

The house itself was small, but exceedingly comfortable, and to the stray visitors, whom Mr. Marston was occasionally obliged to receive, far more agreeable than the grander but gloomier Hall. There were no stables,—the Marston equipage putting up at the inn of the small village in the valley below,—but there was a large poultry-yard, and a well-stocked pigeon house, whose feathered inhabitants were great favorites of Miss Marston's. When in England, I used frequently to visit at the Bower, for Mr. Marston and my father being old friends, I was the only young man allowed to approach the family. So I knew the place well, and loved it, to boot, and could quite sympathise with Ned's rapturous admiration. Let me not forget to mention the fact, that like most cottages, the Bower possessed two entrances, of which, in this case, the back one was far the more commodious, as you could enter directly by it, instead of having to go round to the garden-front. And now that I have given you some idea of the spot to which Ned,—who has just taken a long pull at his tankard of punch, and re-lit his pipe,—and his trusty Dick are hastening, I will once more sink back into obscurity and my arm-chair, and leave him to continue his story.

“Well, we got to the village, and put up the horse and trap at the inn, leaving them in charge of the Marston coachman, in spite of Dick's wish to remain and see his horse groomed—but I could not go up to the Bower alone and I would not wait, so like a good fellow he gave in, and we rapidly accomplished the distance that separated us from our journey's end. We found Mrs. Marston and Julia in the garden, engaged in a croquet tête-à-tête which, after the first civilities had been exchanged, enlarged itself into a quartett. Oh how jolly it was! And afterwards Julia and I had a ramble down the dell, by the side of the streamlet, and such a talk, crikey! and tea, *en famille*, as Dick said, and songs after it, and we sang duets, and trios, to our entire satisfaction, and Julia walked round the garden with me, and gave me such a lovely bouquet of *mignonette* and *forget-me-not*.”

“I know, all right; pass on to something else; such blissful moments won't bear describing.”

“You brute; well, we had supper, and we agreed that Dick and