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you will kindly allow us to finish our game!"

Lord Bellinger played a winning card, and thrust his head out of the window, laughing heartily at the discomfiture of his detachment.

"Can I help you?" said the new arrival, in his rough blunt tones. "I am an honest man enough as times go. A poor West-country parson, at your service, and my name is Abner Gale."

"Mr. Gale," replied his lordship, taking off his hat, "let me present you to Lord Bellinger. If you are of the church militant, reverend sir, you should have been here an hour or two ago, you might have seen some fine sport, and taken a turn at it yourself, to the tune of 'Wigs on the Green.' It's too late now, but I think we could have told a different story, could I have found something like a man to back me up!"

If levelled at his servants, the taunt fell harmless. Their wits were still abroad, but they felt comforted and reassured to learn that the second highwayman was but a parson after all!

"Have you met with an accident, my lord?" asked Gale, with a clumsy bow, "ill-usage, or misadventure of any kind? Command my services, I beg, on behalf of yourself and her ladyship."

"The moon! the moon!" exclaimed lady Bellinger, much to the Parson's disturbance, who thought she had gone mad. "It's over the tree! It's eleven o'clock! Don't stop another minute! Let us drive to the inn at once, and try to forget, only I never shall forget this dreadful night!"

So my lord and the servants, with the powerful assistance of their new auxiliary, got the heavy coach once more into motion, my lady so far remembering the parson's existence, as to entreat that he would ride close beside the wheel, and if need be, defend them with his life!

The procession soon reached its destination, the same inn at which John Garnet had dined. Driving into the yard without its full complement of horses, the servants in a high state of excitement, everybody talking at once, it was obvious the coach had been attacked by a highwayman. The old ostler smiled and winked, the landlord smiled and looked at his wife, the wife smiled and shook her head, the cook smiled, the scullions smiled, everybody seemed interested and well pleased, more particularly when it transpired that the assailant, having taken what he wanted, had made his escape uninjured by so much as a scratch. None seemed astonished when his lordship, inquiring eagerly for particulars as to the robber and his gray horse, mentioned that the only clue he had obtained to his identity was the name of Galloping Jack. The landlord, of course, knew nothing. A landlord never does know anything. The ostler, on cross-examination by the stupidest of Lord Bellinger's footmen, had no recollection of any gray horse in particular. So many gray horses were put up in their stables, coming and going to Marlborough market and what-not? How was he to distinguish which was which, while the maids, preparing my lady's chamber, and airing my lady's bed, furnished Mistress Rachel with so marvelous an account of Galloping Jack, his exploits and enormities, that the waiting gentlewoman could not mention his name without a shudder, connecting him, by some inexplicable process of reasoning, with all the myths and terrible personages she had ever heard of, such as St. George and the Dragon, Bluebeard, and Herod of Jewry, surnamed the Great.

But Abner Gale, who accepted his lordship's invitation to supper, and cracked a bottle with him afterwards, though he prudently excused himself from playing cards, had a clear remembrance of the noted gray horse, whose speed and endurance were once the topic of every market-table and every drinking-bout in his own country. From Lord Bellinger's description of the animal on which his assailant was mounted,

—a gentleman with whom she had formerly made acquaintance, appeared to stroll in the same direction as herself. Two lonely figures, breaking the solitude of a wide level sea board, if they have ever met before, cannot avoid each other, without rudeness. A start—a stop—a bow—a little hesitation on one side, a little blushing on the other, and John Garnet found himself seated on a slab of rock at Nelly Carew's feet, looking dreamily out to seaward, exceedingly well satisfied with his place.

The exploit and accompanying outrage, of which Galloping Jack must henceforth bear the blame, had been thoroughly carried out. The warrants were burnt, the attained persons warned in time to escape. Some had fled the country—all had taken precautions for their own safety; and, thanks to Katerfelto's speed and endurance, so quickly had this been done, so suddenly had the assailant of Marlborough downs shown himself in the market-place at Taunton, that, like Dick Turpin of immortal memory, he might have proved an alibi in any court of law, thanks to the extraordinary powers of his steed. Many an honest West-country gentleman made it an excuse for an extra glass now that, after the king's health (not specified by name), he must devote a bumper to Galloping Jack and the good gray horse! But John Garnet was acute enough to leave on the shoulders of the mysterious highwayman the whole burden of guilt he had incurred in the eyes of justice. From his neighbors over the border, in his own North country, he had learnt the wisdom of an excellent maxim, "Jouk an' let the jaw gae bye!" In other words, "Duck your head, and keep under shelter till the storm be past."

He might remain in hiding, he thought, among these western wilds till the indignation of the Government had blown over, the hue and cry become somewhat dulled. Then he hoped to get quietly on board a fishing-boat, put out into the wide Atlantic, and so, working his way back again up Channel, land in safety at some port on the coast of France. In the meantime, all he had to do was to keep quiet, and leave the gray horse shut up in the stable as much as possible. Chasing about for a harbor of refuge, he hit upon the little village of Porlock a cluster of houses embossed on wooded hills washed by silver waves, shut in from all the world by moor and mountain, purple peak, and bare gray headland, clothed in topical vegetation, calm, beautiful, and secluded as the first paradise of mankind. Here he thought he would be secure and tranquil. Here he determined to take refuge for days and weeks, if only he could endure the dull, cheerless monotony to which he must make up his mind. That he should find a soul to speak to, he had never anticipated, much less did he dream that here was his Fate, waiting for him with her, soft blue eyes, in this peaceful little hamlet, down by the Severn Sea.

For exercise of the good horse, he would ride Katerfelto on the sands at midnight, but a man of his habits could not remain indoors all day. Soon gathering courage from impunity, he would leave his humble lodgings betimes to wander about the neighborhood, drinking in its beauty, making himself familiar with every winding coombe, darkling forest, and stretching moorland for half a score of miles around.

Thus it fell out that, returning from one of these expeditions at sunset, he overtook Nelly's grandfather, very infirm and feeble now, toiling painfully down a steep incline towards his home.

John Garnet was essentially good-natured, with that good nature which springs from a good heart. In an instant he had offered the old man his arm, and Nelly, who went out to meet him, was not a little surprised to see her grandfather leaning on a straight-made, handsome young fellow, in an embroidered waistcoat and laced hat, talking volubly, and to all appearance much pleased with his new acquaintance.

If she thought the stranger good-looking

—a gentleman with whom she had formerly come acquainted, put away in some neglected hiding-place, only to be brought out again when the mourners hang them round your tomb! Then you will know the happiness of living once more, if only for an hour, if only till the glass is empty, or the tobacco burnt to ashes, in the glowing, thrilling memories of an imperishable past. Imperishable, for is it not, in truth, the only reality? Imperishable, for it cleaves to us during life. Imperishable, for we are taught to believe that it goes with us into eternity. You may make an old man happy at trifling cost, if you will only yield a few minutes of patient attention, while he wanders back through its well-remembered maze, and loses himself dreamily in the labyrinth we call life.

Nelly never knew her grandfather so communicative. He talked till he was thoroughly tired out. Marlborough, Prince Eugene, the vineyards of France, the swamps of the low countries, London coffee houses, foreign theatres, dice, duelling, midnight revels, and the fierce joys of the old roaring Mohawk days—he had something to recall of each, and seemed nothing loth to embark on his adventurous godless career once again.

But his voice grew weaker, his chin sank on his breast, the light in his eye, that had flickered up in transient gleams, dimmed visibly, and the guest resisting his host's quavering entreaties to remain, discreetly took leave, thereby earning golden opinions of Nelly Carew. She opened the door for him herself. She even condescended to shake hands, and wished him good-night with a grateful smile. Walking home to his lodgings, through the balmy summer air, with slow and lingering steps, John Garnet began to think that his term of retirement would be no such dreary penance after all, that, under certain conditions, a man might do worse than settle down to vegetate at Porlock for the rest of his life.

Had he forgotten Walf? No! he told himself. A thousand times, No! He was grateful to her; he was interested in her; he pitied the girl from his heart; but hers was not the whisper that seemed floating on the night breeze in his ear, and it was a pair of blue eyes that peered at him out of the twilight gloom whichever way he turned. Blue eyes, calm, deep, and beautiful as the summer sky and the summer sea.

We ought to be ashamed of ourselves, but, alas! there is too much truth in the adage, "We always believe our first love is our last, and our last love our first!"

John Garnet was like the rest of mankind. Still, it had not come to that yet.

So pleasant an introduction, and under such conditions, soon ripened into something more than acquaintance. It was not long before John Garnet and Nelly Carew became fast friends. They were surprised to find how many tastes they had, how many sympathies and ideas, in common. Sitting together on that bare ledge of rock amongst the sand, though a week ago they had been utter strangers, each seemed to know the other for years.

When a man and his wife are silent while together, they have generally quarrelled and are not going to make up; but when two young couple of opposite sexes, who have never broached the subject of matrimony, sit together out-of-doors without opening their lips, there is strong likelihood that they are progressing insensibly towards that holy state in which they will have a legal right to hate each other as much as they please!

It may be that she was the one who felt their silence most irksome, but the girl broke it at last with the following feminine piece of injustice:

"How dull you must find it here, after the life you've been accustomed to! I'm sure I wonder you don't have a fit of the spleen. I've heard grandfather say he felt it dreadfully at first."

"Mistress Carew," he answered—while the blue eyes shot a reproachful glance, that almost said, why don't you call me Nelly?

—"Mistress Carew, I am not your grandfather!"

was now so entirely taken up with Nelly's discomposure, that he failed to notice those indications of a wish to brawl, which he was generally only too ready to indulge.

Parson Gale was indeed in the worst of humors. Only the night before he had reached his home, and yet no sooner had he reached his morning fast, than, after a visit to his Spanish pointer, a cursory glance at his Irish pigs, but taking no thought whatever for his Devonshire parish, he was in the saddle again to get a glimpse of Nelly Carew. Following the devious tracks of Exmoor, with the instinct of the wild sheep, the wild pooves, or the wild red-deer, he threaded the coombe into Badgeworthy, crossed its foaming waters at his accustomed ford, climbed and clattered among the rocks, cantered freely over the heather, and paced down the hill into Porlock like a man in a dream—for his whole mind was filled with the fair face and the blue eyes that he had hungered to look on for weeks. Though familiar with every acre of the forest and the moor, he would never have reached his destination, but that his horse knew the way as well as his master, having travelled it many a time of late.

It was characteristic of the man that he should not have ridden straight to old Carew's cottage, and gone frankly in to see his friends. He stabbed his horse instead at a little farm on the outskirts of the village, and hovered stealthily about its vicinity, hoping to meet some one who would tell him how matters had been going on his absence.

He did not remain long in suspense. Ere half an hour elapsed, a shambling, ill-looking youth, wearing "poacher" written in every line of his face as plain as print, slouched up and touched his hat, waiting however to be questioned, with an awkward grin that denoted how his natural insolence was kept in check by the Parson's quick temper and reputation for physical prowess. "He be soon up, be wor Pa'yon," was the verdict of his parishioners, "and main ready with his hands, right or w'wrong."

"What, Ike!" said Mr. Cole, assuming a cordiality, he did not feel, for to do him justice he hated a peacher, especially in the vicinity of deer; "not hanged yet, nor even sent to Botany Bay? What has been doing then these so many weeks? Has it been slack time with thee while I've been away?"

"Much as usual, Pa'yon," answered Ike, in the broadest dialect of West Somerset, which it is needless to reproduce here. "It's you gentlefolk that knows what change means. Frolics, too. There's not much of that for poor chaps like us!"

"What is there no news in the place then?" asked the Parson. "Never a fresh nag in Farmer Veal's stable? Never a strange face stopped to take a drink of cider at the What Sheaf or the Crown?"

Small as it was, Porlock boasted two beer-shops, and Ike was familiar with both.

"There be one strange face," answered the latter, with a cunning leer; "but its little cider that gets inside of he—beer neither. The best of wine in his glass, and the best of nags in his stable, gold lace on his coat, fine linen on his back, a sword in his belt, and a warm welcome from the likeliest lass in the West Country—that's what he has. Folk like me must put up with a drink of cider, when they can get it. I'm main thirst now, Pa'yon."

"What do you mean?" asked Gale, in no little disquietude, but putting silver, nevertheless, in the other's dirty hand.

"They say he do be a kinsman of Mistress Nelly, for sure," answered Ike. "And it's like enough. They can't let him be, neither her nor the old man, by day or night. I do know well he do be in and out of the house at all hours, like dog in a fair."

Boused beyond endurance, the Parson clenched his heavy riding-whip; and, but that he bit his lip till the blood came, in an effort to control himself, would have given his informant the full benefit of its weight.

Ike never knew how near he was having his head broke then and there.

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## CHAPTER XV.

MORE THAN KIND.

"He understood me at once," thought Nelly, whose headache left her the moment she entered her own room. "How gentle he always seems, and how nice. I wonder who and what he is? Grandfather says there can be no mistake about his being well born, and a man of fashion. Parson Gale often boasts he is not a man of fashion; but I know I like a man of fashion best. I wonder when I shall see him again. Not that I want to see him one bit; only he must have thought me so rude to leave like that, and I ought to explain. How angry Mr. Gale looked, and how cross he seemed all the way home. What does it matter to me? What need I care how cross he is? Only—only I wish I was never going to set eyes on him again!"

Now this was hardly justice—perhaps I should rather say it was woman's justice. In the absence of other society, the time had been when Nelly was well pleased to accept, in a dignified distant kind of way, the Parson's homage, and felt flattered, if not gratified, by his obvious devotion to herself; now she seemed instinctively to shrink from him as from an enemy. And why? Because John Garnet had merry eyes and a ruddy cheek? Because he was the first specimen of his class she had ever met? Or because they were thrown together; two comely young people, in this pretty little village by the sea? She could not have give the reason—no more can I.

Twenty-four hours did not elapse, of course, before they met again. She looked timidly in his face, and put out her hand. He might be offended, she thought, and felt rather disappointed to have no opportunity of begging pardon; but his frank and pleasant manner was so reassuring, that she wondered how she could have dreaded their meeting so much, and why she spent all the morning thinking of it.

Nelly was always wondering now, and for the first time in her life had forgotten to take grandfather's posset off the hob last night before it was smoked.

Ike never knew how near he was having his head broke then and there.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]