

# WHO WINS?

## CHAPTER I.

### ON THE TRAMP.

"ARE we almost there, Joe? I am dead beat—I *can not* go further. Yonder are the lights of Leamington—let us rest there."

The man looked round at the piteous cry. He was a big, broad-shouldered fellow, with a certain stride and swing, bold and free, that stamped him soldier, in spite of the disguising farmer's garb he wore. A young man, big-boned and loose-jointed, with a sullen, sunburned face—what you could see of it for the shaggy black beard and blacker cascade of mustache—purple-black hair close-cropped, and big, savage black eyes. A fierce, gypsy-faced fellow, with a murderous scowl on his bent brow, a murderous devil in either eye, and horrible oaths perpetually on his lips.

He looked around—this big, black-browed Saul, at the plaintive, womanly cry. She was his wife—the little, slender creature beside him, with a face of pallid whiteness, drawn and pinched with unutterable weariness and hunger and cold. For, though the night was August, she shivered as she tottered along the endless way, under the weight of a heavy, sleeping child. She was miserably clad, and her blistered feet were hardly protected from the pitiless stones by the wretched shoes she wore. She strained the little one to her with a fierce, hard clasp that had little of love in it, though it was her only one, hushing its fearful wails with vindictive little shakes. A forlorn and wretched couple as any on whom that warm August night shut down.

"Whimpering again," the man said, with a horrible oath; "you want me to beat in that white face of yours to a jelly—don't you? Shut up, you whining fool, or I'll blacken your other eye to match the one I blackened last night!"

"But, Joe," with a wild, tortured cry, "I *can not* go on,