Kingston William Henry Giles

# Foxholme Hall, and Other Tales

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# Содержание

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## Story 1-Chapter I
## STORY ONE – Foxholme Hall; or, Christmas at an Old Country House

We had our choice given us whether we would spend our Christmas holidays with our most kind and estimable old relative, our mother's cousin, Miss Gillespie, in Russell-square, and go to the theatre and panoramas, and other highly edifying entertainments, or at Foxholme, in the New Forest, with our great uncle, Sir Hugh Worsley. "Foxholme for ever, I should think indeed!" exclaimed my brother Jack, making a face which was not complimentary to Cousin Barbara. "But she is a good kind old soul, if she wasn't so pokerish and prim; and that was a dead-alive fortnight we spent with her two winters ago. I say Foxholme for ever."

"Foxholme for ever," I repeated. "Of course there couldn't be the thinnest slice of a shadow of doubt about the matter. There'll be Cousin Peter, and Julia, and Tom and Ned Oxenberry, and

Sam Barnby, and Ponto, and Hector, and Beauty, and Polly; and there'll be hunting, and shooting, and skating, if there's a frost – and of course there will be a frost – and, oh, it will be such jolly fun!"

A few weeks after this we were bowling along the road to Southampton on the top of the old Telegraph, driven by Taylor – as fine a specimen of a Jehu as ever took whip in hand – with four white horses – a team of which he was justly proud. I see him now before me, his fine tall figure, truly Roman nose, and eagle eye, looking as fit to command an army as to drive a coach, with his white great-coat buttoned well up to his gay-coloured handkerchief, a flower of some sort decking his breast, a broad-brimmed beaver of white or grey, and a whip which looked as if it had just come from the maker's hands – indeed, everything about him was polished, from the crown of his hat to his well-fitting boots; and I believe that no accident ever happened to the coach he drove. There was the Independent, also a first-rate coach, and, in those days, Collier's old coach, which carried six inside, in which we once made a journey – that is, Jack and I – with four old ladies who ate apples and drank gin, with the windows up, all the way, and talked about things which seemed to interest them very much, but which soon sent us to sleep.

The sky was bright, the air fresh, with just a touch of a frosty smell in it, and we were in exuberant spirits. We had our pea-shooters ready, and had long been on the watch for the lumbering old vehicle, when we saw it approaching. Didn't we pepper the

passengers, greatly to their indignation! What damage we did we could not tell, for we were by them like a flash of lightning.

At Southampton we changed into a much slower coach, which, however, conveyed us safely through the forest to the neighbourhood of Lyndhurst, when, waiting in the road, we espied, to our intense delight, a pony-carriage driven by Sam Barnby, who held the office of extra coachman, gamekeeper, and fisherman, besides several other employments, in the establishment at Foxholme. With us he was a prodigious favourite, as he was with all the youngsters who went to the place; and Sir Hugh, I know, trusted him completely, and employed him in numerous little private services of beneficence and charity when a confidential agent was required. He was the invariable companion of all the youngsters in our boating, fishing, and shooting excursions.

It was dusk when we got into the carriage, and as our way lay for some distance through the thickest part of the forest by a cross-road which few people but Sam Barnby would have attempted to take at that late hour, we could often scarcely distinguish the track under the thick branches of the leafless trees which, stretching across it, formed a trellis-work over our heads, while the thick hollies and other evergreens formed an impenetrable wall on either side. Now and then, when the forest opened out and the forms of the trees were rather more clearly defined, they often assumed shapes so fantastic and strange, that I could scarcely prevent a sort of awe creeping over me, and half

expected that the monsters I fancied I saw would move from their places and grab up Jack, Sam Barnby, the carriage, and me, and bolt off with us into some recess of the forest. Jack was talking away to Sam. I had been up bolstering the night before, and had not slept a wink. Suddenly the carriage stopped, and I heard Sam and Jack utter an exclamation. I echoed it, and pretty loudly too; for I thought that one of the monsters I had been dreaming about had really got hold of us.

"Hillo! who have we got here?" exclaimed Sam. "Do you hold the reins, Master Jack, and I'll get out and see."

I was now fully awake. I asked Jack what it was.

"We nearly drove over somebody; but the pony shied, fortunately. There he is; I can just see him moving."

"Why, I do believe it's poor silly Dick Green!" exclaimed Sam. "Is it you, Dicky? Speak out, man! How came you here?"

"Yes, it be I," said the idiot. "Can't I sleep here? It's very comfortable – all clean and nice – no smoke, no noise."

"Why, you would be frozen to death, man, if you did," answered Sam. "But, I ask, what brought you here?"

"That's a secret I bean't a-going to tell thee," whispered the idiot. "But just do thee stop here; thee'll foind it very pleasant."

"No, thank you; we'd rather not," said Sam. "But just do thee get into the carriage alongside Master William there, and we'll take thee to the Hall, and give thee some supper – that's what thee wants, lad."

"Well, now, that's kind like," simpered the idiot. "I know thee

well, Sam Barnby; thee had'st always a good heart."

"Well, well, lad, don't stand talking there, but scramble in at once," cried Sam, as he forced the poor creature down by my side.

Soon afterwards we passed a woodman's or a keeper's hut, from the window of which a gleam of light streamed forth on the idiot's face, and a creeping feeling of fear stole over me as I caught his large lack-lustre eyes peering into mine, the teeth in his ever-grinning mouth looking white and shining under his upturned lip. I knew that he was said to be perfectly harmless and good-natured, but I would have given anything if Jack would have changed places with me. I did not drop off to sleep again, that is very certain. The way seemed far longer than I had expected, and I almost fancied that Sam must have mistaken his road – not a very likely thing to occur, however.

As we neared the lodge-gate of Foxholme, I shut my eyes, lest the light from the window should again show me the poor idiot's face staring at me. All disagreeable feelings, however, speedily vanished as we drove up in front of the chief entrance, and the hall-door was flung open, and a perfect blaze of light streamed forth, and the well-known smiling faces of Purkin, the butler, and James Jarvis, the footman, appeared; and the latter, descending the steps, carried up our trunk and hat-boxes and a play-box we had brought empty, though to go back in a very different condition, we had a notion. Then we ran into the drawing-room, and found our uncle Sir Hugh, and our kind, sweet-smiling aunt,

and our favourite Cousin Julia – she was Sir Hugh's only daughter by a first marriage – and our little Cousin Hugh – his only son by the present Lady Worsley; and there, too, was Cousin Peter. He was Sir Hugh's cousin and Aunt Worsley's cousin, and was cousin to a great number of people besides – indeed everybody who came to the house called him cousin, it seemed.

Some few, perhaps, at first formally addressed him as Mr Peter, or Mr Peter Langstone; but they soon got into the way of calling him Mr Peter, or Cousin Peter, or Peter alone. He wasn't old, and he couldn't have been very young. He wasn't good-looking, I fancy – not that we ever thought about the matter. He had a longish sallow face, and a big mouth with white teeth, and lips which twisted and curled about in a curious manner, and large soft grey eyes – not green-grey, but truly blue-grey – with almost a woman's softness in them, an index, I suspect, of his heart; and yet I don't think that there are many more daring or cool and courageous men than Cousin Peter. He had been in the navy in his youth, and had seen some pretty hard service, but had come on shore soon after he had received his promotion as lieutenant, and, for some reason or other, had never since been afloat. Sir Hugh was very much attached to him, and had great confidence in his judgment and rectitude; so that he tried to keep him at Foxholme as much as he could. He might have lived there and been welcome all the year round.

I have said nothing yet about Cousin Julia. She was about twenty-two, but looked younger, except when she was about any

serious matter. I thought her then the most lovely creature I had ever seen, and I was not far wrong. There was a sweet, gentle, and yet firm expression in her face, and a look – I cannot describe it – which would have prevented even the most impudent from talking nonsense or saying anything to offend her ear.

Our uncle, Sir Hugh, was tall and stout, with a commanding and dignified manner. No one would have ventured to take liberties with him, though he was as kind and gentle as could be. He had been in the army when he was young, and seen service, but had given it up when he succeeded to Foxholme, and the duties attached to its possession. "I should have been ill serving my country if I had remained abroad and left my tenants and poor neighbours to the care of agents and hirelings," I heard him once observe. He was very fond of the army, and it was a great trial to him to leave it.

Our aunt was a very pretty, lively, kind, amiable woman, and devotedly attached to our uncle. She was small, and slight, and young-looking, though I don't think that she was so very young after all.

Hugh was a regular fine little chap, manly, independent, and yet very amiable. He might have been rather spoilt, because it was a hard matter not to make a good deal of him. People couldn't help thinking of him as the long-wished-for heir of the old place and the old title, and what joy he had brought to Sir Hugh's heart and what pride and satisfaction to that of his mother, and that he would some day be the master of Foxholme (all hoped that

day might be far distant); and they prayed that he might worthily represent his honoured father.

After all, however, there was no one we thought so much about as Cousin Peter. How full of life and spirits and fun he was! A shade, however, of gravity or melancholy occasionally stole over him. He had an inner deeper life of which we boys knew nothing. We used to be surprised, after he had been playing all sorts of pranks with us, to go and see him sit down as grave as a judge along with Sir Hugh, and talk as seriously as anybody else. Then he would jump up and say something quiet and confidential to some young lady, and crack a joke with some old one; and again he would be back among us, baiting the bear, standing on his head, or doing some other wonderful out-of-the-way thing. I remember that even then I more than once remarked that whenever he drew near our Cousin Julia, there was a greater sobriety and a wonderful gentleness and tenderness in his manner; and often, when she was not looking, and he thought no one else was looking, his eyes were turned towards her with a look which older people would easily have interpreted. I thought myself, "He must be very fond of her; but that is but natural – everybody is."

# Story 1-Chapter II

I should like to give a full description of the events of those never-to-be-forgotten Christmas holidays. Besides ourselves, we had two cousins and the sons of some of Sir Hugh's friends, and no end of grown-up guests, young ladies and their mammas and papas, and several gentlemen who were in no ways stiff or distant, and we didn't mind saying what we liked to them. I remember that Christmas-day – how happily it began – how, on a fine frosty morning, we all walked to the village church – how we found it decked with hollies, reminding us that, even in mid-winter, our merciful God never withdraws His blessings from the earth – how we could not help listening with attention to the sermon of the good vicar, who reminded us that we were assembled to commemorate the greatest event that has occurred since the creation of the world. He bid us reflect that the Christ who was on that day born into the world, a weak helpless infant, prepared to endure a life of toil, of poverty, and of suffering, and at the same time of active unwearied usefulness, was our Lord the Son of God himself; that He took our sins upon Him, shed His blood on the Cross, suffering agony and shame, which we had merited, that He might wash our sins away; died and was buried, that He might, though sinless himself, for our sakes endure the curse sin brought on mankind, and thus accomplish the whole of the work He had undertaken to fulfil; how He rose again, ascending into

Heaven triumphant over death, that He might then, having lived and suffered as a man on earth, feeling for our infirmities, plead effectually for us; that He had suffered the punishment due to us, before the throne of the Almighty, an offended but a just and merciful God, full of love to mankind.

I never before understood so clearly that the whole work of redemption is complete – that Christ has suffered for us, and that, therefore, no more suffering is required. All we have to do is to take advantage of what He has done, and put our whole faith and trust in Him. The vicar then described most beautifully to us how Christ lived on earth, and that He did so that. He might set us an example, which we are bound in ordinary love and gratitude to imitate, by showing good-will, love, kindness, charity in thought, word, and deed, towards our fellow-men. How beautiful and glorious sounded that Christmas hymn, sung not only by all the school-children, but by all the congregation. Sir Hugh's rich voice, old as he was, sounding clearly among the basses of the others. He did his best, and he knew and felt that his voice was not more acceptable at the throne of Heaven than that of the youngest child present. Then, when service was over, Sir Hugh came out arm-in-arm with our aunt, followed by Julia and little Hugh, and talked so friendly and kindly to all the people, and they all smiled and looked so pleased, and replied to him in a way which showed that they were not a bit afraid of him, but knew that he loved them and was interested in their welfare; and Lady Worsley and Cousin Julia talked in the same kind way,

and knew everybody and how many children there were in each family, and asked after those who were absent – some at service, and some apprentices, and some in the army or at sea. Master Peter also went about among them all, and seemed so glad to see them, and shook hands with the old men, and joked in his quiet way with the old women. He contrived to have a word with everybody as he moved in and out among them. Then the vicar came out, and a few friendly loving words were exchanged with him too.

"We shall see you and Miss Becky at dinner as usual, Mr Upton," said Sir Hugh, as they parted.

"I should be sorry to be absent, Sir Hugh. On twenty-nine Christmas-days have we taken our dinner with you, and this will make the thirtieth, if I mistake not," answered the vicar.

"Ah, time flies along, and yet Miss Becky does not, at all events, remind us of it," said Sir Hugh. Whereat Miss Becky, who was very fair and somewhat fat, laughed and shook hands heartily with Sir Hugh and Lady Worsley, and smiled affectionately at Julia and little Hugh, and we commenced our homeward walk. How enjoyable it was – how pleasant was, our light luncheon! for we dined at five that we might have a long evening. We all looked forward to the evening with great delight. Scarcely was dinner over than a sound was heard – a bell in the hall striking sweetly. We all jumped up, led by Master Peter, and arranging ourselves, some on the great oak staircase and others in a circle at its foot, we stood listening to the Christmas chimes and other

tunes struck up by a dozen or more men with different-toned bells – one in each hand. Scarcely had they ceased and received their accustomed largesse from Sir Hugh's liberal hands, than some young voices were heard coming up the avenue. They, as were the rest, were admitted at a side-door, through the servants' hall, where tea and ale, and bread-and-cheese, and cakes, and other good things, were ready to regale them. The young singers came trooping into the hall, one pushing the other forward; shy and diffident, though they well knew that they had no reason to fear the lord of that mansion nor any one present. At length they arranged themselves, and the leader of the band beginning, they all chimed in, and sang, if not in a way to suit a fastidious taste, at all events, with feeling and enthusiasm, a beautiful Christmas carol. The words are simple, but often as I have heard them I have never failed to feel my heart lifted up to that just and merciful God who formed and carried out that great and glorious work, the scheme of the Redemption, thus wonderfully reconciling the demands of justice with love and mercy towards the fallen race of man. Surely this is a theme on which angels must delight to dwell, and to which they must ever with joy attune their voices and their harps; so I used to think then and so I think now, and hope to think till I reach the not unwelcome grave, and find it a happy reality. Several hymns and other appropriate songs were sung by the children, and then the leader began to sidle towards the door, while the rest nudged and elbowed each other, and at length they all shuffled demurely out again, but

not a minute had passed before they were heard shouting and laughing right merrily in the servants' hall. Their places were quickly supplied by a very different set of characters. They were dressed with cocked hats and swords, and uniforms of generals and princes, which, though highly picturesque, were not of a very martial character, or calculated to stand much wear and tear, being chiefly adorned with coloured paper and tinsel. The tones of their voices showed that, notwithstanding the lofty-sounding names they assumed, they were not of an aristocratic rank, nor, though they all spoke in poetry, was that of a very marked order. There was Julius Caesar, and Mark Antony, and Caractacus, and the Black Prince, and King Arthur, and Richard the Third, the Emperor Alexander, Marshal Blücher, and several other heroes, ancient and modern, including Napoleon Bonaparte and the Duke of Wellington. Some were tall, and some were short, and some fat, and others thin, and I had, even then, strong doubts whether they bore any similarity to the heroes they represented as to figure, while, certainly, they were not in any way particular as to correctness of costume. One little chap, who was evidently looked upon as a star, came forward and announced that he was Julius Caesar, and a short time afterwards he informed us that he was Marshal Blücher. Having marched round the hall in a very amicable way, they ranged themselves in two parties opposite each other. One hero on one side defying another on the other, they rushed forward and commenced, in the ancient Greek and Trojan fashion, a furious verbal combat, always in verse, the last

lines in one case being:

> "I tell thee that thou art but a traitrous cheat,
> So fight away, or I will make thee into mince-meat."

They were not in the least particular as to who should fight one with the other. Julius Caesar and the Black Prince had a desperate combat, and so had Mark Antony and King Arthur, the two British heroes coming off victorious, and leaving their opponents dead on the field. The most terrific combat was that between the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon Bonaparte. For folly five minutes they walked about abusing each other in the most unmeasured versification, I was going to say language, flourishing their swords, and stamping their feet. They put me much in mind of two turkey-cocks preparing for a fight. It might be remarked also that in this, as in the previous instances, the modesty of the heroes did not stand in their way, when singing their own praises:

> "I am that hero, great and good,
> Whom France and Frenchmen long withstood.
> I beat them all well out of Spain
> And I will beat them all again.
> And Bony, as you know 'tis true,
> I thrashed thee well at Waterloo
> So if you have not had enough,
> All will allow you're very tough;

Come on, I say, I do not mind thee,
For as I was, you still will find me."

Thus spoke the great Duke of Wellington. Bony answered in a similar, only in a somewhat more abusive strain, when, throwing the sheaths of their swords on the floor, they commenced a furious and deadly combat. At length Napoleon was slain; but, somewhat outraging our school notions of history, Julius Caesar rushed forward to avenge his death. He, however, got more than he expected, and was soon laid alongside Bony. One hero after another rushed forward, but all were finally slain, and the Iron Duke remained master of the field. He, however, overcome by fatigue and numberless wounds, sunk down at last, and died also. Now a new character appeared at the door, in the person of a doctor, with a long nose and a stick, which he held constantly to it. Having explained who he was and what he would do, or rather what very few things he couldn't do, he produced a huge snuff-box from his pocket, and first approached the slain hero of Waterloo, saying, —

"Take some of my sniff-snuff,
Up thy riff-ruff,
And rise up, brave Duke of Wellington."

Up jumped the Duke with wonderful agility, and began dancing about right merrily. The same words produced a similar effect on all the late combatants, and, the doctor helping them

up, they were all soon dancing and jumping about as merrily as the Duke. This amusement was of short duration, and a moral was taught us as to the brevity of all worldly happiness, for suddenly, the door bursting open, in rushed a huge figure like a moving holly-bush, but it had a head and arms and legs. It was of an allegorical character, intended to represent Time; but, instead of a scythe, the arms held a broom, by lustily plying which, he speedily swept all the heroes and the great doctor off the stage. These mummers, as they are called in that part of the country, always used to excite my warmest admiration. We used to call them jiggery-mummers at Foxholme, because they danced or jigged in the peculiar fashion I have described. They are a remnant of the morris-dancers of olden days. They were generally called on to repeat this play in the servants' hall, and often in my younger days did I steal down to witness the exhibition. This closed the public amusements of the evening. The evening of that holy day at Foxholme was always spent in a quiet, though in a cheerful way. Sir Hugh would have preferred having the mummers perform on another day, but the custom was so ancient, and the people were so opposed to the notion of a change, that he permitted it to exist till he could induce them to choose of their own accord another day. We spent a very pleasant, happy evening, and we knew that for the next day Master Peter had prepared all sorts of games for our amusement. Little Hugh had been with his mother watching the mummers, and highly amused, giving way to shouts of hearty laughter. Then

he ran off to Julia, while Lady Worsley was attending to some of her guests; next he attached himself for a time to Master Peter, and from him made his escape into the servants' hall to witness the mummers' second representation. I remember that Jack and I, with several other boys, went out before returning into the drawing-room to smell the air, and to discover if there was a frost. How pure and fresh and keen it was. The gravel on the walk felt crisp as we trod on it. The stars in countless numbers shone with an extraordinary brilliancy from the dark cloudless sky. There was no doubt about a frost, and a pretty sharp one too, and our hopes rose of getting sliding, skating, and snowballing to our hearts' content. While we were standing with our faces turned towards the park, I remember that Jack, who had a sharp pair of eyes, said that he saw a deer running across it. We declared that it must have been fancy, as it was difficult to make out an object through the darkness, except it was against the sky, at a distance even of twenty yards. As we had run out without our hats, we very quickly returned into the warm house.

# Story 1-Chapter III

We were sitting round Master Peter, listening to an account he was giving us of a trip he once made, when a midshipman, through Palestine, when the drawing-room door opened, and Mrs Moss, little Hugh's nurse, appeared, to beg that he might be sent up to bed. There was nothing unusual for Nurse Moss coming for Master Hugh, who always objected to be sent off to bed, but I saw Lady Worsley turn suddenly pale.

"Why, nurse, I thought that he had gone to you nearly half an hour ago," she exclaimed. "He has not come into the drawing-room since the mummers were here. Oh! where can he be?"

"Probably coiled up in an arm-chair in the other drawing-room, or in the study," said Sir Hugh, calmly, seeing our aunt's agitation; but I thought that even his eye looked anxious. The next moment everybody was hunting about in every possible direction. The child was not in the north drawing-room, nor in the ante-room, nor in the study. That was soon made clear. Where was he, though? Some of the party went down-stairs, to help the servants look in that part of the house; others searched through the bedrooms. Every cupboard, every chest and box, was opened. We looked under every arm-chair, and bed, and sofa in the house. We boys were, I must say, the most active in our movements, and it was a mercy that we did not set the house on fire. We looked into every attic – those inhabited and those full of lumber. In the

latter I should not have been quite happy alone. They were full of so many strange articles of furniture and ornaments, or what were once considered such, and pictures in corners, with eyes, as the light of our candles fell on them, staring out so curiously, that I could not help fancying that some person had got in there to frighten us. Frequently the cry was echoed through the house – "Is he found? is he found?" with a reply in the negative. Sir Hugh headed one party, Lady Worsley another, Cousin Peter a third, and Julia a fourth. After a most systematic search not a trace of the lost child could be discovered. Matters had now become very painful. Our aunt was almost overpowered with her feelings of anxiety, and Julia was nearly as much agitated. Sir Hugh next summoned the servants, as well as all the family, into the hall, and questioned every one to discover by whom his son had last been seen. Several of the servants acknowledged to have observed him enter the servants' hall, but no one could say positively that he had gone out again. No further information could be elicited from any one. The matter had become truly alarming and mysterious. While the female part of the household continued the search within the house, we, with all the lanterns which could be mustered, and extemporised torches, began a search outside. The ringers and the singers and the mummers had taken their departure. Messengers were, therefore, sent after them to the village, to call them back, that they might be questioned. The child would scarcely have left the house of his own accord, and yet, if not, who would have ventured to carry him away? What

temptation, indeed, would there have been for any one to do so? That was the question. I had never seen Cousin Peter in such a state of agitation as he now was, though he tried to be calm and composed. Round and round the house we went, and looked under every tree and bush, and into every dark corner. At last the mummers, and the singers, and ringers, began to come up from the village, accompanied by the greater part of the population of the place, all anxious to know what had happened. A variety of rumours were afloat. Everybody sympathised with our uncle. As soon as they were assembled he addressed them, and then begged those who had anything to say to step forward that he might hear them one by one. Not a word of information, however, was elicited of any value. They had seen little Hugh in the servants' hall, and on one occasion he had darted forward and run in and out among the mummers; but they thought that he had gone back again among the servants. Hopes had been entertained that he, for a freak, had run off with the mummers or singers; but they all positively asserted that he was not with them when they left the Hall. Inquiries were made whether any suspicious characters had been seen in the neighbourhood. The people talked for some time among themselves. Then John Hodson, the village blacksmith, stepped forward, and said that two days before a stranger had spoken to him as he was working in his smithy, and asked a number of questions about the place; but he didn't mind them at the time, and thought that it was only for curiosity's sake. The cobbler, Ebenezer Patch, also recollected that a stranger

had spoken to him, but he didn't heed much at the time what questions were asked or what were answered.

"What was he like, Patch?" asked Sir Hugh, in a hoarse voice, which sounded strange to my ears.

"Why, Sir Hugh, he had, I marked, a very white, long face, and he had an odd bend in his back, which made him look somewhat short. He spoke gently, I mind, just like a gentleman, and I made no doubt that he was one," answered the cobbler.

The blacksmith gave the same account of the stranger. It seemed to agitate our uncle strangely; so it did Cousin Peter. They talked aside for some time.

"Can that wretched man have had anything to do with it?" I heard Sir Hugh say.

"Too probably, indeed, should he really have been in the neighbourhood. I fear so," remarked Cousin Peter. "At all events, we must endeavour to discover where he has gone. He is capable of any daring deed of wickedness. My only hope is that we are mistaken in supposing that the person seen was he."

"The description suits him too closely to leave any doubt on my mind."

I did not hear more, and I had no idea who the person was of whom they were speaking, except that he was the stranger seen in the village; nor could I tell why they should fancy he had had anything to do with the disappearance of little Hugh.

After a further consultation, Cousin Peter and two other gentlemen went to their rooms, and returned booted and spurred,

and, putting on their great-coats, accompanied by Sam Barnby, rode off in two parties in different directions. Notwithstanding this, another search, intended to be still more rigid than the first, was instituted, both inside and outside the house. Meantime, Sir Hugh had ordered lights into the library, and spent the night writing letters to magistrates and others, and papers of all sorts for printing, offering rewards for the recovery of the lost child. Lady Worsley was for most of the time in the drawing-room with Julia and several other Indies, who were in vain attempting to comfort her. No one went to bed that night at Foxholme Park. We boys were called in by Sir Hugh, and highly proud at being employed by him in copying notices to be sent out in the morning, offering a reward for the discovery of little Hugh. We were all very sorry for the loss of our small cousin; but we liked the excitement amazingly. For my part, I must own that I could not, however, altogether forget the games Cousin Peter had prepared for us, and the amusement we had anticipated, and regret for the fun and frolic we should miss, mingled somewhat with the sorrow I really felt for the loss of little Hugh, and the trouble which had come on our uncle and aunt and all the family.

# Story 1-Chapter IV

Morning came at last, and as the family assembled in the breakfast-room with pale anxious faces, the question again and again was asked if any trace had been found of little Hugh, Cousin Peter and the other gentlemen, and Sam Barnby, came back; but they did not appear to have anything satisfactory to communicate. Poor Cousin Peter, I never saw his face look so long and miserable. I thought the anxiety would kill him. He deemed to feel the event even more than Sir Hugh, who several times murmured, "God's will be done, whatever has happened to the child." It must be a great thing to be able to say that under all the trials of life. With daylight the search through the park and grounds was recommenced. I know that I cried outright when I saw men with nets dragging the ponds. I had not realised the possibility that the dear little fellow might actually be dead, as this proceeding suggested. I was very thankful each time that I saw the drags come up empty. As I remarked, the ground had become so hard early in the evening, that no footprints could have been left on it. This circumstance made it impossible to discover the direction little Hugh could have taken, had he gone off by himself, which it was utterly improbable he should have done, or that of anybody else.

Several gentlemen, county magistrates, and lawyers, and constables, came during the day to see Sir Hugh, some to offer

him advice and assistance, others to receive his directions. He and Cousin Peter seemed at last to have made up their minds that little Hugh had been carried off by the mysterious individual who had been seen by the blacksmith and cobbler; but how he had contrived to get into the house, no one could tell. The mummers indignantly denied that any stranger could have come in with them, while the servants as positively asserted that no one whom they did not know had entered the house that evening. Another guest had been expected in the afternoon, a Mr Strafford. I had remarked that whenever his name was mentioned, Cousin Julia had looked very interested, and once or twice I saw a blush rising on her cheek. He had been there before, and Sir Hugh spoke highly of him. Julia had met him at a house where she had been staying in the summer. Cousin Peter, on the contrary, looked sad and pained, I fancied, whenever he was spoken of; and putting that and other things together, I had little doubt that Mr Strafford was a suitor for Cousin Julia's hand. I was, therefore, curious to know what sort of a person Mr Strafford was. Both Sir Hugh and Julia expressed themselves anxious for his arrival, under the belief that he would materially assist in discovering what had become of little Hugh. Why, I could not tell, except that he was a barrister, and that barristers were supposed to be very clever fellows, who can always find out everything. It was late in the afternoon, growing dusk, when a post-chaise drove up to the door, and a slight, active, very intelligent and good-looking young man got out of it. I was in a low window in the ante-room

reading, hidden by the back of a large arm-chair. I looked out of the window and saw the new arrival, who the next instant was in the room, when Julia went out to meet him. From the way they greeted each other, I had no longer any doubt of the true state of the case. They of course did not see me, or they might not have been so demonstrative. Mr Strafford listened with knitted brow to the account Julia gave him of little Hugh's disappearance, or rather I may say of his abduction, for she had no doubt of his having been carried off by the mysterious stranger.

"It is a sad alternative, for the sake of the family; but I see no other course to pursue," said Mr Strafford. "The unhappy man must be captured at all hazards. If we attempt to make any private compromise, he will escape, and too probably never allow us to hear more of your brother. For his own sake, I do not think that he will have ventured to be guilty of violence."

"Oh! the disgrace, the disgrace to the family!" dried Julia. "Yet he cannot be so cruel, so ungrateful, so wicked, as to venture to hurt poor dear little Hugh."

"On that score set your mind at rest," answered Mr Strafford. "He will try to escape with him, I suspect, to the coast of France, and his plan will be to take him to some distant place where he thinks we shall not discover him. I have no doubt that your father and cousin have already taken measures to stop him. At all events we will see about it at once, as there is no time to lose." Mr Strafford now went on into the drawing-room, where Sir Hugh and Lady Worsley were waiting to see him. From

what I had heard, I now began to suspect who the mysterious stranger was. I hurried off to consult with Jack on the subject. He agreed with me that he must be a cousin of Sir Hugh's, who, being his nearest kinsman of the male branch of the family, would succeed to the title and estates, should he die without a son. This man, Everard Worsley, was always a wild profligate character, and was at present outlawed, so that he could not venture to show his face openly in England. Of course it would be a great thing for him to get the heir out of the way, as should no other son be born to Sir Hugh, he would probably be able to have the statute of outlawry removed (I think that is the proper term), and come and take possession, and turn Lady Worsley and Cousin Julia out of the house, and send all the old servants about their business, and fill the place with his own abandoned, reprobate companions, and hangers on. This was a possibility, I had heard it whispered, might occur. It was the skeleton in the family cupboard; it was the not improbable event of all others to be dreaded and deplored. I had heard, too, that this disreputable kinsman was nearly related to Cousin Peter, and that Cousin Peter had an unbounded abhorrence for him, that is to say, as much as he could have for any human being. I fancied that Cousin Peter himself was in the line of succession, though I did not know exactly where; but I was very certain that nothing would have caused him more acute sorrow than to see those he loved so well removed to make way for him.

I observed that Cousin Peter met Mr Strafford in the most

frank and cordial manner, and at once entered with him into a discussion as to the steps which should next be taken for the recovery of the child. I did not hear all that was to be done. I knew, however, that a number of the most intelligent and trustworthy men in the neighbourhood were engaged. Some were sent off to all the places on the coast whence boats could get off, to ascertain if any had gone across the channel, and to examine any which might be going, while other parties were, as soon as it was daylight, to scour the forest in every direction. We boys, under Sam Barnby, were, much to our satisfaction, to engage in this latter service. Sir Hugh and the rest of the family, overcome with fatigue, were compelled to go to bed; but all night long people were coming and going with messages, showing that a very vigilant and active search was being carried on. Neither Cousin Peter nor Mr Strafford, however, went to bed, as they had taken upon themselves the direction of the search. Indeed, unless Everard Worsley had succeeded at once in getting away from the neighbourhood, it seemed scarcely possible that he should now be able to make his escape.

# Story 1-Chapter V

Long before daybreak we boys were up, called by Sam Barnby, and, having breakfasted, and by his advice, filled our pockets with bread and ham and tongue and brawn, set off while the first streaks of dawn were still in the sky, to commence our search through the forest. The sky was cloudless, the stars shining brightly at first, but one by one they disappeared as the light streaming through the leafless trees on the one hand, seemed to be rolling back the gloom of night on the other. The air was pure, but keen as razor-blades, as Sam observed, and would have saved us shaving, if we had had beards to shave. The crisply frozen grass crackled under our feet as we trod rapidly over it, with difficulty restraining our inclination to sing and shout out, so high were our spirits raised by the exhilarating atmosphere.

We walked on rapidly, covering, by Sam Barnby's directions, as much ground as possible, while, however, keeping each other in sight, which could be more easily done at that time of the year than in the summer. Every now and then we came on a herd of forest ponies, which went scampering away, shaking the hoar frost from the bushes as their shaggy coats brushed them in passing. Less frequently we encountered herds of the fallow deer, once so numerous. They would stand for an instant gazing at us, as if wondering why we had invaded their domains, and then, fleet as the wind, they would fly, following one after the

other, till they reached some knoll or thicker wood, where they would stop and scrutinise us as we passed. We were all soon in a thorough glow from the exercise we were taking, for the ground was far from level. Now we had to ascend a height, now descend into a valley, circuit a marsh, or leap across a stream – a feat not always easily accomplished.

We passed many spots of historic fame which I cannot here stop to describe. Many were highly picturesque and beautiful, and had attracted, I doubt not, the pencil of Gilpin, who was minister of Boldre, not far off. On we went, hour after hour, unflaggingly, till Sam called a halt, and each of us produced the provender we had brought. Sam had strapped a large fishing-basket to his back, and to our infinite satisfaction, when we found that our own supplies were totally inadequate to satisfy the cravings of our keen appetites, he brought forth an abundance of eatables and a bottle or two of the stoutest of stout ales, that, as he remarked, a little might go a long way. There must have been real stuff in it, for, though he gave us each but a few thimblefuls, it set us up amazingly, and away we went as full of spirit and strength as when we first started.

I cannot describe all the adventures we met with. Jack was on the right of the line, I was next to him. Suddenly I heard him cry out. I ran up to him, calling to the others to halt. Jack pointed to an object under a bush. It was the body of a man.

"Is he asleep?" I asked.

"He is very quiet," said Jack.

Indeed he was quiet. All our shouting did not arouse him. He was dressed in a smock frock and long brown gaiters; but his hands were white, and his face fair. “He is dead, young gentlemen!” said Sam Barnby, gravely, when he came up. “Who can he be?”

We all stood aloof. None of us had ever seen a dead mail. It was a sad object. Sam, stooping down, examined the body.

“To my mind, this is no other than the unfortunate gentleman we are looking for. He is no carter, and under his smock his dress is that of a gentleman.”

This was indeed valuable information to carry home. Sam wanted as to help him remove the body, but we had no fancy to do that. What, however, had become of little Hugh? If the miserable man had really carried him off, where had he bestowed him? Could he have murdered the child first, and then destroyed himself? The thought was too dreadful to be entertained. How had he met with his death? That was another question. Again Sam examined the body.

“This tells a tale, at all events,” he exclaimed, holding up a little shoe.

It was evidently Hugh’s. This man had carried him off – of that there was no longer a shadow of doubt. What had become of him though? We searched round and round the spot, under every bush, and in the hollow of every tree. Not a further sign of the child could we discover. There would be still daylight sufficient for us to go to the Hall with the information, and to return. The

question was who should go and who should stay by the dead body, which we considered that we ought not to leave. Without Sam we could not find our way, so it was necessary that he should go, at all events. At last my brother Jack asked me if I would remain with him. I own that I did not like it. There was something terrible at the thought of being out alone with the dead body of our wicked kinsman, as we supposed the man to be. Yet I did not wish to exhibit any fear, and put as bold a face on the matter as I could.

"Yes, of course, if you wish it, Jack, I'll stay with you," I answered at once. "Somebody must stay, and I suppose that we are the right people to do so. We can run about to keep ourselves warm. I shan't, of course, mind it a bit, if you don't. You'll not be long gone, will you, Sam?"

"Oh, no fear, Master William," answered Sam Barnby; "we'll be at the Hall and back in no time. We've come a long round to get here."

This answer encouraged me a little, and I managed, I flatter myself, to look thoroughly unconcerned. We had each of us thick sticks: not that there was anything to fight with; for even wild hogs don't attack people who let them alone; but I know that I clutched mine very tightly as the rest of the party disappeared among the trees of the forest, and Jack and I were left on guard. As to looking on the dead man, that was more than I dared do; so I walked about, flourishing my stick and talking to Jack, as far as I could get from the spot where the dead man lay, consistently

with my undertaking to keep guard over it. Jack did not seem to care very much about the matter. Now he walked close up to the spot; then he joined me and talked on indifferent subjects, though I don't think that even he cared to look directly at the dead man. We began at last to become very tired of our guard, and to wish that our friends would return and relieve us. I had no watch. Jack had forgotten to wind up his, so we could not tell how time sped.

Not far off was a dark clump of hollies, to which I had extended my walk. As I was turning round, I heard a slight rustling of the leaves, and, to my inexpressible horror, I caught a glimpse of a pair of eyes gleaming out at me through an opening in the boughs. I instantly connected them somehow with the man supposed to be dead, and, when I hurried back to Jack, I half expected to find that the body had got up, and, by some means or other, gone round into the holly-bush. No; there it lay, quiet enough, never more to move of its own accord. But to what could those eyes belong?

"Jack! Jack!" I stammered out, feeling that I must look very pale and frightened, "I have seen a pair of eyes!"

"Whereabouts?" asked Jack. "I suppose that they are in somebody's head, then?"

"That's the question," said I; "I am not quite so sure of it."

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Jack; "let's have a look at the place. Where did you see them?"

I pointed to the spot, and plucking up courage as he walked up to it, followed him, clutching my stick tightly. The holly-bushes

formed a tolerably large screen, so that we should have to make a wide circuit to get to the rear. Nothing was to be seen in front. No eyes were visible where I had caught the glimpse of them. Jack said it was fancy, but still he had an inclination to examine further. I would rather have waited till the arrival of our friends, but he, telling me to go round one end, ran round the other, that we might catch anybody who might be there. I didn't like it, but still I went, feeling that I was performing a deed of mighty heroism. I was resolved not to allow Jack to call me a coward; indeed, he very seldom did so, because anything that he dared do, I did; the only difference was that he liked it, and I didn't. I got round therefore as fast as he did, and just behind the spot where I had seen the eyes, there they were again, but this time I discerned a head and face into which they were fixed – a face I had seen before.

"There, there!" I cried, pointing to the face as Jack came up.

It was that of the poor idiot lad, Dicky Green. He was crouching down, evidently trying to conceal himself from us.

"Why, Dicky, what are you doing here?" cried Jack. "We won't hurt you."

"I was a looking to see what'd happen next. He's a sleeping, bean't he?" answered the idiot, pointing in the direction of the dead man.

"It's a sleep from which he will never awake, lad," said Jack. "He is dead, lad."

"Lor', be he? Then you won't go for to tell of I?" exclaimed

Dicky, whimpering. “Mother sent I to look for the little one’s shoe, when I told her how I’d got hold of him and gi’en the man as was a trying to take him from me a pretty hard clout on the head. I thought I’d made him quiet, but I ne’er meaned to kill him, that I didn’t.”

“The little one!” cried Jack, a new light bursting on us. “What do you know of him? Where is he?”

“Oh, he’s all right, and happy as he can be, I wot,” said Dicky, with a grin, which made us doubt the truth of his assertion.

Our fear now, however, was that the idiot would escape from us before we could ascertain whether or not he really did know where little Hugh was. Still, we could not help hoping that the child was safe. Jack therefore did his best to keep him talking till our friends should come from the Hull. Happily, the poor creature was very fond of keeping his tongue moving, as other people with a limited supply of brains are apt to do. Though he talked on, we could not make out more than we had already. To our great relief, we heard at length the sound of voices approaching us. Soon Sir Hugh, with Cousin Peter, Mr Strafford, and several other gentlemen on horseback, with Sam Barnby and a whole posse of men, appeared in the distance. We shouted to them to come to us. No sooner did Dicky Green see them, than he began to tremble violently; then, looking to the right and left, he bolted off through the forest. Fortunately, Cousin Peter saw him, and gave chase on horseback; Sam Barnby also followed in the direction we pointed. Still Dicky ran very fast, dodging in

and out among the trees. Meantime, Sir Hugh and Mr Strafford rode up to where the dead body lay on the grass. As soon as Sir Hugh saw the features of the corpse, he said in a sad voice:

"It is that unhappy man, cut off in the middle of his career; but my boy, my boy, where can he be?"

Though Dicky Green ran fast, he was ere long overtaken and brought back. He stood before the gentlemen with one of his most idiotic looks, which made it seem hopeless that anything could be got out of him.

"Come, come, Dicky, that will not do for us," said Cousin Peter; "rouse yourself up and tell us all you know about this matter. No one will do you any harm, lad."

Thus spoken to kindly, after some time, Dicky looked up and said:

"Thee wants to know about the little chap, and if I tells thee, thee won't ask how that one there came by his death?"

"If we do ask, it will not be to bring any harm on you, Dicky. You may be assured of that," said Cousin Peter.

Dicky thought for some time, and then began to move off through the forest.

"He is going towards his mother's cottage; I shouldn't be surprised if little Master Hugh be there safe enough," whispered Sam Barnby.

"Bless you, bless you, Sam Barnby, for those words, and I believe that they are true," exclaimed Sir Hugh, as we all followed the idiot, except a couple of men, who were left with the dead

body.

In a short time we reached a wretched tumble-down hut of mud, with a roof of thatch, green with age, and full of holes, in which birds had built their nests. There at one end we found a bed-ridden old woman, the idiot's mother, and on a little pallet-bed in the further corner lay a blooming child fast asleep. Sir Hugh stepped forward, signing to us not to make a noise, and lifting the child in his arms, bestowed a kiss on its brow. The boy awoke, and seeing his father – for it was our dear little Hugh – threw his arms round his neck and exclaimed:

"You've come, papa, for Hugh at last; Hugh is so glad, so happy!"

It was a happy meeting we all had at the Hall that evening, and grateful were the hearts of Sir Hugh and Lady Worsley at the recovery of their darling boy. I remember that afterwards there was an inquest, and that the magistrates met, but, except from the ravings of poor Dicky Green, there was no evidence how the deceased gentleman who was found in the forest came by his death. He was accordingly buried quietly in the parish churchyard, and as little fuss as possible made about the matter, though of course it had the usual run of a nine days' wonder. I am happy to say that little Hugh grew up, and as he is the father of a number of boys, there is not much chance of the property going out of the old line for want of a male heir.

# Story 2-Chapter I

Two of the most powerful nobles of England, the Duke of Somerset and the Earl of Warwick, were one fine summer's day, in the year of our Lord 1449, walking together in the Temple Gardens, on the banks of the Thames. Their conversations were on affairs of state. Ere long they expressed decided differences of opinion. Their tempers warmed up; the dispute ran high. They appealed to the nobles and gentlemen attending on them, but all drew back. They had long been rivals, each seeking for power and influence. Warwick possessed immense popularity both with the soldiery and populace. He is since well known in history as the Kingmaker. He was not a man to brook opposition.

"It is well that we should know our foes from our friends," he exclaimed, plucking as he spoke a white rose from a bush which grew near. "Let all who claim to be my friends wear henceforth the white rose in their helms or caps."

"And I, too, wish to know who are my friends and who my foes," said the Duke of Somerset, walking on rapidly till he reached a red rose-tree which he saw in the distance. "I shall expect all those who love me, or the cause I espouse, to wear this flower of blushing hue."

Several knights and gentlemen hurried after the duke, and imitated his example in placing red roses in their caps. The earl watched the proceedings of his rival with a smile.

"My challenge is quickly accepted," he observed, turning to those who surrounded him. "But am I to stand alone? Have I no friends who wish to show that they are ready to espouse my cause?"

"Ten thousand swords would be ready to leap from their scabbards the moment you summon them," answered a sturdy knight, Sir Herbert de Beauville. "I, for one, am ready to risk castle, and lands, and jewels, and life itself, in your service; and as a pledge of my sincerity, I place this white rose in my helm, and, so help me Heaven, may I ever be true to it and to you while life remains!"

The rest of the party, following the knight's example, pledged themselves to the earl, and placed white roses in their helms or caps. It was curious to see the two parties, as they henceforth walked apart with the insignia they had so hastily assumed prominently displayed, eyeing each other with glances indicative, it might be, of that fearful struggle which was so soon to commence, and to devastate the fair land of England and deluge it with blood. Some of those present turned traitors to the cause they had espoused, and others more than once changed sides, but amply did Sir Herbert de Beauville fulfil the pledge he had given on that occasion. He was one of those men who consider that black is black, and white is white, and so, having passed his word that he would wear the white rose and support the house of York, he fought on, amid all its changing fortunes, till he had lost the larger portion of his once ample possessions. His

ancestral castle of Beauville, in the north of England, in a sadly dilapidated condition, with its park and a few hundred acres of land, was at length all that remained to him. In the fatal fight on Bosworth Field, holding himself bravely, as was his wont, he was desperately wounded. He would have fallen from his horse had not he been supported by his faithful servitor, Roger Bertrand, who led him from the fight to a retired spot near a brook, where he could attend to his gaping wounds, and stanch the life-blood flowing from his veins. In vain, however, the brave squire exerted all his skill. It was too clear to him that his beloved master's hours were numbered. The knight also was well aware that his last blow had been struck for the cause he had so long espoused, and that he should soon be numbered with the dead. He committed, therefore, his wife and young son, who was named after him, to Roger's care.

"Mark you, Roger, watch over the boy as a precious jewel. Remember his noble blood and parentage, bring him up as becomes both, and above all things, when he comes to man's estate, take care that he finds a bride befitting him, and does not wed beneath him. I fear me much that I do not leave him as rich a heritage as I received, but should quiet times ever come back to this realm of England, with your careful nursing, it may once more be made as profitable as of yore. You know my wishes, good Roger; I can speak no more. Especially in that one point of marriage guide the boy aright. Lift me up. How goes the fight? Let me behold the white rose of York once more triumphant. See

– see – they charge forward! No – alas! they turn and fly. Then welcome death!" The old knight, pressing Roger's hand, uttered the word, "Remember," and fell back and died.

The brave serving-man, rising to his feet, stood over the dead body of his master with drawn sword, to protect it from spoliation, and ultimately succeeded in bearing it off from the field, so as to give it honoured sepulture in the precincts of the neighbouring church. The priests were desirous to keep the knight's armour in pawn, that masses might be said for the repose of his soul.

"Thanks, reverend and worthy gentlemen," answered Roger, quietly. "But my dear master was as hearty a prayer as he was a fighter, and methinks if he's failed while he lived to make his peace with Heaven, nothing that you or any other can say will aid him now that he is gone, and knows more about the matter than you and all the world besides put together."

"What rank heresy is this you are speaking?" exclaimed the priest. "The prayers of the Church not of use to the dead, do you say? This savours strongly of the abominable tenets of Wycliffe. Why, you must belong to the abominable sect of the Lollards, Master Roger."

"Nay, but I was only speaking in the case of my good master," answered the latter, in his quiet tone. "I said that he was a hearty prayer; and what is the use of a man's praying if his prayers are not to be heard? But if my master's prayers were heard – and I am sure they were – then there is no further need of any one

praying for him. I am a true son of Holy Mother Church. I know nothing of Master Wycliffe, and conclude that he has been dead no small number of years."

The priest, not accustomed in those days to controversy, had nothing to say in reply to Roger's remarks, though, still suspecting him strongly to be a Lollard, he would have liked to entrap him, and have the power to bring down punishment on his head. Honest Roger, however, not aware of the feelings of animosity he had excited, frankly wished the irate ecclesiastic farewell, and with the arms and armour of his late master, all that remained of him, took his departure for the now mourning castle of Beauville.

It is not necessary to describe the grief of the Lady Beauville, nor of the young Herbert, who was of an age to feel deeply the loss he had suffered. As may have been suspected, Roger Bertram was a Lollard, as was also the mistress of the castle, though they had found it necessary to conceal their opinions. Young Herbert was accordingly brought up in the principles of Wycliffe, a copy of whose New Testament was one of the most prized possessions of his mother. It was her chief delight to instruct her son in the glorious truths it contained. Alas! however, the shock she received on hearing of the death of her beloved lord, and the complete overthrow of the cause for which he had so long striven and fought, was so great, that from that time she sank gradually, and ere long followed her husband to the grave.

Roger Bertram thoroughly carried out his promise to his

master. Young Herbert de Beauville grew up into a noble-looking youth, who, though he did not possess any large amount of book-learning, was the leader in all the manly exercises of the period. He was brave and open-hearted, of a kind and generous disposition, and had ever proved himself affectionate and obedient to the guardian placed over him. He had, however, a determined will of his own, and Roger discovered that, if he wished to retain his influence over his ward, he must not pull the reins of authority too tightly.

As Herbert increased in years this became more and more evident, especially when the youth mixed in the world, and there were not wanting those who urged him to assert his own independence, and who hinted that, now he had grown nearly to man's estate, it was no longer incumbent on him to obey implicitly one who had merely been placed in authority to watch over him while he was a boy. Good Roger Bertram, though he was able conscientiously to do his duty with regard to watching over his young charge, found that it was a difficult matter to restore a fallen house, and to bring long-neglected lands again into cultivation. The old retainers and tenants who once cultivated the fields had been carried off by their feudal lord to the wars, and their bones lay bleaching on many a battle-field. The lands could not be let, and no money was therefore forthcoming to restore the dilapidated castle fast crumbling to pieces. It had never been restored since the last siege laid to it by the Lancastrians. At that time a large portion of the walls

had been battered by cannon, then only recently introduced, and another part had been undermined: the enemy, indeed, were on the point of forcing an entrance, when it was relieved by the appearance of the Yorkist party. Roger's hope, therefore, was that as soon as his young lord was of age he would retrieve his fortunes by a wealthy marriage. Unfortunately there would, he knew, be much difficulty in finding a bride for him among the fallen Yorkist families, us greedy King Henry took good care to confiscate all the property he could from any excuse lay hands on. Roger was also himself much attached to the principles of the Lollards, and he wished, if possible, that the young Herbert should marry into a family which held them. There were many families at that time who read Wycliffe's Bible and Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" – more, indeed, than are generally supposed. The English, as a nation, never bowed the neck very readily to Rome, and even in the darkest days there were some who put no faith in her assumptions and pretensions. The more enlightened had also ere this discovered what a clog to the prosperity and progress of the country existed in the many thousands of lazy and idle monks and friars, and other members of what were called religious orders. Still it may be considered that the lower classes generally, and many of the upper, were ignorant in the extreme, and believed in all those gross superstitions which have ever been the direct result of the teaching of the Church of Rome, where no counteracting influences are at work. As Roger did not himself possess much book-learning, he was compelled to leave young

Herbert under the instruction of Father Mathew, the curate of the parish, to whom Sir Herbert had confided the charge of his education. Not that the knight had any great esteem for the learning of the father, but simply that he knew of no one else under whom he could place his son.

Father Mathew was not a learned man, but he had cleverness enough to conceal his ignorance, and Sir Herbert, who, though a brave soldier, was no clerk, was not likely to find it out. If the truth must be said, the curate was himself fonder of hawk and hound than of his books, and it was whispered that if a fat pullet came in his way, even on a fast day, he did not always turn aside from the temptation. He could, however, do more than many of his brethren, for he could not only read his breviary, but write a neat hand and copy manuscripts with precision – an art he had learned in the cloister, and which was still the chief mode of multiplying books; for printing had only been introduced into England about twenty years before. Such was Father Mathew; in the main, with all his faults, an honest man. Roger, who had more shrewdness than his late lord, was not altogether satisfied with him, but he consoled himself with the thought that his young charge might have had a worse preceptor when he saw him growing into a fine handsome young man, with many noble and generous qualities, though certainly more addicted to field sports and athletic exercises than to the study of any of those branches of knowledge by which he might restore the fallen fortunes of his house.

Meantime, Roger was not unmindful of his purpose to secure a rich wife for his young lord. He looked about in every direction, far and near; but the only damsel he could hear of at all likely to prove suitable was the Lady Barbara, the only child of the stout Baron Fitz Osbert. She was said to be fair to look on, and pious and good, and possessed of all the accomplishments which distinguished well-brought-up young ladies in those days. There were difficulties to be overcome, however. Herbert had not seen her, and might not be willing to wed her when he did. Her father, the baron, had been a stout Lancastrian, and, although the rival houses of York and Lancaster were now united under Tudor rule, he was very likely to be prejudiced against the son of an old opponent. While the honest Roger was travelling about the country and troubling himself greatly in search of the desired heiress, an event occurred which seemed likely to bring his schemes to naught. Herbert was one day returning from hawking – the quarry having led him a long distance from home – when, as he was passing through a wood of some extent, he heard a cry and loud shouts for help. Urging on his steed over the green sward, he saw two persons on horseback endeavouring to escape from three armed men on foot. That the latter were robbers he had little doubt – Cornishmen, from Lord Audley's wild troops, after the fight at Blackheath. One of the persons on horseback was a country damsel, and, from the panniers between which she sat, it appeared she had been to dispose of the produce of her farm at market; the other was a serving-man, or farm-

servant, apparently, for he also had a number of baskets slung about his horse. He had a bow at his back and a trusty sword by his side, with which he might, if necessary, defend his young mistress. These ideas passed through Herbert's mind the moment the scene appeared before him. The serving-man had drawn his sword, and was endeavouring to keep the robbers at bay. The robbers, however, seemed to be laughing at his efforts, and while one of them was keeping him in play, the other two had run round on either side, and were on the point of seizing the reins of the damsel's pony, when Herbert appeared. He dashed forward, and, with the impetuosity of youth, without asking any questions, cut down one of the robbers, and was about to treat the other in the same way when he made his escape between the trees. The serving-man had in the meantime given a good account of the robber who had attacked him, who lay wounded and, to all appearance, dying on the ground. He had, however, first contrived to give honest Rolfe a severe cut on the arm and another on the side, which would probably have compelled him to yield to the attacks of the other ruffians had not young Herbert de Beauville come to his assistance. The damsel had wonderfully maintained her self-possession during the events which have been described; but when Herbert reached her, and, taking her hand, assured her that all danger was past, her pale cheeks and quivering lips told him that she could not longer contain her feelings. He helped her to dismount, and placing her on the trunk of a fallen tree, endeavoured to calm her spirits, while Rolfe

limped off to fill a bowl, which he had just purchased in the market, with water from a neighbouring brook. This revived the damsel, and, as soon as she was able to speak, after thanking Herbert for the service he had rendered her, she told him that her name was Gertrude Alwyn, and that she lived with her father, stout John Alwyn, a yeoman, on his farm nearly a league off.

"Then I must offer my services to escort you to your home, sweet Mistress Gertrude," said Herbert, in as courteous a tone as he would have used towards a princess. "I can take no denial, as it is unbefitting that you should continue your journey alone. Mayhap some other robbers may meet you, or you may be beset by some other danger."

Whatever might have been the fears of the damsel, she was not unwilling that so handsome and courteous a young man should escort her homewards. Not till honest Rolfe had come up to hold her reins while she again mounted, did she and Herbert discover how badly he had been hurt by the robber who had attacked him. He made light of his wounds to save his young mistress pain, but she refused to proceed till they were bound up, and some further time was lost in this operation. Herbert rode by the side of Gertrude, conversing with her as he went. He thought that he had never seen so fair a damsel, so gentle and so lovable, while she was certain that she had never met so kind and courteous and noble a youth. It was late when they reached Donington Farm. Master Alwyn, the owner, did not seem much surprised to see his daughter escorted by so gay a cavalier as young Herbert de

Beauville. Having thanked him warmly for the protection he had afforded to his daughter, and her deliverance from the danger which had overtaken her, with much courtesy he invited him to remain to supper, which meal was even then being placed on the table.

Young Herbert was not unwilling to accept the invitation, seeing that already his heart, or fancy, or whatever organ or sense by which young men are moved, had already been captivated by the bright eyes and sweet face of the fair Gertrude. There was a bright moon about to shine, and he had no tender mother or loving sisters who would be anxious at his non-appearance at the usual hour. Gertrude did not omit to tell her mother of the hurts Rolfe had received. On hearing this, the dame, with alacrity, examined them, dressing them with much skill, of the possession of which she was not a little proud.

After this, three demure damsels and seven stout labouring men came into the hall, and took their seats at the table. They then ate in silence the messes which Mrs Alwyn served out to them. Master Alwyn, meantime, kept up a very pleasant conversation with his guest. He was evidently far superior in attainments to men generally of his position in life, for he could both read and write, and knew something of what was going forward in the world. In appearance he was not, however, superior to other yeomen or well-to-do farmers; and his dame, though evidently a notable thrifty housewife, was not above her class in manners or in information. As Herbert looked from

one to the other, and then exchanged a few sentences with their daughter, he wondered how so fair a creature could have sprung from so rough a stock. He sat on, unwilling to leave the society of so charming a being, till at length he had no excuse for lingering longer.

As he rode homeward, with his hawk sleeping on his shoulder, and his hounds by his side, his thoughts were so completely occupied with the fair Gertrude, that he reached the castle gates almost before he was aware of it. Good Roger was away on the errand which has been spoken of, and Father Mathew had never been wont to chide his pupil very severely. Now that he had come to man's estate, he wisely abstained altogether from doing so. Herbert was therefore accustomed frankly to tell him all that occurred. He accordingly described how he had met the damsel and her servant, and saved them from robbers.

"You have acted bravely, my son, and you deem the damsel fair to look on?" said Father Mathew.

The last words were uttered quite in an indifferent tone, as if the matter were of very little consequence.

"Oh yes; the damsel is perfectly beautiful," exclaimed the youth, enthusiastically. "I have never seen one I could so devotedly love and adore."

The priest gave way to a low laugh, and remarked:

"Perchance the next time you see her she may not appear so charming, and still less so the following. Methinks, too, that she is not such a one as the young lord of Beauville ought to wed."

"I have heard of noble knights wedding with maidens of low degree, whose beauty and rare excellence made them fit to take their place among the highest in the land. Such is the damsel of whom I speak. It would be a grievous pity to let so charming a rose bloom unseen, or to allow her to mate with some rough thistle or thorn unworthy of her."

The priest laughed outright.

"Certes, the charms of the damsel have made you poetical, my esteemed pupil," he remarked. "I must go forth to see this rare piece of perfection. I wonder whether I shall esteem her as you do."

Now, although Herbert had a great regard for his reverend tutor, he did not altogether desire to have him become acquainted with the damsel, and he at once, therefore, began to repent that he had praised her in such glowing terms. He scorned, however, to retract anything that he had said, yet he determined to try and prevent Father Mathew from visiting Donington Farm till he had secured, as he hoped to do, the affections of its fair inmate. It was not till late at night that the priest and his pupil retired to their beds. At an early hour the next morning the young lord of Beauville was on his way to Donington to inquire if Mistress Gertrude had recovered from the effects of the fright to which she had been subjected. He also persuaded himself that he was anxious to learn how it fared with sturdy Rolfe.

He went well armed in case he should meet any of the band of robbers whose comrades he had so roughly handled. On reaching

Donington, he saw Father Mathew's grey mare at the gate. The father must have left the castle by break of day, and have ridden pretty fast to get there before him. Herbert met him coming out.

"Ah, my son, you said not that you were coming here to-day," he remarked quietly. "However, I am not surprised. The damsel is truly fair to look on, and calculated to win a young man's heart. But beware, I say – beware. Now go in and pay your visit and inquire after her health, and say all the foolish things you proposed saying, and then come out again. I will wait for you, and we will ride back to Beauville together."

This was not at all according to Herbert's intentions, yet he could not help himself without positively refusing to comply with the father's wishes. He found the dame and her fair daughter within. There was some constraint in their manner at first, but the latter was evidently pleased to see him. He thought her not less lovely than on the previous evening. The visit, however, was not such as he had anticipated. In vain he tried to learn what Father Mathew had been saying about him. At last he was obliged to take his leave and join the latter, who had been walking his horse up and down, waiting for him. The young man had learned wisdom.

"I will be even with him," he thought to himself. "I will let him suppose that he is right, and that on a second visit I have not found the damsel as charming as I at first described her."

He carried out his plan, but whether or not Father Mathew was deceived he could not tell; for the wary priest made no reply to his remarks by which he could judge what was passing in his mind.

When Roger returned, Herbert took good care to say nothing to him about fair Mistress Gertrude, and, somewhat to his surprise, Father Mathew was equally reserved on the subject.

It was curious, however, that from that time forward his hounds or his hawks always led him in the direction of Donington, and, though he brought home less game than formerly, he never grumbled at his ill-luck. Perhaps both Roger and Father Mathew were watching him, but, if so, he was not aware of it, and was perfectly well satisfied with the course he was taking. He found that Mistress Gertrude was not over strictly brought up, and that her parents did not object to her mixing with other young people, and enjoying the spoils and pastimes suitable to their age. At all festivals and merry-makings Herbert became her constant attendant. He cared not if any one remarked that he demeaned himself by associating as he did with a yeoman's family. Master Alwyn did not object to his consorting with his daughter, and therefore no one else had any business to find fault with him. He engaged warmly with other young men of his age in the various athletic sports then generally practised. It was his delight to excel in them, and whenever he won a prize, as he often did, he was wont to bring it and place it at the feet of the fair Gertrude. He did so with a right noble air, and it was often remarked that she received these attentions with a grace which not the first lady in the land could surpass. He was not without rivals who desired to gain the chief place in her affections; not that she gave them any encouragement, for her heart was already

entirely surrendered to Herbert.

Among the many devices employed by that money-loving monarch, Henry the Seventh, was that of confiscating the property of any of his nobles or other wealthy persons who gave him cause of offence by rebelling or intriguing with his enemies. Not far off resided a certain Master John Fisher, once a wealthy merchant in London, who had in an evil hour for himself purchased one of these estates, lately belonging to a Lord Nevile, of ancient lineage, much beloved in the country. Master Fisher was a worthy honest man, and would have proved a greater benefactor to the people among whom he came to reside than he had afterwards the power of being, had not the king looked on his hordes as a mine of wealth from which it was his royal privilege to extract whatever he might require. The merchant had several sons, who naturally desired to live like the young lords and gentlemen around them. One of them, Thomas Fisher, had set his eyes on Mistress Gertrude. He had more fortune than his brothers, money having been bequeathed to him by an uncle, also a merchant. His personal appearance was in his favour, and, altogether, he might have been considered a very good match for the yeoman's daughter. Master Fisher, his father, however, did not approve of it, and desired that he should wed into some noble family, which would give him a better standing in the country than he could otherwise obtain. Thomas, however, was of an obstinate disposition, and would by no means give her up. Wherever there was a prospect of meeting her there he was

always to be found, though he had to confess that of late she certainly had given him very little encouragement.

There was in the neighbourhood of Beauville Castle a large open common, in the centre of which were certain Druidical remains – huge blocks of stone, some like pillars standing upright, and others placed on a pivot over another by means the knowledge of which appears afterwards to have been lost. One of these stones, the largest in the group, was so placed that the slightest touch would set it vibrating. It was generally believed, however, that this could only be done by the good and virtuous, and that any one not deserving that character, though they might shake it ever so violently, could not move it. Here, from near and far, it had been the custom of the youths and lasses to assemble on festivals and holidays to amuse themselves with the games and sports then in vogue. Archers came to exhibit their skill. Quintains were set up, at which young men delighted to run, with lance in rest, either on foot or on horseback. Here were practised hurling the bar, casting the lance, running races, and other similar active sports; while on May-day a pole was set up, round which the morris-dancers assembled, and the Lord of Misrule held his court. People of position in the county did not disdain to come to these merry meetings. One fine afternoon, on the 1st of May, 1493, a large number of persons of all ranks and ages were assembled in the neighbourhood – of the rocking-stone. The still wealthy merchant, Master Fisher, and the yeoman, Master Alwyn, and Herbert's faithful guardian, Roger

Bertram, and several knights and justices with their families, and Father Mathew, and other priests and curates, and not a few monks and friars, who had come with the spirit of pickpockets of the present day to try what they could filch from the pouches of the merry-makers.

After the gay assemblage had got somewhat weary of the ordinary sports, a number of persons repaired to the rocking-stone, where they amused themselves by daring each other to give evidence of their virtuous lives by setting the stone rocking. Several had gone forward, when the stone was clearly seen to vibrate. At length the names of several damsels were called out, and, among others, Mistress Gertrude Alwyn was summoned to go forward and move the stone. There might have been a slight blush on her cheek at appearing before so many people on such an undertaking; but yet, with a slight laugh and a smile on her lips, she advanced towards the stone. There was a perfect silence among the crowd of spectators as she touched the stone. It did not move. Again and again she touched it, with all the force she could exert. The stone remained as immovable as if part of the mass on which it rested. There was a general groan uttered by the crowd, an evidence of their full belief in the truth of the legend, while, at the same moment, a piercing cry was heard, and the unhappy damsel was seen to fall fainting to the ground. Dame Alwyn ran forward to raise her daughter, followed by young Herbert de Beauville, who declared aloud that, for his part, he believed the stone might sometimes rock and sometimes cease to rock, but

that this had nothing to do with the virtue or want of that quality in those who touched it. There was a cry of "Heretic Lollard" from among the crowd, but Herbert silenced it by declaring that he would slit the tongue and break the head of any one who uttered it, or a word against the fair fame of Mistress Gertrude Alwyn. The poor girl was mounted on a pillion behind her father and conveyed back to Donington, weeping bitterly. A number of persons collected round the stone, and soon afterwards, on being touched by chance, it was seen to rock as before.

Herbert remained some time behind the Alwyn family, stalking about with his hand on the hilt of his sword, evidently longing for an encounter with some one; but as no person present seemed disposed just then to beard him, he at length mounted his horse and rode after his friends. Again and again he assured Master Alwyn, and his dame, and sweet Mistress Gertrude of his disbelief in the knowledge of the stone of the character of those who touched it, and that he would not credit a word against her fair fame should the cardinal, or bishop, or the Pope himself utter it. Gertrude thanked him with tears in her eyes, but begged him to return home and talk the matter over with Master Roger before he took any steps to vindicate her character, which he told her that he was resolved to do. His worthy guardian did not look on the matter in the light he did. He confessed that he did not believe that Mistress Gertrude was of light character, but that if the world did so, it was nearly as bad, and that she was not a fit bride for him. Herbert did not see the matter in this light, and

argued the point with great vehemence, and declared that nothing should prevent him from vindicating her character by marrying her forthwith.

In this same year a claimant to the throne of England appeared in the person of a handsome youth, who pretended to be Richard Duke of York, second son of Edward the Fourth. He had married the Lady Catherine Gordon, a cousin of the King of Scotland, who espoused his cause. No sooner did he appear in arms than Herbert, faithful to the traditions of his family, prepared to join him. He had no retainers, no money, only his own good sword and ardent young heart. Roger was now too old to bear him company, much as he wished it. He would, indeed, have dissuaded his young master from the enterprise, on the ground that the Houses of York and Lancaster were already united, and that, after all, the new claimant to the crown might be only a pretender, as was asserted, and not the true prince; but then he thought that absence might cure him of his love for Gertrude, and that mixing in courtly society might make him desirous of wedding with the fair Lady Barbara Fitz Osbert. Roger was, however, far too wise to hint anything of the sort, and with inward satisfaction he saw him go to bid farewell to pretty Mistress Gertrude, hoping that the young people might never meet again. Herbert, however, had no such thoughts in his mind. Again and again he repeated his promise to Gertrude that he would remain faithful to her, and that, come weal or come woe, he would return, if alive, and marry her. The world might say what it dared – might traduce

and scorn her, but he would believe her true. He spoke with so much earnestness that she believed him, and pledged her own word to be faithful to him in return.

Not till Herbert had paid this farewell visit to Mistress Gertrude did the wily Father Mathew attempt to cast any slur on her character, or to dissuade his pupil from his intended marriage. He left nothing unsaid which he thought could produce that result. Every insinuation he dared make he whispered into Herbert's ear. Roger also was not slow to support the curate's remarks, while at the same time he warmly praised the charms of the Lady Barbara Fitz Osbert, the heiress of the castle of Hardingham and its broad domains. Herbert listened, pained in mind, and moved, but not convinced. "Should she be fake, there is no virtue or faith in womankind, and I would as lief throw away my life in the first battle in which I am engaged as live." Many young men have thought the same thing, and changed their mind.

No sooner had Herbert taken his departure than Father Mathew, who had got into the confidence of Master Thomas Fisher, urged him to press his suit. Old Master Fisher had become very much averse to it, on account of the reports which were current; but Thomas asserted that he disbelieved them, and that, in spite of all that might be said against Mistress Gertrude, he was resolved to marry her.

Years rolled on; news came of the expedition of the Scotch king and the supposed prince into England, and of its failure. After that nothing more was heard of the unfortunate husband of

the Lady Catherine Gordon or of young Sir Herbert de Beauville, who had been knighted by the King of Scotland.

Meantime a visitor had come to Donington. He was evidently a man of superior birth. He was frequently seen in the company of Mistress Gertrude, and various were the surmises about him. Both Master Alwyn and his dame paid him the greatest respect. He was somewhat advanced in life, though still strong and active. His bronzed complexion, and more than one scar visible on his cheek, showed that he had been engaged in war in southern climes. He did not appear to seek concealment, but at the same time not a word did he let drop which could allow people to guess who he was. At length one day a dozen men-at-arms and several knights, with two led horses, appeared at Donington, and the stranger and Mistress Gertrude were seen to mount and ride away after an affectionate farewell of Master Alwyn and his dame. No people were more puzzled than Roger Bertram and Father Mathew. They remained at Beauville, holding the castle for Sir Herbert, though it seemed very doubtful whether he would ever return. One day a wandering minstrel came to the neighbouring hamlet. He approached a house, the bush hung over the door of which showed that entertainment for man and beast was to be obtained in the establishment. The minstrel took his seat in the public room, and quickly entered into conversation with those around him. His object seemed to be to obtain information about the persons in the neighbourhood. Among others he asked after Master Alwyn and his dame. They were living as before in the

old house, and enjoying good health and strength.

"They had a daughter," observed the minstrel, in a calm voice.

"Oh, the hussy! – she long since went away with a gay knight, who came with a band to carry her off, and no one knows what has become of her," answered his loquacious informant.

"It is false!" exclaimed the minstrel, starting up. Then, suddenly checking himself, he added: "I mean, such reports as these often get about without due foundation."

However, he could not calm the agitation this information caused him, and, having paid his reckoning and slung the harp he carried over his shoulder, he left the house. He took his way towards Beauville. Father Mathew was standing at the entrance as he approached the old castle.

"Go thy way – go thy way; we want no vagrants here. We have enough of our own starving poor to feed without yielding to the rapacity of strangers," cried the father, eyeing him askance.

The minstrel humbly turned aside, and, not far off, met old Roger Bertram. He was about to avoid him, when Roger, eyeing him narrowly, hobbled forward, for he could not run, and, taking him in his arms, exclaimed:

"My son – my own boy – my young master – and art thou really come back sound in limb and health? Thrice happy is this day."

The minstrel was no other than Sir Herbert de Beauville. He seemed too much broken in spirits even to laugh at the way Father Mathew had treated him. He had escaped, not

without difficulty, after the defeat of the pretended Richard of York, who, acknowledging himself as Perkin Warbeck, had surrendered to the King. Herbert had now only one object on earth for which he desired to live – to establish the fair fame of Mistress Gertrude Alwyn; and he had resolved, he said, to trace out the author of the calumnies he had heard against her, or, if he could not do that, to punish every one who had been known to utter them.

It appeared that her disappointed suitor, Master Thomas Fisher, had been heard to repeat the evil reports concerning her. Here, then, was an object on whom he could wreak his vengeance. Master Fisher had, by means of the wealth which had fallen to him, been able to purchase a title and honours of the mercenary king, and he now gave himself all the airs of an old noble. When, therefore, Sir Herbert challenged him to mortal combat on account of words uttered against the fair fame of a damsel undeserving of such reproach, he was compelled to accept the challenge. Space does not permit a description of the combat. The newly-made baron was overthrown, and as Sir Herbert stood over him with his drawn sword, he confessed that he had himself, in revenge, inserted a small pebble in a hole under the rocking-stone, by which it became fixed and incapable of moving. On this Sir Herbert granted him his life, on condition that he should repeat the statement whenever he should so require him to do. He had it also made out in writing and duly attested, and, with this document in his hand, he set out to visit Master

Alwyn and his dame. His heart sank within him when he learned from them that Mistress Gertrude was not their daughter, but the only child of the Earl of Fitz-Stephen, who had, by the sacrifice of a portion of his patrimony, which had gone into the king's coffers, lately regained the remainder. His spirits, however, rose again when they encouraged him to hasten forthwith to, the earl's castle and to try his fortune with the lady, showing her the document he had brought with him. He followed their advice; the Lady Gertrude received him in a way to satisfy his utmost hopes, and presented him to her father as the only person she would ever marry. They were accordingly wedded, and by living in privacy till the death of Henry, Sir Herbert escaped being implicated in the attempts made by the pretended Richard of York to gain the English crown.

# Story 3-Chapter I
# STORY THREE – Reginald Warrender; or, Early Days at Eton

"Reginald, my boy, I was at Eton myself, and, in spite of some drawbacks, I loved the old place right dearly, and so I intend to go with you, and to introduce you to all the spots I remember so well; but I don't suppose any of my old acquaintance and chums are still to be found there. However, the very sight of the walls and towers of the school, the meadows, the river, and the Castle in the distance, will make me young again. You will find a good deal of difference between it and where you have been before. The discipline there is apt to take a good deal of pride and self-sufficiency out of a fellow – not that you have much of them, I hope. The tutor I have chosen for you, Mr Lindsay, is a first-rate man. You are to live in his house. I was at a dame's – a real dame – a very good, old lady, though some are men you will find. There is much the same discipline and order kept in both. We will have our portmanteaus packed by Friday, so that we will sleep in London, and go down there on Saturday morning, that you may have the best part of that day and Sunday to look about you."

These remarks were made by Squire Warrender to his son, who had hitherto been at a boarding-school, where he had received the first rudiments of his education.

Reginald thanked his father for his intentions.

"It will be very delightful to have you with me, papa," he exclaimed; "it will not feel at all as if I were going to school; and, besides, Eton is the place of all others I wished to go to. I don't much fear the fagging or the bullying, and I can take pretty good care of myself now."

In truth Reginald had no longer any dread about going to school. He had accepted schooling as a necessity of boyish existence, and had made up his mind to endure all its ups and downs with equanimity. The day for their departure arrived. Mary, his sister, did not fail to promise to write as usual, and John assured his young master that he would take good care of Polly, his pony, and Carlo and the other dogs, and the ferrets, and all his other animate or inanimate treasures. Reginald had been disinclined to accept Mrs Dawson's offer to fill a hamper with her stores; but the Squire recollected that in his time, at all events, such things were not looked on at all with contempt by the youngsters at Eton; so a hamper even better supplied than before was provided for him. The Squire and he started away in very good spirits, cutting jokes to the last as they drove off. They had no time to see sights in London, and early the next morning, after breakfast, they started off with all Reginald's property for the Great Western station, and within an hour the latter found himself in the long-thought-of and often-pictured town of Eton. He looked out eagerly on either side as they drove along towards his tutor's. So did the Squire, especially when they reached the

High Street. Many a place did he seem to recognise.

"Ah! there it is just as it was," he was continually exclaiming. "There's my old sock-shop —*soake*, a local term for baking, is the better spelling. I spent money enough there, so perhaps they will remember me; so we will have a look in there by-and-by. Ah! there's the Christopher too, where we will go and dine. I dare say Lindsay will ask us; but I must be back in town to-night, and it would delay me to accept his invitation, and perhaps we may fall in with some acquaintance whom you may like to ask to dine with us." The Christopher was an hotel, Reginald found, much patronised by the boys and their friends. Mr Lindsay was in school, but Mrs Lindsay was at home, and received them very kindly. Reginald thought her a very nice person, and so she was, and contributed much, as a lady always can if she sets the right way about it, to make the house thoroughly comfortable and pleasant to its inmates. She told Reginald that his room was ready for him. How proud he felt to find that he was to have one entirely to himself! His things were at once taken up to it, and he begged the Squire to come up and have a look at it. It was not very large; but the walls were neatly papered, and it looked perfectly clean. Neither was the furniture of a grand description. There was a bedstead, which, when turned up, looked like a cupboard, and a sideboard of painted deal, a small oak chest of drawers, or rather a bureau, in the upper part of which cups and saucers, and plates, and a metal teapot, and a few knives and forks and a muffin-dish, were arranged, and there was a deal table covered

with a red cloth, and two rather hard horsehair-bottomed chairs.

"Here we are, sir," said Reginald, as the maidservant with considerable discretion retired, that the young gentleman might look about him. "Sit down and make yourself at home; I feel so already. The place has capabilities, and I hope that the next time you pay me a visit, you will find that I have taken advantage of them. I will get some pictures, and hang them up, and some pegs for my hats find fishing-rods, and hooks for my bats, and then a Dutch oven, and a frying-pan, and a better kettle than that will be useful in winter."

"Perhaps you will not object to an arm-chair or a sofa," observed the Squire.

"An arm-chair, certainly," answered Reginald, "thank you; but with regard to a sofa, they are all very well for women. I think, however, that if a fellow's legs ache, he may put them up on another chair, and if he has got an arm-chair to lean back in, he will do very well."

"You are right, Reginald; I hate luxurious habits," said the Squire. "Do not give way to them. They are not so bad in themselves as in consequence of what they lead to – self-indulgence and indolence: this is the vice of the present day. But come along, we have plenty to do."

The Squire, leaving word that he would call again, took Reginald back into the town. They were getting hungry, so very naturally they proceeded in the first place to the well-remembered sock-shop, known by the world at large as a pastry-

cook's. A supply of ices and strawberry messes was at once ordered and discussed with great gusto, buns and other cakes giving some consistency to the repast. Who would have expected to see Squire Warrender, of Blessingham, who had not perhaps for years taken any other than a solid meat luncheon, with bottled stout, or a biscuit and a glass of wine, lunching off sweet cakes and strawberries and cream? But the truth was, that he did not feel just then a bit like Squire Warrender, of Blessingham; he was once more little Reginald Warrender, somewhat of a pickle, and very fond of those said luscious articles. To be sure another Reginald Warrender stood by his side; but he was, as it were, a part of himself, or it might he himself, or a younger companion. At all events he felt a great deal too young just then to be anybody's father, and was quite surprised that the young women behind the counter did not recognise him. Surely they were the very same he must have known. While they were eating away, an old lady with spectacles on her nose, and a high white cap on her head, came into the shop.

"I have come with this youngster here to show him about the place," said the Squire. "This is a shop I used to know well once upon a time; but the young ladies here don't seem to recognise me."

"I should think not," said the old lady, laughing, as did the young ones. "Perhaps I might though, if I knew your name. What years were you here?"

The Squire told her.

"I was about their age then, and stood where they now stand," she observed, as she went into an inner room, and brought down a longish parchment-covered volume. "Oh, I now remember you perfectly well, Master Warrender," said she, turning over the pages, and evidently also forgetting how many years had rolled away since the Squire was Master Warrender. "You were a very good customer of ours, that you were, indeed. You had a good healthy appetite: six dozen oranges, three dozen queencakes, a couple of dozen hot-cross buns for breakfast on one occasion. I suppose you didn't eat them all yourself though. And now I see you left owing us a little account. It was no great matter; only fifteen and sixpence for cherries and strawberries."

"Sold, papa!" whispered Reginald, aside, and highly amused. "It is pleasant, however, to be able to pay off old scores."

"I fear that the account is too correct," said the Squire. "Let me see, how was it? Ah, I recollect – a wager, I am afraid. Cleveland and I. We tried to see which could eat the most in a given time. Don't you go and do such a silly thing though, Reginald, or I'll disinherit you. He ought to have paid, for I beat him; but I ordered them. Well, I will pay you now with interest."

"Oh no, no, sir, thank you; I could not think of it," said the old lady.

However, as she said the words in a tone which evidently did not mean that she positively would not receive the amount, the Squire pulled out a sovereign, and handed it to her.

"There is the sum with interest – very small interest though,"

he observed. “I wish that I could pay all the debts of my younger days as easily.”

The old lady was highly pleased, and promised to stand Reginald’s friend, and to give him good advice whenever he would come to her.

“And I wish, sir,” said she, “that I could as easily get in all the debts owing to me.”

Thereon the Squire took occasion to impress very strongly on his son the importance of not running into debt. “If you cannot pay for a thing, you should not get it,” he remarked. “Never mind how much you may want it. You may fancy that you can pay some day; but before that day comes you will have wanted several other things, all of which have to be paid for out of this sum in prospect, which may possibly never come at all. Then one person will press for payment, and then another, and then you will think that there can be no harm in borrowing, and the chances are that you become the slave of the person from whom you borrow. Take my advice, Reginald, keep out of debt and be free. I have spoken only of worldly-wise motives for keeping out of debt, but it is morally wrong – it is dishonest. The Bible says, ‘Owe no man anything.’ That is right, depend on it. Some fellows fancy that it is fine and gentlemanly to run into debt, and that it is a spirited thing to bilk a tradesman. I think, and I am sure you will, that it is one of the most ungentlemanly and blackguardly things to deprive any man of his just rights, not to say unchristianlike and despicable.”

This conversation took place as the Squire and his son were walking towards the school-house. They walked about the noble edifice, under the fine arched gateway, and beneath its venerable walls. Then they looked out upon the rich green meadows, and the avenue of lofty elms, and Reginald thought it a remarkably fine place, and began already to feel proud at being able to call himself an Eton boy. As the boys were still "up," that is, in school, the Squire proposed walking down the town to have a look at the Castle, and some of the old places on the way. As they were leaving the building, they met an old man with a vehicle loaded with tarts and buns, and cakes of all sorts. As they passed close to him, he looked hard at the Squire, and said, "Beg pardon, sir, but I think I know you, sir, though it is a good many years since you ate any of my buns."

"And I am very certain that I know you, old fellow," answered the Squire, highly delighted. "You are Spankie himself, or I am very much mistaken."

"You are right, sir, the same, and that young gentleman is your son just come up here; I should have known him in a moment from his likeness to you," said old Spankie. "Never forget anybody I have once known. Now I think of it, were not you one of those young gentlemen who played the trick to Mr Fowler, I think it was, or one of the masters of his time? What a good joke it was! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What joke do you mean?" asked the Squire. "I remember no good joke that I ever played. I am afraid that I had not wits

enough."

"I'll tell you, sir; if you were not one of them, it was somebody else," answered old Spankie, who probably knew that well enough, but wanted to tell a good story to gain time that he might find out, if possible, who the old Etonian was – a fact of which he was in reality perfectly ignorant. "Two of the young gentlemen, tall big lads for their ages, took it into their heads to dress up as foreigners of distinction, with moustaches and beards, and corked eyebrows, and spectacles, and large shirt-collars, with no end of gold chains, and such flash waistcoats, all of satin, and covered over with green and yellow and pink flowers. One was a Greek prince, and the other a Polish count, travelling for the improvement of their own mind, and with the intention of establishing a great public school like Eton in Greece or Turkey, or some outlandish place or other. Well, there they were walking arm in arm through the High Street, looking into the shops and around them on every side, and stopping to admire the prospect whenever there was a prospect to admire, just for all the world like strangers who had never seen the place before. They caught sight of Mr Fowler coming along; so says one to the other, 'Let's sell him, and make him show us over the place.' 'Agreed,' answers the other. They had been keeping up all their airs, and they knew that he had seen them, so they marched boldly up to him, and making him a polite bow, says one of them, 'Saire, I see dat you are one academic gentleman, and if you will be kind to two strangers vill you have de great goodness to show us over dis

grand, dis magnificent town?' Mr Fowler, who was born and bred in Eton, and was very proud of it, was highly delighted, and said that he would have the greatest pleasure in doing what they wished. They knew that, and so they knew when to lay it on the thickest. And so didn't they just praise the place and the masters, and everything they saw, and a great deal they said that they had heard, till he was quite beside himself. Then they began talking Greek and Latin to him, and if he hadn't been so pleased he would have found them out. Then they asked all sorts of questions about the school, and he promised to write out all the rules and regulations, and the whole plan on which it was conducted, and a good deal of its history, and all his own ideas about founding a school. The more inclined they found him to write, the more questions requiring answers they plied him with; and ever after they boasted of the long imposition they had set him. They gave him an address of a friend of theirs in London, and begged him to send what he had written there. He did send it, and they got it too, and they used to show his lucubrations with no little pride, and all he had said about the school. He would have been in a rage had he found them out. They asked to see one of the houses just as they were passing their own tutor's, with whom they knew he was intimate, and they actually made him show them their own rooms. It was a wonder they were not discovered, for there on the table in one of the rooms was a wig and a false pair of moustaches. They hurried out in a great fright, saying that they did not think it was right to intrude on the privacy of any

young students. At last, when they had pretty well walked Mr Fowler off his legs, and got tired themselves, they wished him good-bye, with a profusion of thanks, and betook themselves to the Christopher. They had invited him to dine with them at an hour they knew he could not come – not but what they would have been very happy to see him, but they thought the risk was too great – he might have found them out eating. They had a jolly good dinner at the Christopher, and then they paid their bill and waited till dark, when they pulled off their moustaches and beards, and put on pea-coats, slipping out unobserved, and so got back safe to their rooms. One of them told me all about it afterwards, and I couldn't help thinking you was him, sir."

The Squire was milch amused, and encouraged old Spankie to continue his narrations.

"Well, sir, if it wasn't you sold Mr Fowler so cleverly, it surely was you who got up the great donkey race on the Slough road, just outside Eton."

"Suppose it was me, or suppose it was not, just do you tell my boy here all about it. I like to hear you speak of old times," answered the Squire.

"Well, sir, the young gentlemen got hold of two fine donkeys, and turned out in regular jockey costume, – caps, silk jackets, top boots, and all. Great swells they looked, and there was no end of boys went out to see them. The whole road was full for a mile or more. A course was formed, and off they set; but donkeys never will run when you want them, or, rather, they always will

run when you don't want them. As ill-luck would have it, who should come by but the Doctor. He wasn't a man a bit less than the present to play a joke with. What should one of the racers do but run right against his carriage, and make the horses kick and rear, and, in spite of all the unhappy jockey could do, he couldn't get him away. The Doctor just saw who they were, and though it may be supposed he was in a towering rage, says he quietly enough, 'Go to your tutors and report yourselves, and come to me this evening.' Of course they knew that they would get flogged, and so one of them provided himself with a pair of wicket-keeping gloves, and went in quite boldly. 'It's my duty to flog you,' says the Doctor – 'strip.' 'It's my duty to save my skin,' says the young gentleman, putting on his gloves quite deliberately; and when the Doctor began, he warded off all the cuts till the master grew weary. Then he handed them to his friend, who put them on and saved himself in the same way. Of course they got all the credit of being flogged, and were laughed at for their pains, till they told how they had saved themselves with their cricketing gloves."

"Tell that story to the marines," said the Squire. "However, I dare say some of it is true enough; but I wasn't one of the jockeys, and I wouldn't advise my son to imitate them either. However, old friend, I like to hear you talk of bygone days, and here's a five shilling piece. Let my son take it out in buns and tarts when he has a mind to do so."

"Thank ye, sir, thank ye," said old Spankie, and the Squire walked on, knowing that he had secured another friend for

Reginald. They hurried on to Windsor Castle, which had been much altered and beautified since the Squire had seen it, and certainly, rising up as it does from its richly-green forest, with its terraces and towers, it has a peculiarly handsome and regal appearance. When they got back, the boys were just coming out from two o'clock absence, and were running off to their dames' and tutors' houses. The Squire looked narrowly at them as they passed, to try and find the sons of any of his acquaintance who might be there. Had he written to ascertain the houses they belonged to, he would easily have discovered them. Suddenly Reginald left his father's side, and ran after a boy whose hand he seized and wrung warmly.

"What, Warrender, are you come here?" asked his friend.

"Indeed I am," answered Reginald; "but I had no notion that you were here, Power. How very fortunate I am to find you! But come along, I'll introduce you to my father. He'll want you to dine with us."

Of course Power was nothing loth to accept the invitation. He had come up just in time, before he was too old, and had at once taken a fair standing in the school, being in the upper division of the Fourth Form, and about to go into the lower remove. He was, too, in Reginald's own house, which was a very great satisfaction. The Squire at length found out the son of a friend of his – young Anson, and invited him to join his dinner-party at the Christopher. As he wanted to see the cricketing and boating in the afternoon, he had ordered dinner early; and, saying he might

not exactly know what Eton boys of the present day liked, he had left the selection of the dishes to the landlord. A very merry party they were seated round the dinner-table at the Christopher, and ample justice did they all do to the dinner provided. The Squire wished to give the boys the best of everything, so he ordered champagne and claret.

"Wine?" said Anson, looking at Power.

The latter nodded, and with due gravity they hobnobbed together, tossing off the sparkling contents of their tall glasses.

"Very good wine they give at the Christopher," observed Anson to the Squire; "in my opinion, this Château Margaux claret is about as first-rate tipple as one finds anywhere."

"I fancied their Lafitte was better, and ordered it accordingly," answered the Squire, much amused at his young friend's remarks.

"Oh, certainly, I am very glad of that," quickly replied Anson. "The fact is, I had not tasted their Lafitte, and supposed that they could have nothing better than their Château Margaux."

"Try this, then," said the Squire, pushing a bottle of freshly-decanted claret towards him; "say what you think of it."

"Perfect nectar," answered the young gentleman, smacking his lips. "This beats the other hollow. I must row mine host for not giving us his best wine the last time I dined with my uncle here."

"We were not so particular in my days," observed the Squire; "good honest port and sherry sufficed us. But I tell you what, lads, stick to the light wines, and a moderate quantity of them will do you no harm; but eschew spirits-and-water, or spirits in

any shape, as you would poison, and when you drink beer, don't go swilling away huge quantities, as I see some fellows doing, as if their insides were mere tuns made to hold liquor. Just look at the great, fat, pursy, bloated fellows you often meet, and think how you would like to become as they are. Well, they brought themselves to that state by swilling beer and spirits-and-water. Others have sent themselves to their graves by the same means, and others, though not pursy, have lost their health and stamina, and spirits, and are burdens to themselves, and useless in the world."

Reginald used to say of his father that he did not preach much, but that he had a wonderful way of bringing in good advice, and sugaring it at the same time. In the present instance he was washing down a temperance harangue with champagne and claret. He knew that his advice would much more likely be taken than if he had ordered toast-and-water and small beer for dinner.

In very good humour with themselves, with the world in general, and with Eton in particular, which Reginald thought a first-rate place indeed, they sallied forth into the playing-fields, where several cricket matches were going on. One, Oppidans against Collegers, excited most interest, because there always is, though there ought not to be, a good deal of party-feeling between the collegers, the boys on the foundation, and those who are not; the latter, who are more frequently sons of men of wealth and influence, looking down upon those who have gained their position by their talents and industry. The broad smooth

green meadows, with the fine grey school buildings, and their magnificent trees rising up behind them, presented a very gay and animated appearance. Numbers of boys in their picturesque cricketing costumes were lying about in all directions – England's nerve and spirit, and head and heart – those who were hereafter to head her armies and guide her councils. Little wotted they then of the destinies in store for some of them. A stranger might have said, as he saw their active forms bounding here and there – There is England's bone and muscle. So there was, but that is to be found rather in her wide fields, in her mines, her coal-pits, on her broad quays, in her manufactories, in her towns, and on her railroads. The different games were sufficiently apart, so as not to interfere with each other. Round each of the scorers knots of amateurs were collected, watching the game with intense interest, and applauding or condemning, as each hit was well or ill made or fielded. At a respectful distance from the wide-flying balls, a number of ladies, and children, and nurses, and other spectators, wandered about admiring the play or the cricketers.

"Come along here," said Power to the Squire and Reginald, as he led them up to one of the best spots for witnessing the sport; "it's a hard-run game – well hit, Hawkins – beautifully run! – he's my tutor's pupil – the others will have hard work to get him out – I've known him score twice as many as any other fellow in the eleven – bravo, Langdale! – a first-rate hit – well fielded, too – he'll get caught out though – he often does – he hits too wildly."

So Power ran on. The Squire at once entered into the spirit of

the game. He clapped his hands as enthusiastically as any boy. "Capitally hit! – Smartly run!" he shouted. "Reggie, my boy, I wish that you were playing. Well done! Who is that tall fellow with the light hair? He caught out Langdale in fine style. You said he would be caught out."

"Oh, that's Gull, an Oppidan," answered Power; "he's one of their best fielders. Who is going in next, I wonder? Beaumont, I see. Ah, he's one of our crack players."

"Beautiful! beautiful!" shouted the Squire, as other hits were made. "Capital – first-rate – bravo – bravo – well run – a superb hit!"

His animated remarks soon drew the attention of the boys towards him. When they heard from Anson that he was an old Etonian, they regarded him with a respect he might not otherwise have obtained, and all were eager to show him any attention in their power. They went on end had a look at the other games, and at last the hour came when it was necessary for the Squire to turn his steps towards the station. He had also on his way there to introduce Reginald to his tutor, Mr Lindsay. Old Spankie had been looking out for them. He had seen Power with him, and thus learned his name and all about him.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.