

TWO GOOD HORSE STORIES.

LINDEN MEADOWS, IN THE "ARGONY."

I was the invidious possessor of a pony once, who, from a certain bibulous expression about the eyes and nose (I was always under impression that he drank in private), I christened Bardolph. He had the cunning of a fox, combined with the coolness of our lamented friend the late Charles Mathews. He was in the common habit of walking out of his piece of pasture, going down a lane, opening the church gate, and proceeding to one particular group of graves where some of the "the rude forefathers of the hamlet slept," and he had found the grass to be sweet. Nor was Bardolph altogether selfish in his enjoyments, for he would look round, give a neigh, and induce other rakishly disposed horses in adjacent fields to walk calmly over or through the hedges and join him, politely opening the gate for them with his nose as they presented themselves one by one, with ears laid down, and the most jocular of airs. What do you think this same Bardolph did, too, one day? The man who came to work for me in my garden had hung up the jacket containing his dinner behind the stable-door. Bardolph waited till the stroke of the spade was audible among the cabbage-beds, then he slipped his halter, thrust his physiognomy into the man's skirt-pocket, drew out and undid the parcel, ate the contents (all but a bit of rather stale cheese), and conscientiously returned the paper and string. I chanced to be present when Hodge went in at one o'clock to partake of his frugal meal. He examined his pocket, looked ruefully at the empty paper, then at the unaltered pony (who was gazing pensively at the rack), and with a good-natured grin said, "He's a rare 'un, master, he is," and gratefully accepted my invitation to go and refresh himself in the rectory kitchen.

Switchback was an Irish horse that I had bought at a fair; a splendid-looking

animal, with a coat like satin, and the fastest of trotters. "He'll pass the mile-stones, sir, quicker than you can count them," said his owner—a short, stout gentleman in top-boots, with a slight cast in one eye; "you'd think you were going through a churchyard." The bargain struck, we adjourned to the little inn to partake of a friendly bottle of wine together. There was a scar just over the animal's near hock. "Now I have bought him," I remarked, "you perhaps won't mind telling me any little fault or misfortune my new purchase may possess." "Eh?"—filling his glass and smiling; "no, upon my soul and body, sir, a more magnificent creature was never mounted; but he *has* an objection to letting anything get before him, and—well, he is a little restless at night." "You rascal!" cried I. This was to Switchback next morning, as I surveyed the walls of the stable at the hotel where we had put up. The ostler had begged my attendance for a moment. A single brick partition had been cleverly kicked down. I paid the damages, of course, and jumped into the saddle, started for home. By-and-by I heard the Bedford coach coming behind us. Switchback refused to let it pass, and, when I expostulated, he stuck himself across the road and would not budge an inch. "What is to be done, young gentleman?" the driver asked. I was already dismounting. "There is only one thing that *can* be done," I replied; "crack your whip and go at him!" My hint was quickly taken, and Switchback, the moment the nose of one of the leaders touched him, gave a shrill neigh, made a sudden leap, and rolled down an embankment, kindly waiting for me at the bottom. I rode Switchback for a year or so (he made a capital hunter), and then sold him for a few pounds more than he cost me. He cut an imposing figure, and would have gone at any pace I pleased till he dropped, like Turpin's celebrated Black Bess; conditionally always that I allowed him to pass everything