

your worship, and the calf being a very fine one, I gave the poor man what he asked, which was two guineas and a half; and here's the money, your worship, and I don't think it too much.

Mayor. Upon my word, gentlemen, (turning to the two aldermen,) this seems a very rascally piece of business. Prisoner, do you admit this man's statement?

Watty. Oh, please your worship, I've it so.

Mayor. If your case is singular, your answers are more so. Can you bring forward any person to speak to your character?

Watty. Oh, please your worship, I've it so.

This was Mr. Attorney Gallagher's critical moment, and rising, he addressed the bench—"Mr. Mayor, and worshipful magistrates of Limerick, compassion for the unfortunate man, now before you has alone prompted me to attend to the case, he having sought me out, being often employed by a most excellent gentleman, whom you all know, Mr. O'Dowd of Malgawley, to bring messages to my office. I have known him for years. Of his honesty I have no doubt; but the man is a mere simpleton. The calf was, I am sure, his own; for no person would have employed him to sell it. He came among the butchers as unsuspecting as the beast he drove; and when, instead of receiving the money, he saw the two men turn their backs upon him and go away, the poor creature of course believed the bargain was off, and so strolled on."

"I may also take the liberty of stating, that full advantage seems to have been taken of the extreme ignorance of the servant of my client; and that among the three butchers there appears to be only one conscientious man; and I appeal to your worships whether such a difference as seventeen and sixpence in the value of a small animal actually sold for two pound twelve and sixpence, is not a plain proof of the fact."

"I therefore respectfully solicit of your worships, that as this harmless simpleton cannot take care of himself, that you will order the only honest butcher before you to take what justly belongs to him, and pay this natural his two guineas and a half, and let him go back to his family."

This address carried every thing before it; three of the wisest heads in Limerick were immediately in contact; two butchers looked very blue; and the Mayor, drawing himself up with becoming dignity, spoke as follows—

Mr. Gallagher, on the first view of the case, my own opinions and those of my worthy brother magistrates were much against the prisoner; but, considering your knowledge of the man, and the advantages which have been taken of him, we are of opinion that John O'Rorke is entitled to the calf, and he is accordingly ordered to hand the money over in open court. As to the other butchers who were instrumental in causing a riot, you James Hallinan, and you Denis Moylan, are required to give security to keep the peace for twelve calendar months. Officers, clear the court.

Mr. O'Rorke immediately handed two guineas and a half to Watty, whose eyes glistened somewhat too knowingly as he stowed them safely away in his leathern purse, making also rather too knowing a bow to the bench. Mr. Gallagher was all hurry and impatience to get him away, and leading him out of court, as soon as they got to a lane, turned round and said, "Now, Watty, for our bargain. Hand me over that half guinea."

To which Watty replied, throwing all the drollery into his face he could muster, "Oh, please your honour, I've it so."

The effect was irresistible; Gallagher was caught in his own net; and, after a hearty laugh, actually gave Watty half a guinea, on condition that he "would have it so," and never say a word of their bargain.

MY FIRST DESPATCH.

Within less than eight-and-forty hours after my father had announced to me that I was to leave Eton, and not to go to Oxford, I had been, in all due form presented to the man who at that time might be said to control the destiny of nearly half the globe, had taken possession of my desk and arm-chair at the Treasury, had been installed in handsome lodgings within a hundred yards of St. James's-square, and had taken leave of my respected parent, who was all anxiety to return home to make the necessary preparations for the entertainment which was to astonish the country, and to which I was to contribute additional brilliancy, by fulfilling a long list of commissions which my mother had entrusted to me on my departure; a list which received further additions before my father had taken leave on his return to the country.

The first few days of my official career were marked by no very uncommon occurrence; and finding that little or no duty was imposed upon me, I amused my leisure by looking into some ponderous blue books which I found scattered about the office, and which I learnt, from certain typographical notices on the wrapper, had been printed by order of the House of Commons.

My diligent perusal of these blue books, which, to say truth, I found were frequently far from dull, was observed; and upon the strength of what was thought an uncommon predilection in one so young, I was immediately pronounced to have shown a taste for business. The first consequence of so flattering a judgment was, that I was intrusted with the confidential duty of answering a part of the numberless letters on a vast variety of subjects, which were daily addressed to my patron. My place was now no longer a sinecure. Often when my official hours were over, and my less-favoured fellow-labourers were about to retire to the diversions of the

evening, I was presented with from thirty to fifty letters, most of them solicitations for favours which it was impossible or inconvenient to grant, and to each of these was I respected, before the ensuing morning, to prepare a point-blank refusal couched in such agreeable terms of negation as might leave the disappointed applicant not the most distant excuse for anger or mortification. On each letter a hieroglyphic mark, intelligible only to the chosen few to whom they had been revealed, indicated the precise limits of civility to which it was my duty to confine myself, for the nature of the motives, if any, that I was to assign, for not acceding to the wishes of the great man's volunteer correspondent.

My performances in this line gave satisfaction, indeed, so much satisfaction, that I began to apprehend I should be confined almost exclusively to so monotonous an occupation; perhaps never rise beyond the very questionable dignity of my lord's walking-liver-writer—a kind of machine for the manufacturing of polite refusals and obliging refusals. Such an apprehension did occasionally haunt me, but I was soon relieved from it.

I had one evening returned home, somewhat out of humour at being obliged to decline an agreeable invitation, and had shut myself up in my own room with two score of petitioning epistles before me; to each of which it was my duty to indite a handsome reply, when I was suddenly started by the entrance of an office-messenger, with an order to repair immediately to Downing-street. The poor fellow had been sent out in search of several of the clerks of the establishment, in one of whom he was able to find at home, with the single exception of myself. On my arrival at the office, I was immediately summoned into my patron's presence, whom I found in company with two or three of his most active colleagues of the cabinet. Their discussion had just closed, and they were anxiously waiting the arrival of an amanuensis to draw up some important despatches, that were to be forwarded that very night from town to the diplomatic agent at one of the New South American States; and a fast-sailing schooner, I soon learned, was waiting at Falmouth with orders to start for her destination, the very moment the expected despatches had been put into the hands of the commanding officer.

On my entrance, I found there was some demur at entrusting the purport of so important a business to one so young and inexperienced; but my patron soon satisfied his colleagues that my discretion was to be relied on. The work was put into my hands; and in the course of a few hours the original despatch was drawn out, and, after receiving a few corrections from the hands of a crotchety young minister, who was known to exercise no small influence over his more experienced but less active colleagues, had been fairly copied and unanimously approved of.

Not a moment was to be lost in sending off the despatch to Falmouth. All but the crotchety young minister had retired; and to my great surprise, he declared, that as I was in full possession of the contents, and aware of its momentous nature, I was the person best calculated to deliver the despatch into the hands of the officer who was to be the bearer of it to its destination.

No one minute was unnecessarily lost between London and Falmouth; and, on arriving at the end of my journey, without even waiting to enter my hotel, I jumped into the nearest boat, and in a few minutes found myself alongside of the neat little skimmer of the waves, whose commanding officer was anxiously awaiting the arrival of the important paper of which I was the bearer. He met me as I stepped upon the deck. 'Twas my old school-fellow and crony Frederick Harley, whom I had not seen for nearly ten years, and with whose rapid, but well-earned promotion in his arduous profession, I was now for the first time made acquainted.

Considering the importance of the despatch of which Frederick was to be the bearer to the other side of the Atlantic, and our constraints me to admit, that there was considerably more time consumed in getting up the anchor and getting under weigh, than with the aid of his smart little crew would have been the case, had a friend less dear to him been at that moment sharing the hasty hospitality of his cabin. We tore ourselves away from each other with mutual protestations to become the most sedulous and constant correspondents. At the gangway, our hands were tightly clasped together, and with swimming eyes once more we bade each other a mute farewell.

I stepped into my boat again. The men who had been holding on for some time let go, and in a few seconds it seemed as though our little tub had been moving backward with a velocity which it had never been able to attain in its forward movements, while the delicate schooner was lightly floating over the water before a smart breeze, rising gracefully over the summit of each succeeding wave, then dipping her bows again to catch the kiss of the next billow that came to court her caresses, and then breaking away in frolicsome mood from the embrace which it had just seemed to invite.

I remained for some time standing in my boat, and watching the lessening form of the schooner, as her hull sunk deeper and deeper in the water.

The night was closing rapidly, and my boatmen at length ventured to remind me that it might perhaps be prudent to make for shore. I gave the required assent, and the men began to ply their oars with a briskness that showed me how little they were desirous of remaining on the water any longer than was absolutely necessary.

The night had now closed in, and veiled the departing schooner from my view, I sat down, and faced the breeze to which hither-

to I had turned my back, but whose chilling influence now induced me to button my great coat closely about me. As I was preparing to do so, I dropped almost senseless to the bottom of the boat, every limb trembled, a cold sweat started from my temples, and a half-suppressed scream of agony escaped my lips. The despatch was still in the breast-pocket of my great coat, and Harley was crossing the Atlantic in apparent unconsciousness, how utterly purposeless must be the voyage on which he was embarked.

I was some minutes before I was sufficiently master of myself to think or speak. My first impulse was to row back to the schooner, but the boatmen answered the suggestion merely by a laugh, and without for a moment relaxing their exertions to reach the shore. A moment's reflection convinced me of the utter uselessness of attempting to overtake Harley's vessel, and in the stupefaction of despair that followed I offered no opposition to the men, but lay in childish helplessness, with my elbow resting on the seat, my head rocking to and fro, my eyes resting on vacancy, while a thousand confused images of shame and degradation crowded in quick succession before my mind, till the very intensity of my agony brought me some relief in that mental torpidity which invariably ensues, when the imagination is no longer able to cope with the confused host of torturing ideas which rush in and overwhelm it.

I felt as one awakening from a dream when the boat grounded on the beach, and the men advanced to help me to land. My limbs were trembling still, and without the kind support of my weather-beaten guides, it would have been impossible for me to have crawled to my hotel. I reached it more dead than alive, and on being shown into my room, flung myself upon a sofa, and at length found relief in a flood of tears.

I was now able to reflect on the ignominy I had brought upon myself. On my way down I had indulged in a thousand delightful anticipations of the honor and promotion that awaited me on my return from so confidential a mission. I had been brought under the personal notice of all the leading members of the cabinet, and I could not but remark that the manner in which I had acquitted myself of a task unexpectedly imposed on me, had given satisfaction to all—and now! To hope forgiveness was idle. Too well I knew the importance of that despatch which had been especially intrusted to my care, and to convey which a vessel of the Royal Navy had been expressly ordered to a distant quarter of the world. My father's hopes were all to be nipped in the bud, and all I could look for now, was to quit a service which the contempt of my superiors, and the derision of my equals would make intolerable, and to return heaped with contumely to my paternal mansion, into which I had flattered myself with the hope, I should one day enter as an honored and distinguished guest. Bonding under a load of disgrace I was to present myself to my mother. A agonizing thought! I could not endure it, but hid my face in my hands, and wept like a child.

I had not long remained thus, when I was roused from my reverie by a loud knock at my chamber door. Before I had time to invite my visitor to enter, the landlord accompanied by a government-messenger walked into the room. The latter was enveloped in great-coats, and had evidently just arrived from a journey of some length. He advanced respectfully towards me and presented a letter. I took it from him almost unconsciously, and tore it open. It was in the minister's hand, but without a signature, and contained only these words:

"I trust this may reach you in time to prevent the despatch from reaching Lieut. Harley's hands. Should he have sailed with it, you must instantly engage the fastest-sailing vessel you can obtain, and follow him to sea."

I need scarcely describe the transition from despair to joy, that followed the perusal of this brief note. I was impatient to return to London, and the same chaise which had brought the messenger down, was instantly put into requisition to convey us back.

I was not without some awkward misgivings as to what my patron might say when he came to know by what means it had happened that his laconic epistle had arrived in time to prevent the transmission of a despatch which might have led to a protracted war. What I had lately suffered, however, made every apprehension light in comparison, and it was with a cheerful heart on my arrival in Downing-street, that I stepped out of my chaise, and was ushered into my patron's presence.

"Have you the despatch?" he exclaimed. I presented it to him without uttering a syllable. Eagerly he snatched it from my hand, and with a hurried ejaculation of "That is all right!" rushed into an inner department. I saw no more of him that day, and on the following morning learned that I had been promoted to a situation that made me an object of undisguised envy to all my official friends.

Before I close, my readers will no doubt be anxious to know how Frederick Harley sped on his important mission to South America. On the morning after his departure from Falmouth, he became aware of the boyish blunder we had both been guilty of, and reasonably enough began to think that there could be little use in proceeding on his voyage without his credentials. He was not long in deciding what was to be done, but quietly put his ship about, and that very afternoon came to anchor again in Falmouth roads. His first course was to inquire after me at my hotel, where he learned that I had started for town in company with a king's messenger. He instantly wrote to me to announce his return to Falmouth, and by the next post I relieved him from all further uneasiness by informing him of the real state of the case. Many a time since then, have we made merry together over the misadventure of "My First Despatch."