

lime head. This manner of salutation led some folks to aver that Deputy-Assistant-Commissary-General Ray had once been a full private, from which rank he had risen to his present position ; but this was an unmerited compliment.

"Early, begad ! Yes, I have not even dined," answered the colonel sulkily.

"Well, you know, Juxon, we dine early," observed the other, hesitatingly, yet with sufficient distinctness, "that is the rule of our house ; but we shall have 'high tea,' as my Gracie calls it ; cold things and eggs——"

"Thank you, no, I have not your powers of digestion, Ray. A man who can take 'meat tea' must have the stomach of an ostrich. Dinner's dinner, and it was no light thing that fetched me from home just before feeding time, I promise you. There's the very devil to pay with my Ella, in the shape of a dashed impertinent cadet."

"A cadet !" echoed the commissary, in his slow, reluctant way ; "a cadet and your Ella ! You really astonish me."

"Maybe I shall astonish you more presently," answered the colonel, coldly.

"My dear sir, you mistake me. I intended to express sympathy," returned the commissary. "That a young woman so gifted by Nature and by Fortune as Miss Ella—should have—and a cadet too—— By-the-bye, you have not mentioned how far the thing has gone."

"It has gone, and shall go, no farther than I can help, sir, you may be dashed sure of that. But my niece, you know, is her own mistress, that's the difficulty."

"Difficulty indeed," said the commissary. "To be too well provided for in a girl's case is almost as bad—and much more dangerous—than not being provided for at all."

"I don't want your philosophical reflections, Ray, but your advice. If a beggarly cadet was to come courting your daughter, for example, what would you do ?"

"What would I do ?" repeated the commissary, slowly. "Well, the question is, rather, what would I not do ?" The probability is, to begin with, that I should wring his neck."

"Quite right," observed the colonel, approvingly. "That is the idea that would first occur to every well-constituted mind ; but one can't do it in these times. I can remember the day when no more was thought of what became of a cadet than of a cat, but that's all over now, and the service is going to the devil. A word or two to Sir Hercules, spoken in season, might of course get him expelled from the Academy, but then he would be loose, and so much the more dangerous."