HOLMBY HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD OAK TREE.

The Pytchley hounds have had a run. Io triumphe! The Pytchley hounds have killed their fox. Once again, Io triumphe! Not that these are unusual events with that well-ordered and efficient pack, nor that the establishment is more than commonly exhilarated by success; but that such runs as this last do not occur oftener than two or three times in the season, and deserve to be recorded accordingly.

It is a curious mania, that fondness for hunting which prevades the rural population of Great Britain, from the peer to the peasant, and which we alone of all their progeny seem to have inherited from our Scandinavian ancestors—a mania that outlives love, friendship, literature, money-making, all the devices of poor human nature to squander its most priceless possession—time; and which seems to flourish only the more vigorously when the health and bodily strength indispensable to its enjoyment have passed away for evermore. We, too, in our "hot youth," were once inoculated with the malady, and its seeds have never since been thoroughly eradicated from our constitution. There was a time when our heart used to beat thick and fast at the first whimper of a hound; when the color mounted to our cheek, and our eye glistened brighter, as we watched the gorse shaking above the busy pack; when the life blood coursed quicker through our veins as we listened for the distant "View-holloa" proclaiming hot "*away!*" and the mad equestrian revel really about to commence. Then it was ecstasy to be borne along at speed by a gallant, generous horse, himself giving and receiving the mutual pleasure enhanced by so confiding a partnership; to thread with calm dexterity the rushing cavalade, and reach, unbalked by restive steed or undecided rider, the spot we had marked out many a stride back for our own. Large, black and formidable, hound, seat, and eye combined to land us safely on the further side; and then, with tightened rein, head up and hands down, to speed away after the streaming pack, good friends and true to right and left, but not a soul between ourselves and the hounds!

Alas, alas! "*post equitem sedet atra cura*," she can cling even to the sportsman's scarlet, she can keep her seat even over a Northamptonshire ox-fence; but though the good horse carry double, he feels not the extra load, and the rider's heart must indeed be heavy if it can ache at moments such as these.

As the penitent highwayman remarked to the chaplain at the gallows-foot, "Oh, I repent unfeignedly of my sins, but yet—a gallop across a common! *you dog, it was delicious!*"

So now, though the days of our pilgrimage are in the "sere and yellow leaf;" though boots and breeches have given way to flannel bandages and fleecy hosiery, whilst gout and rheumatism warn us that wet days and "wet nights" are equally dangerous to our *physique*; though our quiet cob, once the property of a Low Church bishop, is getting too much for us, and is coveted inwardly by our eldest grandson, who already considers his own Shetland pony "hardly up to his weight," we have still a hankering after the golden joys of our youth, still a sneaking kindness for the tops and the scarlet, the crack of the whip, the echo in the woodland, and all the appliances and accessories of the chase.

"What a hunting day!" we remarked aloud to our walking-stick, as we climbed the hill painfully towards Holmby, and stopped to admire for the hundredth time the wide expanse of beauty and verdure stretching far away beneath our feet for many a mile to east and west, dotted here and there with noble standard trees, and shut in by the dark stately woods of Althorpe that crown the rising ground to the south. "What a hunting day!" a sky of dappled grey, a balmy breeze just wooing into existence the hundred buds and beauties of early spring—a day to have gathered the first peeping violet "long, long ago." *Eheu fugaces!* what's a violet, with no one to give it to?—day of beauty and promise, a day such as George Herbert so charmingly describes:

> Sweet day, so cool and calm and bright,
> The bridal of the earth and sky,
> Sweet dews shall weep thy fall to-night,
> For thou must die.

But nevertheless, rather too muggy a day for an elderly gentleman nearly fifteen stone weight to walk up such a hill as that; so we rested on our stick, mopped our heated brows, and leaned our back against the stem of a fine old oak tree that stands within a stone's throw of the wall surrounding all that is now left of the ancient palace of Holmby. We own to the practice of day-dreaming—"mooning," it is called by the irreverent—and we were soon lost in the long vista of the past, threading the labyrinth by help of that delusive skein which we were pleased to term history, taking up one end at the period at which we supposed this oak had been planted; and so winding it gently off from the Wars of the Roses to the jolly days of "bluff King Hal;" congratulating it on its inland position, which saved it from forming part of that fleet whose thunders helped to destroy the Invincible Armada, speculating on its size and luxuriance in the peaceful time of the crowned wiseacre whom Scottish parasites termed "gentle King Jamie;" and thinking how fervently its beauties must have been appreciated by his ill-starred son, to whose charge want of generation could never have been laid as a fault. "Here," we thought, "beneath these venerable arms, under the stately shade, how often has the unfortunate Stuart, the martyred Mon——Halloh! what is that?—the note of a hound, as we are a living sinner and a gouty one; but gout or no gout, we haven't seen hounds for a twelvemonth; we must hobble on and have a look at them once more. But stay, there's their fox!—a beaten fox, by all the beauties of Diana!" and forthwith we gave vent to a prolonged and, we rather flatter ourselves, not unmusical yell, which we should despair of conveying to the reader by any other means than oral demonstration. We used to pique ourselves upon doing it rather well, and with one finger in the ear and a rubicund well-fed physiognomy, the effect is, to say the least of it, imposing, if not harmonious. Yes, there he was, stealing along, his back up, his fur draggled, tangled, and black with mire; his brush drooping, his tongue out, his long knavish countenance wobegone and indicative of thorough physical exhaustion, his whole instincts so intent on his pursuers that he scarcely turned aside at our salutation—there he was, dead-beat, and running short for his life, not a covert or an earth within two miles of him, and the best pack of hounds in England running frantic for his blood in the next field. See, he has nearly reached the old oak tree! one, two, three white hounds are through the fence, the rest following, like a stream set free from a dam. How they strain across the ridge and furrow, their bristles erect, their sterns lowered, their hungry eyes flaring out upon him with instinctive hate! He is creeping quite slowly now; but as Harmony and Fairplay near him he turns and shows a long ominous, gleaming set of teeth. Over they roll, all three together. Marplot and Marygold are close upon them, hounds tumble over each other in hungry confusion, a crash is heard in the fence, and Charles Payne is off his horse in another moment and amongst them. A faint strident noise, like that of a smothered saw, grates upon the ear above the stifled "worry," "worry," of the hounds, and ere Charles, the pink of politeness, has time to touch his cap to ourselves (for he takes us for the parson, and therefore a stanch fox preserver, if not pursuer), he holds him high up in the air, and with a loud "Who-whoop," proclaims the conclusion of one of those "best runs of the season" which occur at least once a fortnight.

Who-whoop! indeed. Three more sportsmen have by this time arrived, one over and the other two through the fence, which still hides the rest of the field from our eager gaze. Soon a gate opens, and some half a dozen more, including a couple of black coats, make their appearance. There are a good many still coming, and a large proportion of the original field that will never get here at all. No wonder; the pastures of Northamptonshire are full of them; they are scattered all over the country. Those who have arrived look wild and heated, and intensely pleased with themselves as they jump off their exhausted horses, and talk and laugh and gesticulate; the while Charles Payne throws the fox to the hounds, with another encouraging "Who-whoop!" and the clamorous baying of expectancy is exchanged for the "worry, worry, worry," of fruition. "Had a good thing?" we inquire of the first whip, who is appeasing a difference as to a tid-bit between Countess and Caroline. "*Carpital* thing, sir," replies that affable functionary, whose cap and side are plastered with mud, and who looks as pleased as if some one had given him a hundred pounds. "*Carpital* thing, sir. Brought him from Sulby gorse over the finest part of our country; never checked but once, down by Cottesbrooke; never touched a covert the whole blessed while! It's eleven miles if it's a yard, and I make it exactly an hour and fifteen minutes from the time I "hollosed" him till we run into him in this here grass field just atween your reverence's legs. Whoop, my darlings! Worry, worry, worry! tear him an' eat him!" Cigars are lit congratulations are exchanged, the bay horse and the brown horse and the chestnut horse receive their due share of praise, a reflective flattery somewhat in this wise: 'How well he carried you, old fellow; and what a stiff line! *I was close to you the whole time!*' From different versions and many contradictory statements we gather a tolerably correct notion of the run; and as its glories gradually flood our still enthusiastic imagination, it is with a pang of regret that we reflect we shall never see gallops such as these again.

We were there in spirit, nevertheless; we know every yard of the country, every field and every fence—though we can practise it no longer, we *think* we know every move in the game. We can fancy ourselves astride of a good horse by the side of Jack Woodcock as he views the fox away from the low corner of the gorse. What a long, wiry, tough-looking animal it is, with a white tag to that hand-some brush, which, as he steals across the neighbouring pasture, he whisks in derision, as much as to say, 'Gallop away, my fine fellows! according to your wont; hurry and bustle, and jump and splutter! The harder you ride the better for me!'

'Tally-ho!' shouts our friend Jack, erect in his stirrups. 'Twang' goes Charles Payne's horn from the middle of the gorse. Already the owner of the covert is coming best pace around the corner. Trust him not to lose his start, and to make good use of it when he has got it. In twos and threes the hounds are pouring through the boundary fence; ten or twelve couple are settling to the scent; the rest, with ears erect, are flying to the cry. Now they stoop together with collective energy, and drive along over the grass in all the mute ecstacy of *pace*.

A burst such as this is pastime for the gods!

It sobers our imaginary steed, our pen-and-ink Pegasus; he drops quietly to his bridle, and a turn in our favor enables us to pull him into a trot, and to look about us. Seven or eight men are in the same field with the hounds; half a dozen stiff fences and a couple of miles of grass have shaken off the larger portion of the field, but they are even now coming through a bridle gate not far distant in the rear, and should a check unfortunately occur at this critical moment, they will be up in plenty of time to do lots of mischief still. But no; the pack is streaming on. 'Forward,' says Charles Payne, cramming his horn into its case, and gathering his horse for an oxer. 'Forward!' echoes Mr. Villiers, doubling' it neatly on his right. 'Forward!' adds Mr. Cust, cracking the far-rail as he swings over the obstacle in his stride. 'Line shouts a Meltonian at an unfortunate aspirant whose horse is swerving to the thickest place in the fence. 'Serve him right!' remarks the Meltonian to himself, landing safely in the next field, while the aspirant rolls headlong to the earth. Jake Woodcock, with an amused smile, slips quietly to the front. Three or four more men, one in a black coat, enter the field at different points; that quiet gentlemen *over* not *through* the gate. A loose horse with streaming reins gallops wildly after the chase; and the hounds, with a burning scent, are pointing straight for Naseby Field.

And now every man hugs his trusty hunter by the head, and spares his energies as much as possible, ere he encounters the yielding soil of that classic ground. Many a tired horse has Naseby Field to answer for, from the thundering battle steeds of the Cavaliers, led by hot Prince Rupert, to the panting thorough-breds of Jersey and Allix, and Cooke and Knightly, and the heroes of fifty years ago, who urged the mimic war over that eventful plain. Ay, down to our own times, when although the plough has passed over its marshy surface, and draining and high-farming have given secure foothold to man and beast, many a sobbing steed and dejected rider can still bear witness to the exhaustive properties of that black adhesive soil, many a dirty coat and stationary hunter rues the noble impulse that *would* follow the fleeting pack over such a country as this after a three days' rain.

Some of them began to hope he may have entered the thick holding covert of Naseby Thorns, and that the conclusion of so rapid a burst may save their own and their horse's credit. But a countryman on the opposite hill is holloaing as if his throat must crack. Our fox is forward still; he has not a notion of entering the covert, warmed as he is by the merry pace of the last mile or so.

'No occasion to lift them, Charles,' observes Mr. Villiers, as he lends an ear to the far-off countryman, and points to the streaming pack wheeling with every turn of the scent, like pigeons on the wing.

'Couldn't get near enough if there was. Come up, horse,!' mutters Charles in reply, as he bores through a black close-cut hedge, sinking up to the hocks on the taking-off side. There is no chance of a check now; and as the professed jester of the Hunt remarks 'If he don't stop at Tally-ho, he may go on to Texas!'

The field, that enterprising body, whose self dependence is so touchingly illustrated at every sign-post, are already somewhat hopelessly behindhand and considerably puzzled by the coincidence of two safe practicable lanes, leading equally in the direction of the line of chase. It divides accordingly into two hurrying colums, neither of which will in all probability see a hound again to-day.

So, "on we go again," leaving "Tally-ho Gorse" to the left, and up the hill for Hazel-beech, threading the fine old trees that tower upon its heights, and pointing ever onwards for the wide grassy vale of Cottesbrooke, spread out like a panorama before us, shut in by wooded hills, dotted with fine old standard trees, and smiling beauteous and peaceful in the chequered light of a February sun.

Thank Heaven! a check at last. Pegasus was beginning to want it sadly. He struck that top-rail uncommonly hard, and has dropped his hind legs in the last two consecutive ditches. There are still some half-dozen men with the hounds, but their horses look as if they had had nearly enough, and we are inclined to believe one or two of the riders are beginning to wish it was over. The country for miles back is dotted with equestrians of every rank and every hue. A child on a pony has turned, not *headed*, the fox. Charles Payne opines he cannot have entered the gorse with so "warm a jacket," as he phrases it; so he holds his hounds towards the plantations on his right. Fairplay whisks her stern about her sides, and drops a note or two to her comrades as they gather to the line.

"Yo-geote, old lady!" says Charles, in the inexplicable language of a huntsman.

"She's always right, that old bitch," remarks Mr. Villiers, who has just turned Olympian's head for an instant to the wind.

"Twang" goes the horn once more, and away score the hounds through "Pursar's Hills," as if they were fresh out of the kennel, and over the wide grassy pastures below, and up the opposite rise, with untiring energy, leaving the foremost horseman toiling a field and a half behind them, till a pause and momentary hover in the Welford Road enables Pegasus and his comrades to reach them once more.

It is labor and sorrow now, yet it is a sweet and joyous pain. Still, we can hardly call that enjoyment which we wish was over; and most devoutly now do we all hope that we may soon kill this gallant fox, before he kills our gallant horses. The best blood of Newmarket is but mortal, after all; and Pegasus is by this time going most unreservedly on his own shoulders and his rider's hands.

Down the hill between Creaton and Holywell we make a tolerable fight; but though Olympian clears the brook at the bottom, the rest of us flounder through. We have no false pride now, and do not any of us turn up our noses at gates or gaps, or other friendly egress. Everything is comparative. A country doctor on his fresh hack, meeting us at this period, opines we are going quite slow, but *we know better;* so does Pegasus, so does old Fairplay, so does the fox.

He is not travelling so straight now. Up and down yonder hedgerow the pack turn like harriers, and we think we must be very near him. But see: the crows are stooping yonder over a low black object in the distance. 'Tis the hunted fox, pointing straight for the covers of Althorpe. He will never reach them, for the hounds are now close upon his track, and they run into him in the large grass field by Holmby House under the old oak tree.

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Our dream is over. Hounds and horses and sportsmen are all gone home. The excitement has evaporated, and left its usual depression of spirits behind. We are left alone—all alone—under the old oak tree. What is life at best but a dream? What is happiness but a dream?—fame, honor, love, ambition? Dreams all. The bitterness is in the waking.

Let up put the clock back a couple of centuries or so, when the old oak was stately and vigorous as now, his branches as spreading, his stem as gnarled and knotted, his growth as majestic. What a lesson to us creatures of a day, in our short span of earthly existence, is instilled by the comparative duration of these vegetable giants! How they outlive us! How their "winter of discontent," unlike our own, is annually succeeded by a spring of promise! How they spread and tower upwards into heaven, whilst we grovel upon earth. *Væ mihi!* 'twere a weary world, my masters, if there were nothing beyond. A weary world! Let us put the clock back, I say, and dream again.

CHAPTER II.

A CAST OF HAWKS.

She was hatched on a snow-topped, bluff-faced cliff, towering over the iron-bound coast of Iceland. The parental eyrie, hundreds of feet above the level of the sea, was strewed with bones and feathers, and all the warlike spoils of her predatory progenitors. Her infancy was fed on blood, warm from the living victim, her youth trained in long flights over the dark seething ocean; so her spirit knew not what it was to quail, nor her wing to droop.

But a daring cliffsman, one of those whose pastime and whose profession it is to undertake risks such as quiet men shudder even to read of, made his appearance one clear frosty night at the entrance of her home, and awed her with the immediate presence of the human face divine, never seen before. Well might she be astonished, for the cliff was a sheer precipice, rising perpendicularly from many a fathom deep of ocean, and the eyrie was securely placed some hundred feet or more below its landward edge, a giddy height indeed above the restless sea, heaving and surging down yonder in the darkness. Three strands in the numbed grasp of a comrade were between the cliffsman and eternity, yet his nerve was totally unmoved, his hand steady, his face not even pale. Quietly he selected the most promising bird from the eyrie; and she, the very essence of whose existence had been freedom, wild as the winds and waves themselves, must be a captive now for evermore.

At first she pined sadly; her bright keen eye grew dim, her feathers lost their gloss, her wings their sweep and vigor. She was breaking her untamed heart, like a wild hawk as she was, but custom and discipline at length prevailed. Her feminine spirit, half won and half subdued, yielded to the combined influence of kindnsss and coercion. Ere she reached England in a merchant-ship she would perch contentedly on the deck, sunning herself for hours in the pure sea air. She would take food eagerly from the hand at which she once fought and tore. She was tamed at last, that winsome wild-bird, ready, for the lure, and the bells, and the jesses; willing, under man's tuition, to become more than ever an inveterate enemy to her kind.

So they sold her for ten gold pieces to a north-country lord, and the north-country lord being *more suorum*, a judge of horseflesh, exchanged her away to Sir Giles Allonby for a dapple grey palfrey; and now she sits jessed and hooded, under the old oak tree at Holmby, far and away the best falcon within forty miles of fair Northampton town.

So thinks the falconer standing yonder, with his perches slung from his broad shoulders, and his hooded pupils sitting contentedly thereon, who would wager his new doublet and his Christmas fee on the success of her, the pride of his mews. So thinks the lithe active lad his assistant, in whose grasp those handsome spaniels are straining at the leash, and who clings to his opinion with the glorious tenacity of sixteen. So think those two jolly-looking serving-men who are in waiting, and who seem to have no earthly thing to do save to crack broad English jokes, and to laugh at them with their broad English faces. So thinks fair Grace Allonby, whose nature it is to pet and love every mortal thing that comes within her reach. So thinks good Sir Giles himself, who only yester evening over his claret was loud in the praises of his favourite, and eager to match her against all and everything on the wing.

"Let them come," said the stout old knight, "with their purses in their hands. My Lord Vaux, my Lord Montague, my Lord Goring, Colepepper, Carnarvon, and the rest, within fifty miles of this spot—ay, within the bounds of Britain itself—Peer or Puritan, Cavalier or Roundhead—always excepting the falcons of his most blessed Majesty. Let them come with their hawks, every feather of 'em, and 'Diamond' shall have a flight at them all!"

It was a glorious morning for the sport. The sky was clear and blue, softened here and there with light dappled clouds; dewdrops sparkled in the sun from thorn and briar, while the earth exhaled new life and fragrance from her teeming bosom, moistened but not saturated with the late genial rain. How blithe and gladsome was the lark's shrill song as he mounted cheerily into the sky, such a speck against this unfathomless blue—how soft and mellow the sunlight on the uplands—how sweet the perfume of the free fresh air!—sight, smell, and hearing all gratified at once. What a morning for hawking, or indeed for any manly, vigorous, out-of-door-pursuit.

"The knight is late this morning," remarked the falconer, a man of few words, and whose whole energies were wrapped up in his profession; "and tice wind is changing even now," he added with an anxious glance at the heavens, whilst "Diamond" stirred uneasily on her perch, jingling her bells, and moving her hooded head from side to side with characteristic impatience.

"Drinking the King's health overnight," remarked one of the serving-men, with a leer at his comrade. "Liquor and loyalty make sleepy heads in the morning; is't not so, Will? Thou wast ringing chimes in the buttery thyself, lad."

Will shook his head, as who would say, "I follow the example of my betters," but answered not a word; and indeed in those days late sittings, large flagons, and bumper healths were the daily custom of the age; and the strong ale flowed as freely in the hall as did the red wine in the banqueting-room or the dinner-parlor.

But there was a stir amongst the group under the old oak tree; the falconer's eye brightened, the serving-men sprang to an attitude of respectful attention, and the spaniels fawned and whined, and strained in the leash, for a party of three equestrians were approaching; up the hill they swung at a dashing hand-gallop, and cantering over the smooth sward with feathers waving, habits fluttering, bridles jingling, and palfreys snorting, pulled up under the oak, and returned the salutation of their inferiors with the frank courtesy that is always the stamp of good-breeding and high birth.

"What a morning for us, lads!" remarked Sir Giles to the retainers, with a kindly smile lighting up his ruddy countenance, still handsome and high-bred, though marked with many a deep and furrowed line, the inevitable consequence of a hard life spent in much excitement, much anxiety, much danger, and some excess. "We flushed a brace of herons as we came along the riverside at Brampton; and a fairer flight than one of the beauties made I never wish to see. Ah "Diamond!" don't you know the old man's voice? Come to my wrist, old lass! Soh! Soh!" and Sir Giles caressed the hooded bird, and smoothed her neck plumage with a loving hand as she fluttered sagaciously to take her well known place on the glove of the old Cavalier.

Sir Giles Allonby was a specimen of the old English gentleman such as no other country but England could produce; such as the troublous times in which his lot was cast brought out in all its excellence, and all its faults. In person he was tall, spare, and sinewy, framed for a horseman, a swordsman, or a sportsman; for success in any bodily exercise demanding strength, quickness, and agility. Field-sports and campaigning had toughened him to the consistency of pin-wire but the same causes, coupled with a considerable amount of deep-drinking, had hardened the almost feminine beauty of his countenance into a type strangely at variance with the delicate chiseling of its small features, and the mirthful glances of its bright blue eyes. It seemed a contradiction to see that oval face so rugged and war-worn, that well-trimmed moustache and carefully pointed beard so white, those soft curling locks so thin and grey. The man himself corresponded in his inward character to his outward appearance. Generous, enthusiastic, and chivalrous, he was passionate, prejudiced, and obstinate. Quick to resent insult with a blow or sword-thrust, he would forgive and embrace the bitterest enemy who should move a hair's breadth towards reconciliation; though he would lift his hat on entering a poor man's cottage, and address his dame with as much courteous deference as a duchess, no Cavalier alive was such a thoroughgoing aristocrat in his reverence for what he called "blood"—not one of his Norman ancestors could have expressed a greater contempt for the puddle that stagnated through the peasant's veins, as compared with the generous fluid that warmed his own; though he would fling his gold pieces about to all that asked for them, he would screw his tenants to the uttermost, nor stop short of what we should call acts of violence and rapine, to raise men and horses for the king; and when his wife died, whom he had loved with all the unrestrained ardour with which such a nature could not but love a kindly, handsome, gentle, generous woman, although devotion to the crown, which he called loyalty, became the one guiding impulse of his life. Grace herself, his lovely daughter Grace, was second in his estimation to his sovereign, and in that sovereign's cause he would not have scrupled to sacrifice even her, his sweet, dutiful, and loving child.

She is reining in her horse with a graceful but somewhat timid air, and appears not too well pleased at the caresses and attentions of those busy spaniels, to which the steed replies with a degree of playful restlessness not quite agreeable to his rider. Grace is a sad coward, and though she spends much of her life on horseback, like other gentlewomen of her time, she has never acquired the perfect self-possession and masculine ease which sit so well upon her companion, yonder lady, whose curls are waving in the wind, whose soft blue eyes are deepening and dancing with animation, whose lip and cheek are blushing carnation in the fresh morning air, under the rays of the bright morning sun.

'Give him a gallop, Gracey,' says she, with a ringing laugh at her friend's obvious misgivings. 'Why, Sir Giles himself could hardly ride my Bayard if I let him get as fresh as you do that riotous pet of yours. Silly Grace, you spoil everything you come near. What a tyrant you *will* make of your husband, my dear, if you ever get one!' and she bent her beautiful figure to pat her horse's neck in a bewitching attitude, which was not lost, as it was not meant to be, on old Sir Giles, or the busy falconer, or the grinning serving-man, nay, not even on the lad of sixteen, who gazed on her open-mouthed, with a ludicrous expression of stupified amazement and delight.

Mary Cave dearly loved admiration wherever she could get it. Left early in life to her own devices, brought up chiefly abroad, and transferred from a foreign convent to a foreign court, she had acquired, even in the first flush of youth, a habit of self-reliance and a decision of character seldom to be observed in those of the softer sex who have not passed through the crucible of much pain and much tribulation. Clever and quick-witted, with strong passions and strong feelings, she nursed an ambition which was stronger than them all. She had the knack, partly natural, partly the result of keen observing powers, of detecting at once the mental value, and, so to speak, the moral weight of those with whom she came in contact; and this gift, so dangerous to a woman, necessarily imparted a harshness to her character, and robbed her of that trusting, clinging tendency which is woman's greatest charm. Young as she was, she busied herself in all the intrigues of the day, and her beauty, her fascinating manners, her extraordinary influence over everything that wore a beard, rendered her a most dangerous enemy, a most desirable and efficient partisan. From her kinsman's house at Boughton she corresponded with the leading men of the Cavalier party, and Lord Vaux himself, in all his wisdom of years and experience of intrigue, was indebted to beautiful Mary Cave for many a happy resource, many a deep-laid and successful stratagem.

Every one in the house adored her. The respectful and austere *major-domo*, a condition of whose very existence it was to preserve on all occasions a demeanor of supernatural decorum, would follow her about with his eyes, and dodge after her with flowers and porcelain and choice old glass, and every device he could think of, to win the reward of a word and a smile; and the little page-boy, the lowest of all varlets in the establishment, spent a whole night on the staircase in darkness and tears, when he heard that 'Mistress Mary was ill at ease, and troubled with a slight cold.'

So she turned and wound them all round her finger—and why not? The lower animals have their natural arms, offensive and defensive; the ox his horns, the tiger his claws, the serpent his guile, man his obstinacy, and woman her beauty; the last is the most fearful weapon of all, and right well does she know its advantages and its use.

Even now old Sir Giles, keen sportsman as he is, cannot but feel that his attention to the business of the day is much distracted by his daughter's friend; that if 'Diamond' could have a rival in his admiration and attention, it would be beautiful Mary Cave.

She ought to be very happy, speeding along in all the enjoyment of health and power, and conscious charms, and the delightful motion of Bayard's easy gallop. And yet there is a little black imp sitting behind her that no gallop on earth can shake off—a secret sorrow nestling at that proud wayward heart which no triumphs of beauty and influence can stifle or eradicate. Both girls laugh out merrily as they fly along, but timid Grace Allonby is alarmed about herself; dauntless Mary Cave is uneasy about another; the latter's frame of mind is the least envidable of the two.

And now the little party are winding slowly along the brookside in the valley down by Althorpe. Many a noble elm and stately oak nods above their heads, many a patch of sedge and rushes shakes and rustles to the quest of the busy spaniels and the long poles of the falconer and his assistants. Far and wide, to right and left, extends a prairie-like and undulating pasture, nourishing here and there a few scattered flocks feeding in the sun, near one or two small hamlets, a few posts and rails, or an old straggling overgrown hedge, denote an attempt at cultivation and enclosure, but the general character of the district is wild, nomadic, and provocative of galloping.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A CHUNK OF GOLD.

An American's Experience in Australia.

(From the San Francisco Call.)

One day while I was at work in the drift one of our party, who was bailing in the shaft, said:

"There's something big happened up above, Tom; I hear a great buzzing and shouting."

"Perhaps it's a fight," I suggested as I struck my pick into the soil and unearthed a nugget as large as a walnut.

"Perhaps it's a find," suggested my mate.

"There's a find here," I said, as I crawled out of the drift and exhibited the nugget I had just taken out. Then I heard the clamor also; it was like the murmur of distant waves. We shouted to the rope, and receiving no answer to our signal concluded that something important had happened, as our mates above had evidently left the windlass. A moment later a shadow appeared above, and Bill's voice was heard shouting:

"Come up, boys, and see the big find."

"Where is it?" I asked, on reaching the surface; but I scarcely needed to ask, for it must be where the crowd was collected, some fifty yards distant from our claim. The crowd was large, and every moment increasing, but being brawny and broad-shouldered, I pushed my way through it, and was almost overwhelmed with astonishment at the sight which greeted my vision; it wasn't a nugget, it was a boulder. No wonder that the miners were excited. The spectacle was enough to excite the most phlegmatic individual that ever breathed.

It was a solid mass of gold as large, or larger, than a leg of mutton, and not unlike one in shape. This was the mass which has since become widely known as the Welcome nugget. A fair simile of it may now be seen in the mineral department of the Boston Museum of Natural history, where the weight is given at 2,166 ounces, and the value as $41,822.70. The further information is imparted that the nugget is the largest piece of gold ever found. This is an error. A larger nugget was found at Bendigo lead on Feb. 3, 1869. It weighed 189 pounds 1 ounce Troy, or 2,269 ounces.

I had been mentally congratulating myself on the discovery of a nugget as large as a walnut; but the sight of this mass of gold took all the conceit out of me. Nevertheless I was glad that the nugget had been found, for the claim from which it was taken was right in the direction in which we were working, and our claim was daily growing richer in ore.

The Welcome nugget, as large as it was, did not enrich its finders, for there were twelve shareholders in it, and it brought them less than a thousand pounds apiece; it would have been a lucky find for a couple of mates. The man who dug it out fainted dead away before he unearthed it. When his pick first struck it he put forth his hand to pick up the lump; the light from his candle shone upon it and revealed its nature. To his surprise, it did not yield to the touch. Then he began to feel around it with his hands, and it grew in size under his exploring digits. He gave it a wrench, but it did not budge. Seizing his pick he began to dig around it, and as its proportions grew under his eye, the spectacle overcame him, and he fainted from joy.

—Two members of the Galway Blazers, an Irish hunting club of local distinction, bet $250 on the jumping quality of their horses. In the trial Mr. Power's Ruction cleared a railroad embankment, with a descent of fifteen feet, and won, although the rider of Mr. Boilkin's Droolen was ready to take the jump over a wall that had a perpendicular fall of 25 feet on the other side.

—"I had no time to stuff the chicken," apologized a landlady. "Never mind, madam, it's tough enough as it is," replied a boarder.

CANADIAN NOTES.

Through a runaway accident last week Mr. John Bowes, of Newry, had his leg fractured.

John Stubbs, of Elma, had his hand and arm frightfully lacerated in a thrashing machine the other day.

The Tremont House, in Port Elgin, narrowly escaped destruction by fire the other day through a lamp explosion.

Farmers in the vicinity of Port Burwell are holding on to their wheat in anticipation of a rise. The price at present is 88 cents.

An old lady named Mrs. Leechman, living near Oshawa, attempted to commit suicide last week by cutting her throat. She will recover.

Mitchell bemoans the lack of musical talent in that town, and hopes that some effort will be made to cultivate the latent abilities of the rising generation.

During the hearing of a recent case in the Lindsay Police Court, the prisoner sprang forward and knocked the principal witness down. A lively scene followed, but the recalcitrant prisoner was finally locked up.

Charles Martin, a sixteen-year-old son of William Martin, of Kelvin, was badly burned from the thigh to the heel while moulding last week in the Scotland Foundry. The bottom came out of a kettle in which they were carrying the metal in its melted state.

Dr. Hornibrook's many friends in the vicinity of Mitchell will regret to learn that owing to continued ill-health and consequent inability to resume practice, he has decided to remove his wife and family to the West. Mrs. H. and family left on Wednesday afternoon to join the Doctor at Iowa.

An Indian funeral in Halifax attracted a good deal of attention one day last week. The coffin was slung by cords to a pole carried on the shoulders of two men, and was covered by a white pall. One or two men and about a dozen squaws followed the coffin, walking Indian file. The women all had their hair tied up with white ribbon. Deceased was a minor.

A young lad son of Richard Ruston, of Mitchell, was visiting some friends in Weston, near Toronto, and while there he was unfortunate enough to get his thigh bone broken. The nature of the injury was so apparent that it was impossible for any one to mistake it, yet these people kept the lad two weeks without calling in a doctor or making any attempt to relieve him. On Monday last he was removed to Mitchell, when a doctor was immediately called in, and with difficulty succeeded in reducing the fracture.

A peculiar case of poisoning occurred in Mitchell one day last week. Mr. J. J. Powell, of that place was handed a large poster done in green ink, to place in his window, and after reading it, noticed that some of the coloring adhered to his hands. He thoughtlessly wiped his hands on his handkerchief and then forgot the occurrence. Some time afterwards his eyes began to swell, the result being that he was compelled to place himself in the hands of a physician, who regarded the affection as a result of poisoning. After recovering his sight, Mr. Powell recollected the handling of the poster, and on examination it was found that the ink contained Paris green.

A horse belonging to Abraham Norris, of Essex County, died last week from the effects of a rattlesnake's bite. Some time ago Mr. Morris was driving to McGregor, when the horse stepped on the snake and it bit him on the foot. The horse grew weak and emaciated the foot continually suppurating until its death. There have been fifteen or sixteen of these venomous reptiles killed in that vicinity within two weeks, one of which was at least three feet long and had twelve rattles, and a process, indicating an age of fifteen years. They were the true rattlesnake (Crotalida horrida) quite different from the rattlesnake frequenting the marches, and their bite is usually considered fatal at this season of the year, being the time of the second moult.

At the re-opening of the Separate schools of London, there were 545 pupils present. Boys, 270; girls, 275.

A warrant has been issued by Squire Anderson against Harvey Scott, of Missouri, upon a charge of violently assaulting his wife.

An Orange lodge will be organized at Oneida bef ore the end of this month.

The Chippewas and Oneidas had an excursion from Oneida to Cartwright lately.

A young girl named Mary Sickles, of Oneida, is missing. No one knows where she is.

Mr. Fred Smith, of Aylmer, on Monday last, met with a very serious loss by the death of his imported stallion "Malbrino Marshall," for which he had recently paid six hundred dollars. The animal died from inflammation of the bowels.

A man by the name of Samuel Henderson was committed, by Coroner Thomas Norton, M. D., Owen Sound, to the county jail, on the 22nd inst., to be tried at the fall assizes for the crime of arson, committed at Shelburne on the 21st inst. The building was known as Jelley's Hall, and wholly destroyed, but was insured in about $300.

A special general meeting of the Canadian Press Association will be held in the County Council Chamber, Toronto, on Wednesday, September 10th, for the revision of the constitution and consideration of other important matters.

There was a good attendance at the half-yearly business meeting of Friends at their meeting-house, near Sparta. Reuben Wilson, from Pennsylvania, Nathan Borton, from Ohio, and others addressed a large and attentive audience at the public meeting on Sunday.

In Whitby on Thursday two prisoners, remanded on charge of breaking into the dwelling house of Mrs. Norton, at Brooklin, were again brought up and found guilty. Stevens was sentenced to five months, and Williams to six months in the Central Prison.

A favorable answer has been received to the invitation to the Marquis of Lorne and Princess Louise to visit Cobourg during their sojourn in the Province. The answer is to the effect that the visit will be made on the return trip from the West. The date, therefore, cannot be definitely fixed.

The Lindsay *Post* says: We received a call from Mr. J. B. Campbell, of Port Perry, the discoverer of the principal mineral deposits in the North, which are now attracting considerable attention. Mr. Campbell has lately devoted a great deal of time to prospecting on properties he owns in the north country. Last week he discovered a bed of plumbago, or graphite, of superior quality on Lot 16, con. 13, Galway. He opened the bed in three places and found evidences of a very large deposit. He also discovered within a few days a bed of hematite ore in the township of Lutterworth, near the Victoria Railway. He reports only a couple of miles of iron to be laid upon Mr. Miles' railway, and says that as soon as it is in running order various mines will be at once uncovered.

Mr. Daniel Osborne, of Rosebank, near Brantford, has returned from England, where he went with 750 sheep and 30 cattle, on account of himself and Mr. W. C. Hately, of that city. He had a very successful passage both ways, lost ten sheep and one steer. Mr. Osborne says that he paid expenses and that's about all. Mr. Hately intends to continue at it for another cargo or two, and try and make it a success.

Mr. Ivison, a mighty English hunter and fisherman, Captain Percy, a nephew of the Duke of Northumberland, and the Hon. Charles Ellis, a brother of Lord Howard de Walden, who came out to this country first in attendance upon the Prince of Wales in 1860, have been doing wonders with the rod and the gun. Out of the Cascapedia it is averred they took 600 salmon with an average of 25 pounds to a fish.

At a late Division Court at Napanee, before his Honor Judge Wilkinson, a case of more than local interest was disposed of. Mr. R. A. Weese, traveling tea merchant, brought an action against the Grand Trunk Railway Company for obstructing the highway and causing serious injury to his horse and damage to his conveyance. Some time since Mr. Weese was about starting for the country on a tea-peddling expedition, and when he arrived at the railway crossing on the Selby road a train was standing directly in his way. He accordingly drove around a block and again came to a standstill, as the train had not yet moved on. The appearance of the cars, however, was too much for the mettle of the horse, which became unmanageable and succeeded in dumping the wagon, laden with tea, into the ditch, and severely injuring itself. After hearing the case his Honor awarded Mr. Weese $86 damages ($80 for the horse and $6 on wagon and tea) and took occasion to inform the defence that the Company would be liable if they only trespassed on the road allowance one inch to obstruct the same.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick, wife of T. W. Kirkpatrick, Esq., Reeve of Aldborough, had the misfortune to break her arm on Thursday evening by being thrown from a wagon.

James Rae and his son, who were injured near Port Stanley last Tuesday evening, through their vehicle being struck by an engine, are slowly recovering. The lad was but slightly injured, but the parent was more seriously hurt, and has suffered very considerably from the effects of his fall.

The directors of the Yarmouth Agricultural Society have changed the date of holding the fall exhibition at Yarmouth Centre to Thursday, the 25th inst.

Thomas Gurnett, of Woodstock, Ont., complains that he was robbed of a watch valued at $30 at the foot of Griswold street, Detroit, Sunday afternoon, while lying on the dock asleep.

The Ridgetown firemen appear to be a very creditable organization, judging from the work they recently accomplished, when the steamer was run nearly a quarter of a mile, steam raised, and water thrown in six minutes and forty seconds from the time of starting.

On Thursday last, Mr. Joseph Laing disposed of by public auction the Baxter farm, situated in Yarmouth, and comprising fifty acres, to Mr. Geo. Buck. The price was $3,010.

Mr. Alex. Lawton, of the fourth concession of Yarmouth, says he has had threshed from 76 acres of land 970 bushels wheat, 840 bushels oats, 150 bushels peas, and 440 bushels barley,