

from the next town, and took possession on the instant.

Her new inmate, who, without positively declining to give his name, had yet contrived to evade all the questions which Mrs. Kent's "simple cunning" could devise, proved a perpetual source of astonishment, both to herself and her neighbours. He was a well made, little man, near upon forty; with a considerable terseness of feature, a forehead of great power, whose effect was increased by a slight baldness on the top of the head, and an eye like a falcon. Such an eye! It seemed to go through you,—to strike all that it looked upon, like a *coup-de-soliel*. Luckily, the stranger was so merciful as, generally, to wear spectacles; under cover of which, those terrible eyes might see, and be seen, without danger. His habits were as peculiar as his appearance. He was moderate, and rather fanciful, in his diet; drank nothing but water or strong coffee, made, as Mrs. Kent observed, very wastefully; and had, as she also remarked, a great number of heathenish-looking books scattered about his apartment,—Lord Berner's Froissart, for instance,—Sir Thomas Brown's Urn Burial,—Isaac Walton's Complete Angler,—the Baskerville Aristos,—Gæthe's Faust,—a Spanish Don Quixote,—and an interleaved Philoctetes, full of outline drawings. The greater part of his time was spent out of doors.—He would, even, ramble away for three or four days together, with no other companion than a boy, hired in the village, to carry what Mrs. Kent denominated his odds and ends; which odds and ends consisted, for the most part, of an angling rod and sketching apparatus,—our incognito being, as my readers have by this time probably discovered, no other than an artist, on his summer progress.

Robert speedily understood the stranger, and was delighted with the opportunity of approaching so gifted a person; although he contemplated with a degree of generous envy, which a king's regalia would have failed to excite in his bosom, those *chef-d'œuvres* of all nations, which were to him as "sealed books," and the pencils, whose power appeared nothing less than creative. He redoubled his industry in the garden, that he might conscientiously devout hours, and half-hours, to pointing

out the deep pools and shallow eddies of their romantic stream, where he knew, from experience, (for Robert amongst his other accomplishments was no mean "brother of the angle,") that fish, were likely to be found; and, better still, he loved to lead to the haunts of his childhood, the wild bosky dells, and the sunny ends of lanes, where a sudden turn in the track, an overhanging tree, an old gate, a cottage chimney, and a group of cattle or children, had sometimes formed a picture, on which his fancy had fed for hours. It was Robert's chief pleasure to entice his lodger to scenes such as these, and to see his own visions growing into reality, under the glowing pencil of the artist; and he in his turn would admire, and marvel at, the natural feeling of the beautiful, which could lead an uninstructed country youth, instinctively, to the very elements of the picturesque. A general agreement of taste had brought about a degree of association, unusual in persons so different in rank:—a particular instance of this accordance dissolved the intimacy.

Robert had been for a fortnight more than commonly busy in Mr. Lescombe's gardens and hot-houses,—so busy that he even slept at the Hall; the stranger, on the other hand, had been, during the same period, shut up, painting, in the little parlour. At last, they met; and the artist invited his young friend to look at the picture which had engaged him during his absence. On walking into the room, he saw, on the easel, a picture in oils, almost finished. The style was that of a delightful kind which combines figure with landscape: the subject was Hay-carrying; and the scene, that very sloping meadow,—crowned by Farmer Bell's tall, angular house, its vine-wreathed porch and chimneys, the great walnut-tree before the door, the orchard and the homestead,—which formed the actual prospect from the windows before them. In the fore-ground was a waggon, piled with hay, surrounded by the farmer and his fine family—some pitching, some loading, some raking after, all intent on their pleasant business. The only disengaged persons in the field were young Mary Kent and Harry Bell, an urchin of four years old, who rode on her knees on the top of the waggon, crowned and wreathed with