

that night, and did not ever see his mother and pretty sister again. Neither did the young soldier with fifty pounds in his pocket, who was going to Salisbury to be married, ever meet his expectant intended bride.

CHAPTER II.

The Heap by the Road side.—Since the events of the day described, above nineteen years have elapsed. It is now the year 1792. Having taken the advice of the soldier on Salisbury Plain, Jacob Fearn has now been nineteen years in the army. The reader will please to suppose him serving in Holland, and that he has never during the whole of those years we have named, once written to inform his friends of his destination, or whether indeed he be in the land of the living.

One dark evening, Jacob mounted guard about eight o'clock on the ramparts of the city of— . Like as on that night when Hamlet's father appeared to him, it was "a nipping and an eager air." As he stepped out of his box, Jacob cast his eye quickly round; nobody was abroad; nor could anything be seen, save the black platform of broad wall on which he stood, a black, cold sky beyond, and a deep gulf on one side below him, in which the town lay, studded with numberless little lights, like the reflection of a clear midnight sky. Yet Jacob felt as though something was about him. A sense of the dread presence of some being, he knew not what, was heavily upon him; and he felt more fear than a soldier ought to feel, or than even a woman whose hands were un-crime-stained. He trod his round with trembling footsteps and back again to his temporary shelter. He sat down and looked out on the broad wall with dread. The light shadow as of a woman's figure, like a film floating in the summer air, hovered before his eyes. What could it be? He had made no assignation there; he had ruined no innocence; sent no confiding woman to the grave before her time, that thus her image should haunt him reproachfully in his time of solitude. What else had he done?

"Yes, yes!" cried Jacob involuntarily—"but that was not a woman. I say it was not a woman. I say it was not a woman, and I have done no woman wrong. Begone, devil; away—away!"

But as he spoke, the figure grew more distinct to him. It seemed to be on a road that he knew when he was young—a road he had last travelled at night, some nineteen years ago. There lay the vast dark plain on either side of it, and three blighted pine-trees stood on the left, and at their foot lay the heap by the road side, which he knew again too well. And though it was but a heap of stones and dirt, overgrown with grass and nettles, it made him quake, and turn deadly cold, for beneath that heap lay what should accuse him at the day of doom; and from the streaming of the blood which soddened that earth had a witness gone up before God and pointed the finger of eternal justice towards Jacob's soul. As he leaned against the rampart for support, the figure he had seen appeared to settle and bend over the heap by the road-side. It raised up its head and Jacob saw his sister. It then appeared to disperse the earth with its hands, and to bring out something red and some decaying bones. A cry was heard or seemed to be heard—the figure fell as dead upon the ground, and Jacob saw no more.

When his comrade came to relieve guard, Jacob was found lying along the wall insensible. He was carried off, and with some difficulty restored. The cause of his indisposition he would not tell; and only requested that he might buy himself out of the regiment or be discharged, adding that he should never be fit for a soldier again, and was only worthy of one fate, that fate neither would he explain. But as both his appearance and his health bore ample testimony that some strange and incurable infirmity had befallen him, he very shortly afterwards received his discharge.

CHAPTER III.

The Plain, and what was on it.—The giant shadows of those solitary giant stones which stand on Salisbury Plain, a record written in mysterious character of an age and a people else scarcely known, stretched far to the eastward in broken and irregular shapes, as the sun sunk redly beyond the hills which lie to the west of Wiltshire, and caught in brilliant patches each rising ground, each Druid's stone, and aged tumulus, with which the downs in that part of the country are so abundantly covered. Not a breath stirred, so that the dull sound of the sheep bell could be heard at a distance inconceivable to any person who has not stood in the midst of those tracts, as a single mariner at sea, and listened to their tinkling miles away. A gray old shepherd or two, looking as small as gnats upon so vast a visible surface, were moving homewards in the now gathering twilight, when a solitary soldier was observed advancing, foot-sore, and in pain, down one of the roads leading from Salisbury, across the Plain. Shortly he overtook a shepherd who was walking the same road, and he and the way-worn soldier entered into friendly conversation. Whenever the inhabitants of peculiar localities chance to fall into conversation, they invariably evince and exercise a peculiar tact in diverting both their own and their hearer's attention to those immediate objects of home interest with which they are themselves most particularly acquainted. Thus it was with the old shepherd and the soldier:—there might be too, some mysterious affinity between the red jacket and the story which lay upon the shepherd's tongue, since one assisted very materially in calling up the other. The shepherd soon began to inform his companion how, some nineteen or twenty years ago, as a soldier like himself was passing down that very road, he was robbed and murdered, but by whom nobody knew.

"It was supposed, said he, to be near those three fir trees; for under a heap of dirt close to them they found the body."

The shepherd started, for his companion stood still as though afraid to move.

"Come, come along; don't be frightened. Why, I have come this way all hours of day and night in lambing time."

"Tell that soldier," muttered the frightened man, as he pointed forwards down the road,— "bid him for God's sake walk along and let me pass!"

"There is no soldier here except yourself," said the shepherd.

"And my sister, too!" continued the soldier, for he was Jacob Fearn. "They are both there."

Thinking his companion out of his mind, the old shepherd grew afraid, and refusing to walk with him any longer, for fear of danger, hurried away, and left him to pursue his course alone.

CHAPTER IV.

The Pot-house.—It was nearly dark outside the same little public house, which we particularly pointed out at the commencement of this story, though within blazed a heaped up fire that rendered other light needless, when the soldier Jacob Fearn entered fatteringly, exhausted, and with a countenance of ashes. He threw himself almost with the weight of a corps into the chimney-nook, and mustered just voice enough to ask for a pot of ale. The kind host of the house, seeing his condition, and pitying his weariness, hastened with all speed to place the usual stimulus before him. The soldier took it up, but he could not drink:—another mouth was at the brim—the face of that very man who had treated him so generously twenty years ago. The landlord looked amazed at the soldier, while the soldier looked earnestly at him. At length the latter spoke.

"Landlord!" said he, "did you keep this house twenty years ago?"