

"The cases are not alike," replied the soldier, filling up his pipe again. "My money went long ago, so did my character, so did my good fortune; but you have prospects—at least you would have, if you played your cards better."

"I defy any one to play his cards better, or troll the doctors better than I do," replied Francis, willfully mistaking him, though in a manner that showed he felt the rebuke."

"In that sense I grant you; but I spoke of playing your cards with the grave judge your father—humoring the old man in his whims—foiling the plans of the fox your brother."

"What plans?" demanded Frank.

"Folks say he's a good young man, a nice young man, a steady young man: one that wears a well starched ruff, wipes his mouth cleanly after a single glass of sherry, sticks to his law books—in short, a chip of the old block!"

"And what then? What is it to me whether he drinks one glass or a dozen? I am not to pay for them, am I?"

"No; you're only to pay for what he does *not* drink."

"The devil I am."

"Why, now, only tell me one thing: isn't it as easy to write John as Frank? And though you be an elder brother, the judge can do as he pleases with his own."

Frank was now fully aroused from his apathy; starting up, he exclaimed, "You don't mean to say that the judge has really any thought of disinheriting me?"

"More unlikely things have come to pass," replied the soldier.

"And who the devil has put this into your head? It never came there of itself, I'll be sworn."

"Perhaps not," replied the soldier; "but there it is, however."

"Come, come, Dick, this is no joking matter. Tell me where you got your information, and I shall the better know what to think of it."

"I'll tell you what to think of it; think that it's true, and see how it may be best mended. It will be cursedly unpleasant when the old one dies to find you have more cause to mourn for yourself than for him."

"Well, Dick, I know you love me ———."

"To be sure I do," interrupted the other; "The next best friend to him who has fought at one's side is the honest fellow who drinks with one from night till morning, and never flinches."

"Then, I think, you might say how you came by the knowledge of this."

"Oh, a little bird whistled it in my ear, but whether it was a goldfinch or a blackbird I can't recollect just now, and it does not much signify; were it my case, I should certainly render brother John incapable of inheriting by knocking him on the head."

"Why, you don't mean this seriously?"

"Don't I, though!"

"Nonsense; you don't mean it, and if you did, it would little matter; I hold John incapable of playing me false. Even were it not so, he shall come to no harm from me. I have wronged many—myself, perhaps, most of all—but I will not wrong him."

"Bravely mouthed—diavolo!"

"What's the matter now?"

"It's my belief old square-toes in the corner yonder has been over-