for Tom, who loved a fight as he loved nothing else, and who had a very exalted idea of his own prowess and skill in arms. He could wrestle and throw better than any antagonist he had ever met, and was no novice with pistol or sword. He had the good opinion of his powers which naturally came to one who had seldom or never found his match in his native place; and already in imagination he saw himself riding at the head of a troop of soldiers, and winning laurels on all sides by his bravery and address.

The Squire's voice had sunk into the silence of exhaustion. He had closed his eyes, and only opened them again after a long interval. Their glance met that of young Tom, and the father seemed to read something of what was passing in his mind.

"Tom, lad," he said feebly, reaching forth his hand and trying to grasp the great horny fist of his son, "strive to be humble. Think not too well of thyself. Seek counsel from God in all things. Be not wise in thine own eyes. If thou art self willed, vain, and headstrong, grief and pain will be thy lot. Seek first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness-"

But here the voice failed; and Tom, his quick nature touched and sobered, rose hastily, and, with a muttered promise of quick return, threw himself out of the room, as though afraid to trust himself there longer. He was such a stranger to keen emotion, that he fled from before it with a sense of dread.

The wife came back to her husband's bedside. He looked into her face and said, faintly:

"The lad hath yet a warm heart."

"I have always felt that," she answered quickly. "But oh, my husband, why send him forth to the perils of war?"

"In the hope that the stern discipline of a soldier's life may fit him for the duties which will be his at home. The lad needs above all things to learn to obey. Till he has mastered the lesson of submission, he can never be fit to hold the reins of government. That lesson he will learn most quickly in the life of the camp. There he will be no great man, but an overgrown boy to be taught and drilled. Young Tom needs to find his own level. That is what he never will do at home. He has lorded it over the neighbourhood too long already."

"But if he leaves us and goes forth into the world, who will care for his immortal soul?" asked the mother, with tears in her eyes.

"Has he listened to our words of admonition and warning at home?" asked the Squire, with a strange look in his glazing eyes. "Nay, wife, I feel as I lie here dying, that the life of the soul is something we poor frail human creatures must not try too much to touch. The Spirit of God will work in His own time. We may pray and weep and plead before God for an erring son, and we believe our prayers will be answered; but it will be in His time, not in our own. And time and place are no

barriers with Him. He will do for Tom, I will not doubt it, what we have failed to do with all our pains and care."

The mother wept silently-for the husband whose life was ebbing away; for the son over whose heart she seemed to have so little control; for herself, soon to be left alone in the world, with only her daughter for her prop and stay. She was not a weak or helpless creature. She had been in her husband's confidence, and had been his helpmeet throughout their married life. She was well able to carry on single-handed the course of action he had pursued through his long rule at Gablehurst; yet not the less for this did she feel the desolation of her approaching widowhood; and it seemed an additional sorrow (although she recognized its necessity) that Tom was also to be taken from her.

A mother's love for her only son is a very sacred and compelling thing. Tom had not been a comfort or support to his parents; he was likely, if he remained, to be a source of endless trouble to his mother during her reign at the old house; yet none the less did it seem to her a heart-breaking thing to have to part from him.

The light about them grew more dim as the fire burned with a steady glow instead of with dancing flames. Rachel had lighted a lamp, yet it did little to illumine the great room. The sick man lay as though asleep.

Presently the mother spoke in a whisper to her daughter.

"Fetch Tom," she said.

Rachel knew what that meant, and her heart beat to suffocation. She crept from the room, and returned with her brother, and they stood side by side at one side of the bed, whilst their mother knelt at the other.

Once the dying man opened his eyes, and looked from one to another of those about him, though whether he saw them they did not know. Then his eyes closed, he gave a sigh, and turned upon his pillows.

The Squire of Gablehurst had passed to his last account.

CHAPTER II. OUT INTO THE WORLD

"You had better let me go, mother. I shall do no good here."

Tom stood before his mother with a flush upon his handsome face-a flush that was one partly of shame, partly of anger, with a dash of excitement and eagerness thrown in.

His mother was in tears. She had been uttering words of reproach and sorrow; for after a period of wonderful steadiness immediately succeeding his father's death, young Tom had broken out into his wild ways again, and her fond hopes of seeing him grow into her comfort and stay were dashed ruthlessly to the ground again. The impression made upon him by the death of the Squire was growing dim now. His old companions were tempting him back to their ranks, and he had neither strength of purpose nor the resolute desire to resist their overtures.

"You had better let me go. You know my father said it. I have never done any good here, and I never shall. I want to see the world, and I see nothing here. Gablehurst and Gablethorpe are too narrow for me. I will go to foreign lands, and come back to you with a better record to show. I think I could make a fine soldier, but in this miserable little place a man has no scope."

"A man has scope to become a good landlord, a kind master, a God-fearing head of his household," said the mother, with a sigh in her voice.

But Tom interrupted impatiently:

"That is all very well when one is the master. Perhaps when I come back I can be all that myself; but now I am a dummy-a nobody, and they all make game of me for being a mock squire! My father himself knew that no man of spirit would stand such a humiliating arrangement. If he could not trust me to succeed him, he did well to arrange for me to go elsewhere. He said you would tell me what provision he had made for me to do so."

The moment had come that the mother had so long dreaded. She had to face the separation from her son, and to send him forth into the world alone. But the experiences of the past weeks had taught her that perhaps this was the best thing that could happen to young Tom. In Gablethorpe he had no chance of getting away from evil associates. In a different place he might find friends of a different stamp.

She rose and silently unlocked a great oaken press, clamped with iron, a place where the Squire kept all his valuable papers, and some of the heirlooms which had come down to him from his forefathers. Tom looked on with curious eyes. He had always experienced, from childhood upwards, a certain sense of awe when that press was unlocked and thrown open. He now observed his mother's actions with great curiosity.

"Come, Tom, and lift down that box, for it is heavy," she said; and Tom came forward and carefully lifted down a small iron-bound chest, which, for its size, was in truth remarkably heavy. This box was placed upon the table, whilst the mother locked up the safe once more.

Then she selected a small key from a number in a bag at her girdle, and offered it to her son.

"There, Tom, the box and its contents are yours. You will find within five hundred golden pieces-guineas every one of them, bright and new from the mint. Your father saved them up for you for many long years, in case it should ever become needful that you should leave home to see the world. Always it was his hope that you would remain at home to be his comfort and stay; but if that could not be, then would he wish to send forth his only son in such a manner as beseemed his condition in life."

Tom's eyes sparkled. A flush mounted to his cheek, and his hand shook a little as he put the key into the lock.

It was all true. There lay, in neat rolls, more money than he had ever seen in all his life-a fortune for a prince, as it seemed to him in his youthful inexperience. The admonitions and counsel of his mother fell on deaf ears. Tom's busy brain was planning a thousand ways in which his wealth might

be expended. He would go forth. He would see the world. He would win fame and fortune. He would never return to Gablehurst until he brought with him a name which should cause the ears of those who knew him to tingle by reason of the fame he had won!

"Nay, but boast not of the future, my son," pleaded the mother, with a note of anxiety in her voice; "and be not over confident. The times are perilous, and you are but an untried youth. Boasting is not well."

But Tom could not listen. He laughingly repeated his boast, and was off to the stables forthwith, to pick for himself the best horses for his ride to London. For, of course, he must first go there, to fit himself out for his journey beyond seas, and find out where the army of the Duke was at present to be found.

Vague rumours of the great victory had penetrated to the wilds of Essex; but where Blenheim was, and what the victory was all about, the rustics knew as little as "Old Kaspar" of the immortal ballad of later days. The squires were little less vague in their ideas as to the scope and purpose of the war. It was to abase the power of France-so much they knew, and was unpopular with the Tories of Jacobite leanings, for the reason that the French king was sheltering the dethroned monarch of the Stuart line. But then the great Duke who was winning all these victories was said to be a stanch Tory himself; so that it was all rather confusing, and Tom was just as ignorant and ill-informed on all these topics as the hinds who tilled his fields. He had never cared to inform himself of what was passing in the world, and the newspapers had always seemed to him very dull reading.

Now, however, he wished he knew a little more; but he told himself that he should quickly pick up everything in London. His heart beat at the thought of seeing that wonderful city; and although he carelessly promised his mother not to linger there long, he was by no means sure that he would not make a good stay, and learn the fashions of the gay world before he crossed the sea.

He was quite of the opinion that, clad in a new suit of fashionable make, he could ruffle it with the best of the young bloods about town. He was now all in a fever to be off. He selected for his attendant a young groom, with whom he had long been more intimate than his father approved. His mother in vain besought him to take faithful old John, or at least Peter, whom they had known from boyhood; but Tom would have nobody but young Robin, and declared that he and Robin, mounted upon Wildfire and Wildgoose-two of the best and fleetest horses ever reared in the meadows round Gablehurst-could distance any highwaymen who might try to stop them, or shoot them down if they could not shake them off.

For these were days when travelling was none too safe, and the transit of the heavy bag of golden guineas made an additional source of danger. For there were highway robbers and footpads, who seemed to have a seventh sense for the scenting of gold. It was probable that they had spies and confederates in all sorts of places, and that they were warned beforehand when travellers rode with money and valuables upon their persons.

It was, therefore, small wonder that mother and sister looked with somewhat sinking hearts at the handsome young fellow, in his workman-like, if rustic, riding dress, as he sat upon his horse at the hall door, giving a last look round him at the little crowd gathered to see him ride away.

"You will write and tell us of your safe arrival in London; and be very careful how you cross Epping Forest," said the mother.

And young Tom answered gaily, – "Oh, never fear for me. Wildfire and I can ride through and ride down anything! I will send a letter from London, but after that you must not look for anything but silence. When men cross the seas, and live amid battles and marches, letters can scarce be written, still less safely carried."

He stooped from his saddle, and once more kissed both mother and sister. Then the servants and tenants crowded round, full of good wishes for a prosperous journey and a happy return; and Tom answered them with gay words of promise. He would come back again, covered with fame and glory. They would hear of his doings before they saw him again, and when he came back he would

"take toll again of all his old playmates;" and so saying, he looked laughingly round upon the blushing girls, who had paid Tom Tufton's toll many a time, between jest and earnest, by the lych gate.

They all admired and liked the handsome lad, even though his ways were more wild and reckless than the elders could approve. But all declared that it would do him all the good in the world to go out and see life in other places. It would cool his hot blood, and teach him wisdom; and, after all, lads always would be lads till manhood's cares and lessons had tamed them.

So Tom rode away in high spirits, Robin following on Wildgoose, with the saddlebags strapped in front of him. They did not take much with them, as Tom meant to equip himself in town, and was wearing his finest home-made suit upon the journey. He had his precious guineas carefully secured about his person. They were heavy, it is true, but he liked to feel the weight of them, and to know that they were safe.

For many miles he was constantly receiving hails from friends and comrades; sometimes a band of young men would ride with him for a few miles, and then, wishing him good luck, return home again. At some houses which he passed, bright eyes would look out from the windows, and kerchiefs would be waved in greeting and farewell.

Tom may perhaps be forgiven for regarding himself somewhat in the light of a young prince riding forth to see the world. Everything in his past life had combined to give him a good opinion of himself, and make him fancy himself irresistible alike with men and women. For he was undoubtedly the strongest and handsomest youth in his own small world.

He sang and whistled as he rode along in the crisp morning air. October had dashed the trees with vivid tints of red and gold. A crisp touch of frost was in the air, and though the noonday sun was bright and hot, there were indications of approaching winter plain to be seen.

They baited their horses for an hour at a little inn where Tom was slightly known; but when he spoke of pressing on, and asked where the next halting place was, mine host advised his remaining where he was till morning, as he was now close to the forest boundaries, and not only were the paths somewhat intricate, but there were always footpads, if not worse, lurking in the recesses of the wood, ready to pounce upon unwary travellers, especially after sundown.

"And the light goes quickly beneath the trees. For my part, I would rather travel by the waxing light of early morn than by the fading glow of an autumn evening."

Tom had meant to arrive at this inn full two hours before he did; for he had allowed his friends to hinder him on his way, and had stopped all too often to exchange a word with some maiden watching from a window or by a gate. He had intended reaching a little village known to Robin, situated in the forest itself, before night fell; and even as it was, he was by no means prepared to abandon the hope of getting there.

Robin was not afraid of darkness or of footpads. He had a very good knowledge of the forest, and was eager to press on. It was still quite light, and Tom was in all the fervour of his first impetuosity. So, as soon as the horses were baited and themselves refreshed, they mounted once more, and pushed gaily along, feeling themselves quite equal to repel any wretched footpads who might try to assault them.

As for the regular highway robbers, well armed and well mounted, they favoured better-frequented routes than this. Open heaths were their favourite hunting grounds, though they liked well enough to lie in hiding in the forests when they had brought too much notoriety upon themselves. These unfrequented forest paths did not offer them sufficient hope of booty to attract them in large numbers, and Tom had no fear of meeting an enemy too strong for him.

But security is not always safety, as Tom was destined to find to his cost. In spite of their best efforts, and the gallant response made by their good horses, dusk fell whilst they were still threading the tortuous forest paths, and Robin was fain to admit that he would be puzzled to find the way in the dark; indeed, he was not certain that he was on the right track now.

It was impossible to ride fast in the gathering darkness, and upon so rough a way; and Tom had more than once suggested that they should make their bed in some hollow tree, and wait for daylight before pursuing their journey.

They had halted in an open place, and were just discussing the matter, when-whiz! – a bullet grazed the flank of Wildgoose, and the mettlesome creature reared straight into the air, threatening to fall backwards over his rider.

"Mark ho!" cried a loud voice, and there was a crackling of the underwood all round.

"It is the footpads!" cried Robin. "I have beard that call before;" and in a moment the travellers had their pistols out, and were warily awaiting the first sign of attack.

It was not long in coming. Three men with blackened faces sprang out from different places, and the crackling of the underwood showed that more were lurking out of sight.

Tom took steady aim, and brought down the foremost villain at the first shot; but Robin was not so lucky. He winged his man, but did not drop him, and the next moment four stalwart figures had sprung out to the aid of their comrades, and the travellers were surrounded.

Tom set his teeth hard, a great fury in his heart. He took aim again, and another of his assailants dropped as he pulled the trigger; then, setting spurs to Wildfire, who was well-nigh distracted with terror at the noise and the flash in the darkness, he rode clean over the man who had sprung at his bridle rein, and calling to Robin to follow him, he sped away in the darkness at a pace which was risk to life and limb.

The footpads seemed taken aback by this move, for they had reckoned that a headlong flight into the recesses of the forest would be too great a peril to be risked; and indeed it was a headstrong course to take. But Tom was in a headstrong mood, and his horse was beside himself with fear. Both man and beast were well used to reckless riding, and Tom had eyes like a cat, whilst Wildfire had both the wonderful sight and wonderful instinct of his race. Tom lay along the horse's back, now on this side, now on that, dodging, swaying, manoeuvring, in a fashion which showed marvellous horsemanship, and all the while listening eagerly for the sound of Wildgoose's following steps.

But he heard nothing. The silence of the forest was unbroken save for the noise he made himself. It became plain at last that he was alone. Robin and Wildgoose had either lost his track, or had not followed him.

And a sudden doubt surged into Tom's brain as to whether or not Robin had betrayed him to the footpads. Was it not Robin who had connived at all the halts upon the way in the morning, Robin who had advised pushing on, and had undertaken to find the way by day or night? Robin was a son of the forest himself. Might he not have friends amongst these very outlaws? Had not his father warned him before this that he did not trust Robin, and did not like his son's intimacy with the young man?

All these thoughts came surging into Tom's brain as he rode on through the dark forest. He was loath to harbour doubts of his servant and friend; but he could not lay them to rest, do what he would.

But for these doubts he would have ridden back in search of his comrade. As it was, he set his teeth somewhat grimly, and rode onwards. Robin had no money about him. He would escape with the loss of his horse, and could follow his master on foot to London if he chose. It was not worth while to risk life and fortune in attempting the rescue of a fellow who might be a villain and a traitor.

It seemed a heartless thing to do to leave Robin to his fate, but for all that Tom could not make up his mind to turn back and search for him; for he felt it was quite probable he would only fall into a cunningly-devised ambush. But he could not ride all night through the forest. He might fetch a circuit all unknowingly, and find himself in the midst of the footpads again. The moon had now risen, and was giving a faint light. By its aid Tom was able to examine the nature of the ground about him, and presently saw at a short distance a dark, arched cavity in the face of a mass of gravelly rock which rose up on his left hand. It had the appearance of a cave, and Tom got off and carefully examined the loose shale round the mouth of it for the trace of recent footsteps. He did not want to fall into the hands of a band of marauders.

But he could not see any trace of footmarks, either of man or beast; and the cave was tempting to one who had ridden since early morning. There was a pool of water close at hand, where his horse eagerly stooped to quench his thirst; and Tom loosed the girths, and left the creature to browse at will; for Wildfire was as tame as a dog, and knew his master's voice well. He could be trusted not to wander far away, and to come back at the sound of whistle or call. Indeed, it was probable that he would presently find his way into the cave, and lie by his master's side.

Tom found that he could make himself comfortable enough in the little cavern. It was not very deep, but it afforded protection from the cold night wind; and a great heap of leaves at the end bespoke the fact that other travellers had utilized the place before. Tom had a little food in his wallet, which he munched in silence, feeling his spirits somewhat damped by the events of the last hour, and yet he was as fully resolved as ever to see life and taste of adventure before he returned home again.

His adventures had begun rather before he had bargained; but, after all, that was the way of life. He would learn in future to trust nobody and to believe in nobody. All men were liars-did not the Scriptures say as much? It was as well to learn that lesson soon as late. He would not waste a regret upon Robin. His horse was the one friend in whom he would trust. He at least would never betray or desert him.

Presently Wildfire, having eaten his fill of herbage, came and snuffed at the cave's mouth with a whinny of inquiry. On hearing Tom's voice, he stepped lightly in, and after standing for a while beside his master, lay down between him and the opening to the cave, so that Tom was well shielded from the keen night air, and could sleep as snugly as in his bed at home.

Sleep he did, and soundly too; for the day's ride had wearied him, and he was of the age and temperament when slumber is seldom wooed in vain. How long he slept he knew not; but he was aroused at length by a movement of Wildfire. The horse had lifted his head, and was snorting slightly as if in anxiety or fear.

Tom looked out. The gray of dawn was in the sky, and between him and the light stood a tall, motionless figure, outlined clearly in the cave's mouth by the coming glow in the east. It was the figure of a man. He held in his hand a great horse pistol, and was evidently studying with some curiosity the sleeping figures whose slumbers he had disturbed.

Tom would have sprung to his feet, but the man called out in a clear, sharp voice:

"Keep where you are, or I fire!"

The hot blood surged into Tom's cheeks; but for once prudence took the upper hand of valour, and he remained sitting upright behind the still recumbent figure of Wildfire. He had restrained the horse from rising by the pressure of his hand. He knew by hearsay that robbers seldom fired upon a good horse if there were a chance of making a capture of so valuable an acquisition. He might find shelter behind the body of the good steed yet.

"What do you want with me?" he asked, speaking as calmly as he could, but bitterly regretting the carelessness which had omitted to load again his pistol after the brush with the footpads of the previous night. He had meant to do it before falling asleep, but drowsiness had come quickly upon him, and he was now practically at the mercy of the man who stood in the cave's mouth, for there was no way of escape save past him.

"I only want your money, my young friend," answered the man, whose face was becoming more visible every moment in the growing light. "I doubt not you have a bag of gold pieces somewhere upon your person. Give them up to me, and you shall go your way in peace."

The veins on Tom's forehead swelled with rage and impotent fury. He set his teeth, and his voice sounded hoarse and choked.

"You will have to take my life first," he said.

"Nay, but that is folly," remonstrated the elder man, who had a rather fine face, and much of the air and manner of a gentleman, as Tom was quick to perceive. "I desire no man's death; I only

ask for his gold, which is, after all, but the dross of the earth; and life for a fine young fellow like yourself is full of joyous promise, even though he carry no purse with him."

"I tell you," answered Tom, in the same stubborn way, "that if you take my money, you will have first to take my life. Here have I been leading the life of a dog or of a boor all these years-squire's son though men call me. I have seen nothing, I have learned nothing; I have consorted with low hinds; I have been no better than the swine in the fields. Now at last I have my liberty and a bag of gold given to me. I am sent out to see the world, and to enjoy life. Take my gold from me, and I must perforce go back to the old life. I would choose death sooner. Therefore, sir, let us fight like men for this same bag of gold; for I will defend it with every drop of my blood!"

And in spite of the peril of so doing, Tom sprang to his feet and stood facing his antagonist with the air of a man whose blood is up, and who will prove no mean adversary.

"Come now, I like that spirit," said the other. "In these days of dandies and ruffled courtiers, stuffed with fine-sounding words but puling cowards at heart, it refreshes the spirit to meet a youngster of your sort. Tell me your name, young master, and let us talk this matter over together. I have ever sought to mingle mercy and discretion with the need for making a livelihood out of my fellowmen."

Tom was surprised into a short laugh at this unexpected address.

"I am Tom Tufton of Gablehurst," he began, but was quickly interrupted.

"What! the son of the good Squire of Gablehurst! Lad, is this the truth?"

"Ay, verily," answered Tom, somewhat taken aback. "Did you know my father? Alas! he is dead."

"Dead! What! Is that so? Then the world is the poorer by one good man. And you are his son, and called by his name! What are you doing away from home? Are you not master there?"

"No," answered Tom, with a flush on his cheek. "I am to see the world first. My mother will rule for me till I be five and twenty. I have money given me, and I am to seek fame and fortune afar. That is what I said to you. Take my money from me, and I must needs return to the life I have left-and I would sooner die!"

"Tut, tut, boy. Speak not so wildly; nor think that I will touch a penny of your good father's gold. I am not sunk so low as that. Did he ever speak to you of Captain Jack, whom he once saved from the gallows?"

Tom shook his head. His father had not been a talking man.

"It was years ago now," said the man thoughtfully, "and I did try for long after that to lead a different life; but in the end I came back to the one I love the best-the free life of the road. But believe me, Tom Tufton, your father's act of clemency has never been forgotten. I too have shown mercy many a time and oft. I have my own code of honour and chivalry. I want money badly enough; but I will touch none of yours. I want a good horse; but I will lay no finger on yours. Go your way in peace, and drink your fill of the world's pleasures; but remember that if the time should come when you want a friend and a place of refuge, ask at The Three Ravens tavern on the skirts of this forest for news of Captain Jack, and whensoever you may come to me, I will share my last penny and my last crust with you, for love of the good man your father, who saved my unworthy life."

The man spoke with visible emotion and Tom was moved also, he scarce knew why. A sudden sense of liking-almost of love-sprang up in his heart towards this freebooter. He laid a hand upon his arm.

"Take me clear of this forest," he said, "and I will leave Wildfire in your hands as a token of gratitude. I have bethought me often that in London town he would pine his heart away. He loves the green glades of the woodland, and the free air of the fields and forests. Methinks you would be a kind master; and he is a loving and faithful creature. I might even lose him in London, where, they tell me, rogues abound. I would sooner leave him in your hands; and if I want him back some day, I will ask him of Captain Jack."

The bargain was struck. Captain Jack accompanied Tom to the farthest limits of the forest, giving him meantime much information about life in London, and astonishing him by the intimate knowledge he possessed of life in every grade of society.

Tom listened in wonder and amaze; but Captain Jack answered his questions in such a way as to leave him little the wiser. He managed, however, to make friends with Wildfire almost as quickly as with his master; for the two men rode by turns, and Captain Jack's horsemanship was of that finished kind which every horse understands and responds to.

"You are right not to take such a creature into London," said Captain Jack, after trying the paces of Wildfire over a stretch of springy turf. "Some sharper would soon make away with him; but it will be a clever man who filches him from me! I will guard him as my greatest treasure, and he will be worth more to me than the guineas you carry in your bag."

"And his brother is somewhere in the forest," said Tom; and he told the story of Robin and Wildgoose, to which Captain Jack listened with a look of amusement.

"Clever fellow! clever fellow!" he muttered, "he will make one of the brotherhood one of these days!"

Tom began to realize, with a grim sense of humour, that he was aiding and abetting the mischievous schemes of some notorious highwayman, and that his father's two favourite young horses, by which he set such store, were destined to become the property of the gentlemen of the road!

At the limits of the forest Tom and his companion parted. He had been put upon the highroad, and given careful instructions as to the way he must take. Moreover, Captain Jack had given him a password, which, he said, would protect him from molestation; although a traveller on foot was not in the same danger as one who rode a fine horse.

It cost Tom a pang to turn his back on Wildfire; but he felt so certain that the horse would pine in London, or be stolen away, that he preferred to leave him in the hands of a kind master who would treat him well.

"Take your fill of life. Keep open eyes, and believe every man to be a rogue till he prove himself an honest fellow," was the parting advice of his companion, for whom he had already taken rather a strong liking; "and if ever town becomes too hot, come and join Captain Jack; and if ever you should chance to knock up against Lord Claud, tell him that his old master sends him greeting and felicitations, and is watching his career with admiration and delight."

With that the captain turned and galloped away; and Tom was left looking after him, wondering what the meaning of this last charge could be.

CHAPTER III. IN GAY LONDON TOWN

Tom Tufton walked through Bishopsgate, and along the crowded dirty thoroughfare towards the Poultry, with a jaunty air of unconcern that did credit to his powers of dissimulation.

It was Captain Jack's parting word to him to dissemble all outward signs of astonishment at what he might see when he entered the city; to walk on without stopping to stare or gape, to look as though such sights were of everyday occurrence in his life, and to bear himself with a bold and self-sufficient air, as much as to tell the world at large that he was very well able to take care of himself, and that roisterers and bullies had better let him alone.

Tom acted his part with considerable acumen; but within he was consumed by astonished bewilderment, which increased as he turned westward towards Cheapside, and approached the still fashionable regions of Holborn and its environments.

The streets appeared to the country-bred youth to teem with life. Everything he set eyes on was strange and wonderful. The shops with their wares displayed, and noisy apprentices crying out to buyers, or exchanging fisticuffs with each other by way of interlude; the coaches carrying fine ladies hither and thither, tightly laced, swelled out with hoops, their hair so towering in its lace and powder as to provoke the query as to how it had ever attained such gigantic proportions; the gay gallants in their enormous perukes of powdered hair, and their wonderful flowered vests and gold-laced coats-all these things provoked the keenest wonder and amazement in Tom's breast; albeit he walked on without pausing to examine one more than another, or to exchange a word with any save some honest-looking shopman, of whom he would ask the way to Master Cale's shop just off Holborn.

If Tom had lost on the way to London his servant and both his horses, he had at least gained some information which might be of more value to him than all the rest of his possessions; for Captain Jack had told him to go to Master Cale's and lodge with him, telling him who had sent him, and had added that he would put him in the way of becoming a proper gentleman of fashion, without fleecing him and rooking him, as would inevitably be the case if he fell into the clutches of those birds of prey always on the lookout for young squires from the country coming up to learn the ways of the world, with a plentiful supply of guineas and inexperience.

Master Cale seemed to be well known, and he was directed to his house in almost the same words by each person he asked. Master Cale was a perruquier of no small popularity, who had risen through honesty and ingenuity to be one of the most fashionable tradesmen of the day. He also sold vests or waistcoats, lace-edged neck cloths, gloves, sword scarfs and girdles, generally of his own design; yet though his shop was regularly crowded with gallants and courtiers, the man himself managed to preserve much of the honesty and simplicity which had been his making in the days gone by. Everybody liked and trusted Master Cale, and he was said to be the best-informed man in London town on matters connected with the court and its fashionable throng of hangers on.

As Tom walked onwards he realized for the first time in his life what a rustic-looking fellow he must appear. He had felt himself smart enough at home in his leather breeches, brown frieze double-breasted coat, scarlet vest, and riding boots, his hair tied behind with a scarlet riband to match the vest. But as he beheld the fine gentlemen lounging arm in arm along the streets in their huge curled wigs, gorgeous waistcoats reaching sometimes to the knees, gold embroidered coats, with huge cuffs turned back almost to the elbows, and scarfs of every hue of the rainbow supporting their swords, he felt himself a mere boor and bumpkin, and wondered much whether Master Cale would ever be able to turn him out a fine gentleman, fit to associate with those he saw in the streets.

As he pursued his way westward, he met parties of young rakes and roisterers setting out for the theatres, the play being then an earlier function than it has become of late years.

These men were swaggering along arm in arm, exchanging ribald jests with each other, and insulting the inoffensive passers by with coarse remarks interlarded with oaths, and, whenever occasion offered, tripping them up with their swords or canes and landing them in the gutter.

Some of these worthies wore cockades or badges, and later on Tom learned to know them as Darby captains, Tash captains, or Cock-and-bottle captains, according to the special sort of marauding which they favoured. He met one party of the dreaded Mohocks, or Mohawks, reeling along half intoxicated already, and ripe for any offensive mischief, which later in the day they were certain to perpetrate. They eyed the young rustic askance as it was, and Tom heard a whisper go through their ranks:

"Pity 'tis so early i' the day, or we'd sweat him rarely."

But he held his head high, and swaggered along as though he felt himself a match for all and any who might attack him. Yet inwardly he felt that he would never go abroad in town without a sword at his girdle. What the "sweating" might be, he knew not; but he was assured that it was some sort of assault upon his person.

At length he reached his destination, which was a shop of fine appearance in Drury Lane, just off the main thoroughfare of Holborn. It was then a street of some pretensions, albeit a narrow one, and Tom's eyes soon espied the name he was in search of over the door of a shop round which a score or more of gallants were lounging. In the doorway itself stood a very fine youth, at least he was fine as to his raiment, although he wore no wig and was but an apprentice of better figure and deportment than most. He was displaying to the admiring crowd a mighty fine waistcoat of embroidered satin, worked in gold and colours very cunningly, and trimmed with a frosted-gold cord of new design and workmanship. It was this waistcoat, which the young man called the Blenheim vest, that had attracted the crowd, and Tom could not at first get near the door, so much chaffering and laughing and rough play was going on round it.

So he filled up the time by seeking to understand the extraordinary jargon which was spoken by the young dandies, in which he was not particularly successful (for in addition to a marvellous assortment of oaths, they talked a mixture of bad English, worse French, and vilest Latin), and in examining the signboard which hung out over the doorway of Master Cale's abode.

This sign had been painted to the perruquier's own design, at a time when there threatened to be a reaction in favour of natural hair in place of the monstrous perukes so long worn. The picture represented a young man clad in all the finery of a fop of Charles the Second's court, save only the peruke, hanging by his hair from the limb of a giant oak, with three javelins in his heart, whilst below sat weeping a man in royal crown and robes; and below this picture there ran the following legend:

"O Absalom! O Absalom!
O Absalom! my son,
If thou hadst worn a periwig
Thou hadst not been undone."

In the window of the shop was set out an array of the most wonderfully curled wigs, perfect marvels of the perruquier's art; and, indeed, the size of the young dandies' heads was a study in extravagance quite as wonderful in its way as the towers upon the heads of the ladies.

When presently the group had moved away, and the apprentice in the fine vest had a moment's leisure, Tom came forward and asked if Master Cale were within.

The youth regarded him with some insolence of manner, but as he might be addressing a future customer from the country, he replied with a show of civility that Master Cale was in the room behind the shop, curling the perukes of some gentlemen, but that Tom could go inside and wait if he liked. This he accordingly did, and soon the apprentice was surrounded by another crowd, and was taking orders thick and fast for the Blenheim vest.

The talk bewildered Tom, who, however, needs must listen, and presently he was attracted towards the inner room, where half a dozen young men, with heads almost as bald as those of infants, were arguing and laughing about the curl and fashion and set of their wigs, which were all standing in a row upon the blocks, and being cleverly and carefully manipulated by the deft hands of a small and dapper man, in a neat but not inelegant suit of brown cloth, ornamented by rather large silver buttons, whom Tom saw at a glance must be Master Cale the perruquier, although all his customers called him "Curley."

Heads were turned upon Tom's entrance, but the gentlemen only vouchsafed him a haughty stare, whilst the perruquier bid him be seated till he had leisure to attend to him. He then adjusted upon each head its own wig, amid much jesting and gossiping that was all Greek to Tom; after which the gallants filed out with much noise and laughter, and the little man turned to his unknown customer.

"What can I do for you, young sir?" and his eyes instinctively sought the head of the rustic youth, which was crowned with his own fairly abundant locks of dark brown.

"I come to you, Master Cale, with a few words in writing from one calling himself Captain Jack, whom I met in Epping Forest, and who told me I should be fleeced and beggared in a week if I fell into the hands of the sharpers of London town; but that if I sought lodging and counsel from you, I might learn my lesson without being ruined thereby. Here is the note he sent to you."

The shrewd face of the little perruquier had taken an almost eager look as the name of Captain Jack passed Tom's lips. His eyes scanned the youth from head to foot, and when Tom took out and handed him the note which had been given him, he seized it and read it eagerly, after which he turned to his new client, and said:

"This billet, young sir, would be enough to secure you a welcome from me. Tell me of my good friend Captain Jack. Ah! if he could have but stuck to honest trade, he and I might have made our fortunes together ere now. Never was such a figure for showing off coat or vest or sash, or a head upon which a peruke sat with a daintier grace. But come, let us sit down together and quaff a cup of wine, and you shall tell me all your history."

Dusk was falling between the high walls of the houses, and business was over for the day. Cale led his guest into a room on the basement floor, where a simple but substantial refection had been laid out. He called out to his apprentice to get his supper in the kitchen; and when the door was shut upon the pair, he listened with interest whilst Tom gave a very fairly accurate history of his own life up till the present moment.

Then the little man shook his head with an air of wisdom.

"The best advice I could give you, my young friend, is that you should go home to your mother and your friends in Essex, and seek to learn no more of the wickedness of the world than you know already. But I suppose no words of mine would induce you to take that course."

"Certes no," answered Tom with a short laugh. "I am sick of the country. I have come forth to see the world, and see it I will, or know the reason why."

"Ah yes, so says every moth that flutters round the candle, till his wings be burnt away, and he left the shattered remnant of what he erstwhile was," responded Cale, with a wise shake of the head. "But no man ever yet was found wise enough to take experience at second hand. So if you are bent on seeing the world-which, let me tell you, is an evil thing at best-I will try, for the love I bear to Captain Jack, and indeed to all honest youths, to put you in the way of seeing it with as little hurt to yourself as may be. And so you are thinking of foreign travel?"

"I was, till I saw what London was like," answered Tom; "but, i' faith, I am in no haste to quit it till I have seen its sights and tasted of its pleasures. Methinks I might go far, and spend much good gold, and not find the half of the diversion which the streets of London afford."

"Oh, if it be diversion you seek-"

"It is," answered Tom frankly; "diversion, and the game of life as it is played elsewhere than in the lanes of Essex. I have seen enough in one afternoon to excite a thirst which can only be allayed

by drinking from the same fountain. So no more talk of Essex, or even of lands beyond the seas. I will e'en get you to write a letter to my mother, telling her that I am safely arrived in London town; and knowing that, she must make herself easy, for I was never one who could easily wield a pen. I was always readier with the sword or the quarterstaff."

"There will be fine doings in London town, too," remarked Cale, rubbing his nose reflectively, "when the Duke lands, and is welcomed by all the town as the great victor of Blenheim. Yes, certainly, you should stay to witness that sight. Afterwards we can talk of what you had better do. They are always wanting fine-grown young fellows for the army. Perhaps when your store of guineas is gone, London will not hold you so fast."

"My store will last a long while," answered Tom, confidently slapping his inner pocket where the bag of gold rested. "I have five hundred golden guineas, the legacy of my father; and to that my mother added another hundred, to fit me out with all things needful for my travels, which things could not well be purchased in Essex. Now Captain Jack bid me at once hand over to you my money, which, he said, would melt in my pocket like snow, if it were not filched away by thieves and rogues. He bid me place one hundred guineas with you for my board and outfit, and trust that you would do honestly by me; and the rest was to be put into your keeping, to be doled out to me as I should have need. It seems a strange thing to be taking the counsel of a highway robber in such matters. But I like you, Master Cale; and I am just wise enough to know that my guineas would not long remain mine were I to walk the streets with them. So here I give them into your keeping; I trust you with my all."

"I will give you a receipt for the amount, my friend. Many men have made me their banker before now, and have not regretted it. You shall have a comfortable room above stairs, and you can either be served with your meals there, or take them with me, or at some coffee house, as best pleases you; and as for the outfit-why, it will be a pleasure to clothe a pretty fellow of your inches in fitting raiment. But be advised by me; seek not to be too fine. Quiet elegance will better befit your figure. I would have you avoid equally the foppery of the court beaux and the swaggering self-importance of those they call the bully beaux, with whom you are certain to make acquaintance ere long."

Tom was willing to listen to advice in these matters, and the little perruquier soon threw himself almost with enthusiasm into the subject of the young man's outfit. They spent above two hours looking over cloths and satins and scarfs, trying effects, and fitting on perukes. Tom had never before imagined how important and engrossing a matter dress could be, nor how many articles of attire were necessary to a man who wished to cut a good figure.

But at last he grew weary of the subject, and said he would fain take a stroll in the streets, and breathe the outer air again. He felt the stifling presence of encircling walls, and longed to get out into the starlit night.

"The streets are none too safe at night for peaceful citizens," remarked Master Cale, with a shake of the head. "But I have a peruke to take to a client who lives hard by Snowe Hill. If you needs must go, let us go together; and gird on yonder sword ere you start. For if men walk unarmed in the streets of a night, they are thought fair game for all the rogues and bullies who prowl from tavern to tavern seeking for diversion. They do not often attack an armed man; but a quiet citizen who has left his sword behind him seldom escapes without a sweating, if nothing worse befall him."

"And what is this sweating?" asked Tom, as the pair sallied forth into the darkness of the streets.

Here and there an oil lamp shed a sickly glow for a short distance; but, for the most part, the streets were very dim and dark. Lights gleamed in a good many upper windows still; but below-where the shutters were all up-darkness and silence reigned.

"Sweating," answered Cale, "is a favourite pastime with the bullies of London streets. A dozen or more with drawn swords surround a hapless and unarmed passer by. They will close upon him in a circle, the points of their swords towards him, and then one will prick him in the rear, causing him to turn quickly round, whereupon another will give him a dig in the same region, and again he will jump and face about; and so they will keep the poor fellow spinning round and round, like a cockchafer

on a pin, until the sweat pours off him, and they themselves are weary of the sport. But, hist! I hear a band of them coming. Slip we into this archway, and let them pass by. I would not have my wig box snatched away; and there is no limit to the audacity of those bully beaux when they have drunk enough to give them Dutch courage. Discretion is sometimes better than valour."

So saying, he pulled Tom into a dark recess, and in a few minutes more there swaggered past about six or eight young roisterers-singing, swearing, joking, threatening-more or less intoxicated every one of them, and boasting themselves loudly of the valiant deeds they could and would do.

They did not see the two figures in the archway. Indeed, the greatest safety of the belated citizen was that these bullies were generally too drunk to be very observant, and that a person in hiding could generally escape notice. After they had passed by, Cale continued his way quietly enough, following the noisy party at a safe distance, as they too seemed bound towards Snowe Hill.

They were approaching the top of the hill when a sudden sound of shrieking met their ears, mixed with the loud laughter and half-drunken shouts of the roisterers. Tom caught his companion's arm and pulled him along.

"That is a woman's voice!" he cried quickly. "She is crying for help. Come!"

"Beshrew me if I ever again walk abroad with a peruke at night!" grumbled Cale, as he let himself be hurried along by the eager Tom. "I am not a watchman. Why should I risk my goods for every silly wench who should know better than to be abroad of a night alone? Come, come, my young friend, my legs are not as long as yours; I shall have no wind for fighting if you drag me along at this pace!"

It was the urgency of the cries that spurred Tom to the top of his speed. The laughter was loud and ceaseless, but the shrieks were becoming faint and stifled. Tom's blood was boiling. He pictured to himself a foul murder done. A few seconds before they reached the spot a new sound greeted their ears-a sort of rattling, bounding noise-which provoked another peal of uncontrollable laughter.

Then a voice was heard shouting:

"The watch! the watch! or some fellows with swords!"

Immediately the whole band broke up and rushed helter-skelter in all directions. Not that the bullies feared the watch one whit. The watchmen were mostly poor, old, worn-out men, who could do little or nothing to impose order upon these young braggarts. Indeed, they were so often maltreated themselves, that they just as often as not kept carefully away when cries were raised for help. But, having had their fun, the roisterers were ready to disperse themselves; for some of the citizens would rise in a white heat of rage, and take law into their own hands, in which case it happened that the disturbers of the peace came off second best. One of them had seen Tom's tall figure and the sword in his hand as he ran beneath a lamp, and had fancied that some more determined rescue than that afforded by the watch was to be given. So the band dispersed shouting and hooting; and Tom and Cale found them scattered ere they came up to them.

"But where is the woman?" asked Tom, looking round; "they have not surely carried her off?"

"Oh no-only sent her rolling down the hill in a barrel!" panted Cale; "it is a favourite pastime with the youths of London town. One party will put a barrel ready in yon doorway on purpose, and if it be not removed, it will like enough be used ere morning. We had best go in search of the poor creature; for ofttimes they are sore put to it to get free from the cask-if they be stout in person at least."

And, indeed, as they neared the foot of the hill, they heard a groaning and stifled crying for help; and, sure enough, they found a buxom woman, the wife of a respectable citizen, tightly wedged into the cask, and much shaken and bruised by her rapid transit down the hill, although, when released with some difficulty, she was able to walk home, escorted by her rescuers, and bitterly inveighing against the wickedness of the world in general and London's young bullies in particular.

"The best thing, good dame, is not to be abroad at such an hour alone," advised Cale.

"Yes, truly; and yet it was but the matter of a few streets; and it seems hard a woman may not sit beside a sick neighbour for a while without being served so on her way back. My husband was

to have come for me; but must have been detained. Pray heaven he has not fallen in with a band of Mohocks, and had the nose of him split open-to say nothing of worse!"

"Are men really served so bad as that?" asked Tom, as the two turned back from the citizen's house whither they had escorted their grateful protegee.

"Worse sometimes," answered Cale, with a shake of the head. "Those Mohocks should be wiped out without mercy by the arm of the law; for mercy they show none. They have read of the horrid cruelties practised by the Indians whose name they bear, and they seek to do the like to the hapless victims whom ill-fortune casts in their way. There be men whose eyes they have gouged out, and whose noses have been cut off, whose brains have been turned by the terror and agony they have been through. And yet these men go free; and law-abiding citizens are allowed to quake in their beds at the sound of their voices in the street, or the sight of their badges even in broad daylight. I call it a sin and a shame that such things can be. Well, well, well, let us hope that, when the great Duke comes home, he may be able to put a stop to these things. Even in warfare, men say, he is merciful, and will permit no extortion and no cruelty. We citizens of London will give him a right royal welcome; perchance we may be able to crave a boon of him in return. He-or, rather, his wife-is all-powerful with our good Queen Anne; and she would not wish a hair of a man's head hurt could she but have her way."

"By the Duke you mean the great Duke of Marlborough, who has done such great things in the war? But what is the war about? Can you tell me that, for I have never rightly understood?"

Cale was a great politician in his own eyes, and was well versed in the politics of the day. He strove hard to make Tom understand the intricacies of the Spanish succession, the danger of allowing Spain to be ruled by one of the Bourbons, and the fear of the all-powerful French king, who seemed like to rule Europe, if the allied powers could not make head against him. Tom did his best to understand, and got a rather clearer view of the situation than he had before; but what interested him most was the information that the Duke would come over to England shortly, and that a magnificent reception was to be given to him.

Whigs and Tories had alike grown proud of the victorious general, and the war had become popular from success, though the drain on the country was great. The Queen was personally liked, although she was but a small power in the kingdom; and for the time being Jacobite plots were in abeyance. So long as she lived, nobody was likely seriously to desire the return of the banished Stuarts; but, of course, there was the future to think for. Anne had no child to succeed her; and the thought of the Hanoverian succession was by no means universally approved. Still for the moment the Jacobite agitation was in abeyance, and all England rejoiced in the humiliation of so dangerous a foe as the great monarch of France.

Cale was full of stories of court gossip respecting the Queen and the Duchess of Marlborough, whose affection for one another was a byword throughout the realm. The Duke and Duchess were also most tenderly attached; and the private lives of Anne and her Prince George, and of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, presented a bright contrast to the general laxity of morals prevailing at the time. The rather austere rule of William and Mary had not really purged the court of vicious habits, though such had been steadily discouraged. Anne had not the force of character to impose her will upon her subjects; and extravagance, frivolity, and foppery flourished amazingly.

Tom felt his head in a perfect whirl as Cale chatted on of this thing and that, passing from politics to court life, and then to the doings of the wealthy classes, of which he had an intimate knowledge.

"By my faith, London must be a marvellous place to live in!" quoth Tom, when at last he had been shown to the chamber prepared for his reception. "I feel as though I had been a year away from Gablehurst. Prithee, bestir to get my clothes ready, good Master Cale; for I shall know no rest till I have been abroad myself, and have seen these gay doings with mine own eyes!"

CHAPTER IV. THE FOLLY

A very fine fellow did Tom Tufton feel a few days later, when, arrayed in all his new finery, he surveyed himself from head to foot in Master Cale's long mirror, kept in the best light afforded by the back room, for the benefit of the fops and dandies who desired to see the effect of the finery purchased from the fashionable perruquier.

Cale had used discretion, and urged the same upon Tom, in the selection and fashion of his garments, and had sternly discountenanced anything like undue extravagance and foppery. Tom had insisted upon the Blenheim vest, with its rich flowering on the white satin ground, and its trimming of golden cord; but for the rest he had permitted Cale to select what he would, and was perfectly satisfied with the long coat of claret-coloured cloth, with a modest trimming of gold cord, and turned-back cuffs (showing the white lawn full shirt sleeve beneath), which set off his tall and well-made figure to advantage. The breeches were of the same cloth, but showed little, as silk stockings were drawn high up over them, almost meeting the vest or waistcoat, which was always long. He had shoes with high though not extravagant heels, and gilt buckles; a gold cord with tassels adorned his jaunty three-cornered hat; and his girdle and sword belt were of gold silk and cord.

But perhaps Tom was most proud of his periwig-an addition to his outfit which he had insisted upon rather against the advice of Cale, who had offered to curl and powder his own hair in an imitation of the prevailing mode. But Tom would not be denied the fashionable peruke. He had spent the best part of each day seated behind a screen in Cale's inner shop, listening in a species of fascination and amaze to the talk of the young dandies who daily resorted thither. Cale told him that he would thus best learn something of the language and gossip of the day, and be better able to hold his own when he went abroad; and Tom already felt that he possessed command of a thousand new epithets and words, to say nothing of the meaningless oaths and blasphemies, which made a part of the stock in trade of every fashionable man's vocabulary.

And now he stood regarding himself with complaisant satisfaction, feeling that he could ruffle it with the best of them. He had heard too much talk of periwigs not to feel resolved to wear one himself. Unless he did so, he felt he should never take his place in the world of fashion. His natural hair had therefore been cut close to his head, the peruke was fitted on, and fell in bushy curls to his shoulders.

Tom could not forbear a smile as he turned his head this way and that to judge of the effect. He felt indeed a pretty fellow, prepared to take his share in the drama of life going on about him.

"Harry Gay shall be your companion," said Cale, who had assisted at the toilet with the interest of a connoisseur, and who did not attempt to disguise his satisfaction at the result. "Harry is as gay as his name, but he is a well-meaning youth, and will neither rob you himself, nor suffer others to do so without warning you. He knows London well, and the life has hurt him less than it hurts most. He is brave without being a bully; he can play, and knows when to stop. He is afraid of no man, and so he is left alone. He has a good heart, and is to be trusted; and here he comes in good time to take you under his care."

The young man who now lounged in with a smiling face and a nod of recognition to Cale, was not unknown to Tom. He had seen him several times, and had taken a liking for him, which the other reciprocated. Harry Gay was the son of a leading merchant citizen, a man of some importance and mark, who was able to give his son every advantage that money could purchase, and the means to enter almost any circle short of that of the court itself.

But he had also transmitted to his son a certain hard-headed shrewdness, which stood him in good stead in the gay life he was now leading. Harry had the sense not to try to push himself amongst the high-born dames and gallants, where he would be regarded as an interloper, and only admitted

to be fleeced of his gold; but contented himself with a more modest sphere, where he was a man of some little mark, and could lead as well as follow, if he had the mind.

Entering the back shop, Harry cast an approving glance at Tom, and nodded his head towards Cale, at the same time taking a pinch of snuff from his box, and handing it to the perruquier.

"Does you credit, Curley, does you great credit. A chaste and simple costume, but elegant withal-uncommon elegant, i' faith. Shouldn't mind a suit of the same myself, if I had our young friend's inches.

"Well, friend Tom, and how do you feel? Learned to take snuff yet? No! Ah, well, 'twill come by degrees.

"Put some more scent upon his person, Curley; he must smell like a perfumer's shop; and so-give him his gold-tasselled cane, and the gloves with the golden fringe. A muff? No! Well, perchance those great fists would look something strange in one, and the day is fine and mild.

"So, if you are ready, friend Tom, we will sally forth. To the coffee house first, and afterwards, an it please you, to the play.

"Farewell, Curley; I will bring you back your nursling safe and sound. He shall not be rooked or robbed today. But how long I shall be able to hold the cub in leading strings remains yet to be proved!"

Tom was in far too good spirits to take umbrage at this name. He felt anything but a cub as he walked down the street beside his scented and curled and daintily-arrayed companion, unconsciously striving to copy his jaunty step, and the little airs and graces of his manner.

"We will to the Folly," said Harry, as they stepped out into Holborn and turned their faces westward. "You have not yet seen the river, and the Folly is a floating structure moored in the water on the farther shore opposite to Somerset House, of which you may have heard. It is not the most fashionable resort; but, for my part, I like it well. There is always good company to be had there, and we are not interrupted every moment by the incursions of drunken roisterers, who spend their day in reeling from tavern to tavern, or coffee house to coffee house, in search of some new story to tell, or some fresh encounter to provoke."

Tom listened eagerly to all his friend told him as they went their way towards the river. So far he had not cared to show himself in the streets till after dusk, as he had become foolishly ashamed of his rustic garb. He was immensely interested in all that he beheld, and in the stories his companion told him about the places they passed, the persons they met, and the occupants of the coaches which were now rolling to and fro through the streets, taking ladies and their fine gentlemen friends either to the park, or some fashionable rendezvous.

Great indeed was his interest and amazement as they reached the steps beside the river, and Harry signalled to a waterman to bring up a wherry alongside to take them to the Folly. He had never imagined anything so wide and grand as this great flowing river, lined with its stately buildings, and bearing on its bosom more vessels than he imagined that the world held! Had it not been for his fear of betraying undue ignorance, he would have broken into a torrent of questions; as it was, he sat in wide-eyed silence, gazing about him like a savage suddenly transported into the world of civilization-not a little to the amusement of his cicerone.

The Folly was a floating structure not unlike a large houseboat of the present day. Its guests could walk to and fro upon the roof, or find warmth and entertainment within its walls, as did Harry and his friend; for although the sun shone, the wind blew cold upon the water, and it was pleasanter within the warmed interior, where already a sprinkling of guests had assembled.

The place was divided into two rooms for the public accommodation. The first of these was a bar and gaming room. A buxom and rosy-cheeked damsel was presiding at the bar, and several young dandies leaned their elbows upon it, and strove to engage her in conversation. Some others were already seated at a table, and were throwing the dice, laughing and swearing ceaselessly over their game. The second room was quieter at present, and upon the table there lay strewn about the

various newspapers and pamphlets of the day. Two or three men were reading them, and discussing the news of the hour as they sipped their coffee or chocolate.

Harry led the way into this place, ordered coffee for himself and his friend, and, whilst nodding familiarly to the occupants of the room, possessed himself of a few papers, and pushed some of them across to Tom.

"A new pamphlet by Jonathan Swift, I see," he remarked carelessly, with a wink at his pupil. "You know his *Tale of a Tub*, Tom? Monstrous clever thing that! It tickles one to death reading it. So do his pamphlets-sharpest things out. Some talk of Defoe as his rival; but, for my part, I never read anything that rivals Swift's writings! Pity he has such a sharp edge to his temper. They say he will never get promotion."

Tom took up the pamphlet, and tried to look as though he were reading it with appreciation; but he had never been much of a student, and the comings and goings of a constant stream of visitors engrossed him far more than the printed words, the meaning of which he understood no whit.

It was much more interesting to him to listen to what the frequenters of the coffee house were saying amongst themselves; and greatly did he admire the ease and readiness with which Harry took his share in the conversation.

"Has my Lord Godolphin found a worthy pen to sing the praise of the victor of Blenheim yet?" he asked of a man who appeared to be a referee on matters literary. "The last I heard was that he was scouring London, tearing his periwig in pieces in despair that the race of poets was extinct, and he could only find the most wretched doggerel mongers, whose productions were too vile to be tolerated. Has the noble lord found a better rhymster? Or will the victory of the great Duke have to go unsung by the Muse?"

"What! have you not heard the end of that matter? Why, my Lord Halifax declared that he knew the man worthy of the occasion; but he would not reveal the name unless it was promised that he should be excellently well treated. And this man is none other than Joseph Addison, a fellow of the University of Oxford, and a man well thought of and pensioned, too, by the late King William. But since the death of His Majesty, the poet has been living in poverty and obscurity in a humble lodging hard by the Haymarket. There it was that he received a visit one day from the two noble lords; and it hath since been whispered that a poem is a-preparing so fine in quality and so finished in style, that my Lord Godolphin is now fit to dance a hornpipe for joy, and has promised a bountiful reward to the genius whose brain has devised and whose hand has penned the lines. They say that the poem is to be called 'The Campaign,' and that it is one of the finest the world has ever seen."

Whilst this sort of talk was going on in one corner, there were counter-conversations, more interesting to Tom, being carried on in other parts of the room. One band of bully beaux, somewhat the worse for drink already, were telling stories of scandal and duelling, to which Tom could not but listen with ill-concealed interest. Others were discussing the last new play, or the last new toast. A few fine dandies sat combing their periwigs as they talked of the latest fashions, taking snuff freely, and sprinkling themselves with perfume from a small pocket flask, if they were ever too nearly approached by some commoner person.

As time passed by the quieter men, who had come early to read and talk politics and literature, withdrew themselves and took their departure. Harry Gay was claimed by a party of dashing-looking young rakes, who insisted that he should come and play a game of tic-tac with them in the outer room; and as Tom made no move to accompany him, he left him in his seat in the corner to look on and learn all he could.

Tom, indeed, was quite fascinated by the scene around him, and had no desire to tear himself away. Presently one of the men from the group of bully beaux (as Tom had dubbed them, not by any means incorrectly) moved nearer to him, and took the chair vacated by Harry; and gradually the group reformed, with Tom as one of its members. The others addressed him, asking his name and his history. Tom was reserved as to this last, but spoke in a frank and easy way which seemed to win upon

his comrades. There were four of them, and whatever might be their real names, Tom found out that they were known amongst themselves, and by the world of the tavern, by the following cognomens: "Slippery Seal," "Bully Bullen," "Thirsty Thring," and "Dicing Dick."

Tom was not sure that he liked or approved these new comrades, but at least their conversation interested and excited him. They told of duels fought in the ring at Hyde Park, or at the back of Montague House; of the exploits of highwaymen, and the executions at Newgate, which were plainly favourite spectacles with them. They told of the doings of themselves and other marauders in the streets of London, and roared with laughter over their exploits. Tom, ashamed of his real disgust, strove to laugh too, for he dreaded above everything to be thought a man lacking in spirit; but perhaps his face betrayed more than he meant, for his comrades began to gibe him in a fashion which made his hot blood rise; and he might have got into trouble before Harry could come to the rescue, had it not been that a sudden hush fell upon the room, whilst the word went round, spoken in every intonation of curiosity, respect, and admiration:

"'Tis Lord Claud himself! Hither he comes! Certes, but he is a fine figure of a man! So he has not grown too fine for his old haunts, though men did say that he was the pet and the favourite of all the court ladies!"

At that name, heard once before from the lips of Captain Jack, Tom looked round in great curiosity and eagerness. Immediately he was gratified by the sight of the entrance into the inner room of the person who was the cause of all this subdued commotion.

The newcomer was a very handsome man, of slender and graceful proportions, tall and elegant, and dressed in the extreme of fashion, yet with a taste that robbed foppery itself of any appearance of absurdity in his case. He looked quite young at the first glance; but a keen and practised eye could detect lines in that gay and handsome face which only time could trace. Probably he was past thirty by some years, yet many men of five and twenty looked older. The only thing in which he differed materially from his brother dandies was that he wore his own hair in lieu of the wig; but so abundant and beautiful was it, lying upon his shoulders in large curls of tawny golden hue, and clustering with a grace about his temples that no wig ever yet attained, that not the most ardent upholder of the peruke could wish him to change the fashion of his coiffure, which, in fact, gave to his outer man a touch of distinction which was well borne out by the elegance of his deportment and costume.

Tom stared his fill at the newcomer, who was attended by several of the *habitues* of the coffee house, and received their welcome with a languid grace and indifferent goodwill. He was speedily accommodated with the best seat in the room. Conversation was hushed to listen to his words; the most fragrant cup of coffee was brought to him by the beauty of the bar herself, and his orders were dispatched with a celerity which was lacking to any other customer.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.