

as for hurting you or doing any harm, I give you my sincere assurance I will not, however much I might gain by it.'

'Betsy, my dear,' said he, 'we are not going to the kenn; we will go home. I wish to entertain my old friend.'

We then altered our direction, and proceeding down a dark and dirty lane, entered a neat and well furnished room. As soon as we entered and the door was shut—

'Betsy,' said he, 'there is no use for gammon now; find your tongue lass, and help me to find my arms.'

'As you please, Billy,' said the dumb wife. And both retired to another apartment, from whence they soon returned—she well dressed, and Bill as perfect in every limb as when we had parted, he to remain in India, and I to return home.

I believe he had told her his intention and who I was, in the time they were away; for, seeing my surprise, he laughed aloud, while she, smiling, took me by the hand and welcomed me to their house. Now that her begging disguise was thrown off, she really was a most bewitching girl, of the gipsy cast—brilliant black eyes and hair—her features regular, almost to perfection—the loveliest brunette I had ever seen. Bill smiled good-naturally at the admiration my looks expressed, as I gazed at her; and, slapping me on the shoulder—

'Square,' said he, 'is she not a beauty? You must not fall in love with her if you stay—that I must make a condition.'

We all laughed.

I said, if I fell in love, I could not help it; the fault was his for bringing me into temptation. A large square bottle of brandy and a jug of water were set on the table; and while the wife was busy preparing dinner, Bill gave me the following account of himself:—

'You know, Jack, I am no scholar,' he began; 'only a pretty good seaman, as far as hand, reef, or steering goes; so I soon found India was no place for me, in a regular country ship. I could not abide these black, lazy, cowardly rascals of lascars; and there was crowds of them in all the vessels I could find. They are well enough in fair weather; but when it blows, the heart is blown out of them. They are neither in the way, or skulking in corners; so I took the first opportunity of returning home to Britain again. When I came to London, I got into all manner of mischief, and lost my guineas like winking; above two hundred in one week; and the remainder, clothes and all, in one night in Wapping; for I awoke in the morning in the watch-house, bruised, and with only a watchman's greatcoat thrown over me. I had been thrown out of a window, or pushed down some stair, and in that state they told me I was found by the watchman. I had now time to reflect, but nothing to reflect upon, for all I had in the world was a shirt and a pair of trowsers. There was no charge against me, so I walked from the watch-house like a man adrift in an old boat, without oars or food. I went to the wharfs, for pity or employ. I got fitted in a kind of way; but could not find a vessel, for there were too many like myself. What to do I knew not. More than once I thought of doing as I had been done by—that is, helping myself where I could; but, although I was often without food, and slept in the streets or under a boat, I, somehow, could not bring my mind to that. I often wished I was again in Scotland, where I had friends and was known; but how to get there I knew not. At length the thought came into my mind—I could beg my way down. I could be no worse than I was in London—and where was the odds? A beggar in London was no better than a beggar in Scotland, or anywhere else; for my Scotch pride was by this time starved out of me; so off I set; but was poorly enough off, for I was not then up to the trade, so my stout look and honest truth met nothing but unkindness and insult. At length, one day, as I was on the point of dying from starvation, (for England is not a country for an honest beggar,) I fell upon a gang of gipsies, upon the borders of a heath, making merry. I joined them, and was kindly and hospitably received. Betsy there was one of the troop. From the moment I saw her, I took a fancy to her pretty face—joined the gang for her sake, and soon won her regard and love. I was now content and happy. We had victuals of the best in plenty, and roamed where we pleased, with no restraint but our own wills. I found there was some tough work before my hand. Betsy had one or two pretenders to her love, in her own and other gangs, and my rivals were not to be lightly thought of, for in

their minds none but the brave deserve the fair. It is, win your bride and keep her while you can. There was one stout, active fellow, whom her parents intended for her husband; but Betsy had no wish for the match, and my arrival confirmed her dislike to him. Our loves were only known to ourselves, and our interviews stolen, until my services had gained me the esteem of her father. He was patriarch or head of the gang, and kept the common stock, guiding our movements and directing our operations as far as our wayward fancies could be guided—partly by argument, partly by yielding, but seldom by resorting to punishment, for all was done for our good, to the best of his judgment. No one thought of resisting his control; and if any became discontented, they left the gang—a step by no means desirable, for our safety lay in the strength of the gang. There is scarce a gang but is at feud with some other gang or gangs; and when they meet, nothing but the flight of the weaker, or some other overruling cause, prevents a battle, in which murders are not unfrequently committed.

Under the tuition of Betsy, I became a most expert beggar, as you witnessed this morning. My contributions to the common stock often equalled the amount of all the others put together. I became the pride of the gang; and no wonder—for I strove for Betsy, and was cheered on by her acclaim, while I was scowled at by my rivals, who were quick enough, though her parents had no suspicion of it, to see her preference of me. When we thought it proper time, I proposed to the father for the hand of his daughter. He had no objection to me as a son-in-law, further than that he had all but promised her to long Ned, but would leave it to Betsy and myself to manage the affair as we best could, and would interfere no farther with his authority than for the good of the gang. If Betsy was pleased, he cared not whether Long Ned or I had her. When I told her the result of my conference with her father, she was as well pleased as myself.

'Bill,' she said, 'you will not win me from Long Ned with both ease and honour. He is no contemptible rival. He will be at you as soon as he comes to the camp, for his mother will tell him. Now, be a man, and do not yield while you can stand to him; for, much as I love you—and you know I love you dearly—I could not marry you if you are beat. Nay, the people might make me marry him; and you must leave the gang, or your life would not be safe for one night. What says my Bill?'

I looked upon the lovely girl with astonishment, her language was so unlike anything I had ever heard from a woman. In Scotland here, if a woman knew her lover was to fight, she would almost go distracted, and do all in her power to prevent him. I could scarcely believe my ears, I was as yet so little used to their ways. As I stood looking at her, a shade of anger passed over her face, and the tears came into her eyes; she turned away her head, and sobbed aloud. This roused me.

'What ails my Betsy?' I said, taking her in my arms. She still sobbed, and pushed me from her.

'I am the most unfortunate girl in the world,' she cried. 'I love a man, and he is a coward.'

'A coward, Betsy!' cried I. 'What do you mean? I am no coward. I fear not the face of clay.'

Turning to me with one of her sweet smiles—

'I am not deceived, then in my Bill?' she said. 'He is not afraid of Long Ned?'

'No, my love; nor of the whole gang, one after another—one down, another come on,' said I. 'Are we friends again?'

'O Bill, we are more than friends,' she sobbed. 'I love you dearly, and am proud of you.'

Arm in arm, we returned to the tents.

Long Ned had just come home after an excursion, so, as soon as he saw us his rage knew no bounds; and his dark eyes flashed fire, as he came forward and ordered me to quit my hold of the girl. There were few words passed between us; every one knew what was to take place, so no one interfered further than to see fair play. You recollect, Square, I always loved a bit of a row. The lessons I took on board from Sambo the black cook, stood me now in great stead. I learned from him the African mode, to hold the stick with both hands by the ends, and cover the body with it, more especially the head; having thus the advantage of striking with