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ROBERT BURNS.

(From the Slabtown Gazette.)

'Mony heather braes a poet sang
And Scotland gave him birth;
His heavenly harp by genius strung
Touched all the hearts of earth.

Fame pointed up her laureled steep,
Where hung the deathless lyre,
Roused poor Ambition from her sleep
And bade her soon aspire.

From lowly ranks to lofty praise
He trod her upward way;
Earth's beauties beaming on his gaze
And glowing in each lay.

The cottar's joys, the lover's flame
He made immortal themes;
And Hope's bright yearnings for a name
Fulfilled his early dreams.

The wimpling burn, the yellow broom,
Her glens, her streams, her hills,
He clothed with an undying bloom
Will charm while language thrills.

Wit, satire, love or pity show
Through all his varied song,
To shield the weak he dealt the blow
In scorn at human wrong.

His heart made other's woes his own
Through feeling that exalts,
Till generous love with tears has thrown
Its mantle o'er his faults.

Though Scotland holds in sacred keep,
Dear dust within her urns,
None move her pride or tears as deep
As that of Robbie Burns.

CLAWDEVIL.

BY WILLIAM SENIOR.

Neilson of Joombarra and his brother-in-law, settled old colonists now, were famous in their younger days for boldness in exploring for new country. They would set out with a small following of black fellows whose fidelity had been tried, and be absent for a year or eighteen months at a time. They would turn up very browned, hungry-looking, but otherwise jolly, and after a visit to the metropolis two results invariably followed; their banker's balance would be increased by three figures and two or three pioneer squatters would, before long, travel out upon their tracks, to stock and take up the eligible country they had found and reported upon. Finding good grazing country is a profitable occupation, and is still work for brave men. These explorers are unknown to fame, but they often undergo severe privations, and confront appalling perils.

Neilson of Joombarra and his brother-in-law, Julian, met with many astonishing adventures, but the one they remembered best was, as compared with some of their experiences, quite unexciting. They were approaching the verge of the settled districts, and a long march of almost unknown plain country intervened between them and a certain creek which they aimed to make. A stony ridge confronted them in the afternoon, and as a satisfactory day's travel had been accomplished, the party encamped and made comfortable for the night. There was grass and amongst the trees on the ridge something in the shape of game would doubtless be beaten up.

The young men went out with their guns, strolled up and over the ridge, and found themselves amongst broken rocks, where they hid themselves in wait for a small species of kangaroo called rock wallaby. Soon Julian tumbled one over. The marsupial rolled down from crag to crag, and disappeared. Neilson crept round the face of an angle on the track of other game, disturbed by the echoing report of the gun. Julian descended in search of the shot wallaby, whose death-bound had given it an impetus that caused it, together with a mass of dislodged stones, to roll swift and far. It was by this reason some time before Julian had picked his way within sight of the prize. Neilson meanwhile had wandered off in another direction, turning the angles of the ridge.

The wallaby lay dead close to what looked like the entrance to a cave, and Julian, fancying he saw "tracks" around peeped in muttering, "Dark as a wolf's mouth," as it was. Black it seemed, as the tomb, and as silent, but for a trickle of water within. Cautiously he walked into the thick darkness, and on and on for a score of paces before pausing. Ahead, he became conscious of a pale blue glimmer, and he afterwards confessed that he felt fearfully white in heart and face, as, breathless, he clutched his gun, and noted that the light began to waver. If the illumination had been thrown more distinct, the phenomenon would have resembled the disc thrown upon the wall by a magic lantern. Into it, faint, like the light itself, there now intruded a ghostly visage. Impalpable as was the shape, Julian could see bright eyes in hollow sockets, white, haggard, wrinkled features, and matted hair and beard.

"Hallo, there!" he shouted, at last, presenting his gun. "By the Lord, I'll fire."

The supernatural appearance, as he could but deem it, faded away before the reverberations of his voice had rung themselves out, and deep darkness reigned as before. Scared, as a hundred blacks breaking in on the midnight fire would not have scared him, Julian retraced his steps and returned to camp, much mystified.

By-and-by Neilson came in with a wallaby and stone plover, and to him Julian told his story.

Neilson was incredulous.

"I tell you," Julian urged, "it was a man, or an apparition. I'm neither drunk nor mad."

"Then, Julian, my lad, we must sift out the mystery. Let us go back with something in the shape of a light, and face the devil."

So it was agreed. The bushman's lamp—a tin pot of grease with a rush for wick—was finished out, and the box of matches, carefully preserved for rare occasions, found. They took their guns, sought the cave mouth, and penetrated it until, a hundred yards from the entrance, they were stopped by a wedge shaped termination of the passage. A pool of limpid water was near, fed by rivulets down the slimy face of the walls. The roof was about eight feet high, and of fantastically broken and gnarled solid rock. Nothing more.

"This is what the doctors call a hallucination," said Neilson. "You are in a bad way, friend Julian, and I must keep an eye on you."

"Deuce a bit," answered Julian. "There is nothing the matter with me; but I wouldn't like to say so much for the haunted cave."

Over their damper, tea, and wallaby stew, and later, over the turning-in pipe, Julian kept referring to what he had seen, and finally became taciturn when he received nothing but good-humored banter from his mate.

As ill luck would have it, two horses were driven in lame next morning, and the explorers, well satisfied with the grass and water, and doubting when they might find a more luxurious camp, determined to prolong their spell. During the night the melancholy scream of the curlew had been heard, and Neilson, after breakfast, proposed a saunter to a timbered ridge at some little distance, where he shrewdly suspected the birds would be taking their customary repose after the exertions of the night. Julian, who was the handy man with saddlery, remained in camp to repair girth and bridle. An hour or two passed, and the report of Neilson's gun was often heard, and Julian, his cobbling done, took his weapon and wandered off on his own account, involuntarily wending his way to the scene of the previous evening's adventures. He was approaching the rocks through a bit of closely-wooded forest, thick with undergrowth, when a sound startled him.

"Well, well," he said to himself, stopping, "the birds and beasts of this country make strange noises, no doubt; but if that wasn't human, I'm a Dutchman"—adding at the top of his voice, "Hi! Who are you? What are you?"

There was no response. He turned away into a gully choked with ferns and undergrowth reaching to his arm-pits, and had not proceeded far when the human groan was repeated, on the slope to his right. It was so near that Julian could fix upon a big gum-tree as a probably safe steering-point. And there the search ended. The gum was one of those deceptive trees which are solid to the eye but hollow to the touch, for on the farther side there was a cavity in which four men could find shelter. One had found refuge there, and he was the author of the groans which in the out-of-the-way solitude had startled the traveler—a poor old man, who in his prime must have been a model of athletic vigor, and who even now, though his beard was grizzled and snakelike, and his hair white, and his face seamed across and athwart with crooked wrinkles, was not the description of enemy one would care to meet in single combat.

"You seem ill, master," said Julian, kneeling towards where the groaner lay in his hollow tree, into which he had fallen a helpless heap.

The old fellow turned up his eyes imploringly, and groaned again.

"Here, take a pull at this," Julian said, pouring what little grog remained in his flask into its cup. "We haven't much left, but this is a clear case of 'medical comforts.' Come, cheer up."

The stimulant revived the old man. He straightened himself out, rose to a sitting posture, took another dose of the restorative, sighed wearily, motioned to Julian to lend him a hand, and by that assistance stood upright, and stepped out into the open.

"That has pulled you together," said Julian heartily.

"Saved me — saved me for the present, mate," answered the other.

By degrees he progressed from prostration to liveliness, finally throwing out his right arm and straightening back his broad shoulders, as if anxious to discover whether the leading parts of the machinery were still intact. But to Julian's request to see him on his way he returned a surly negative. He curtly explained that he had fainted, and fiercely warned Julian to "clear out."

"Look you, old man," said Julian, "you want doctoring; you want to patronize our little medicine chest. I'll go to camp and back again in the twinkling, if you'll promise not to move till I come back."

The old man seemed to jump at this proposal. "Thank'ee," he said; "right. Another nip, certain, before you go."

"Certainly," answered Julian. "As I said just now, there isn't much left, but I'll leave the flask with you."

The recipient seated himself in the hollow tree, and Julian hurried off to camp, towards which Neilson also was approaching. Soon he was in possession of the main features of Julian's narrative.

"What is the man like?" asked he.

"What is he like?" repeated Julian. "He is a veritable man of the woods—shaggy, bull-necked, burly, rough. But let me whisper—he is the ghost of the haunted cave."

"Bosh! you are joking."

"Never a joke about it. The face of my wild man of the woods is the face I saw in the pale blue light of the cavern."

"Did you tell him so?"

"I did not. I asked him, as if carelessly, if there were any caves hereabouts, and he growled such a ferocious 'How should I know?' that I said no more."

"Turned rusty, did he?"

"Rusty and jagged as old hoop iron. He seemed tolerably grateful for the brandy; yet he is a savage, every inch of him. But come along."

"Yes, I'll go, Julian; but what shall I see. I suspect I might put in my eye and feel none the worse for the transaction."

"Then you don't believe me?" asked Julian, angrily.

"Yes; believe you are in for another hallucination."

Julian had now the double duty to perform of doctoring the wild man and shaming his comrade, and he did both by anticipation, so confident was he. The friends in due time arrived at the tree, and Neilson roared again at Julian's look of blank amazement. The old man had vanished.

"I swear he was here," protested Julian, pointing to the ground, upon which the flask lay."

"Julian, you must be looked after," the other said. "I can forgive you pitching a yarn about an old man in a tree, but when you think to convince me that he left a flask and half a glass of grog behind him, I've done with you. You're very young to go daft, Julian, but that's the time of day, depend upon it."

It was useless for Julian to protest. After all, Neilson might be right; he was going off his head. Pondering which, he picked up his flask, and accompanied his friend moodily to camp; was very taciturn during the afternoon, and very thoughtful as they sat round the evening embers. Then suddenly he exclaimed, "I have it."

"Ah?" drawled Neilson. "Seen something else, my poor Julian?"

"The fainting man will be found in the cave—mark my words, Neilson; and if you are game to keep me company in the morning I'll find him!"

"Good night, old fellow; you'd better get under the blanket," said Neilson with mock pity.

But next morning they did proceed in company to the cave mouth; and sure enough, when they had penetrated far enough, they both beheld the pale blue light described by Julian, the light, but not the face.

"Egad! I think it is! I that am daft now," said Neilson.

"Come on," Julian whispered; "We'll soon solve the riddle;" pushing on in the darkness, and again whispering, "You see, the ghostly mystery is easily explainable when you have the key to it."

The mystic light, as was now self-evident, had shone into the cavern through the roof of what appeared to be solid rock, and from an aperture which could be gained by means of a couple of niches in the rocky wall. It was a natural manhole, how contrived was not yet apparent. Julian was first in the breach. Neilson pulled himself up close at his heels. They were now in a rocky chamber, dimly lighted through an opening at the farther end; the novel man-hole was formed by a singular slab of rock, which fitted like mosaic into the roof of the cave; it could only be opened inwards. When this stony trap-door was lowered into its receptacle by its thong of green hide, it was impossible for a spectator below to observe its existence at a merely casual glance.

"I think I have to beg your pardon, Julian, I do believe you are right for once," whispered Neilson.

"This is the secret," replied Julian in the same cautious tone, and taking no notice of the other's banter. "My colonial Orson lives somewhere yonder, and when I stood aghast at what I certainly conceived was a visitant from the other world, the old gentleman had come down for water. He heard me, and under cover of the darkness scrambled up at the side."

This explanation proved to be correct. The bush lamp, held aloft, revealed a large natural chamber of hard smooth limestone, and near the trap-door there were a couple of kerosene tins filled with water, and a stone jar so recently overturned that the puddles glistened fresh on the floor. At the farther end the explorers found a rift in the wall wide enough to serve as a doorway. They pushed through, observing, as they passed on the inside, a rudely hewn slab that in a moment would render the place impregnable. It was a perfect place of concealment. Now came a wide passage, some twenty yards in length, curving abruptly to the left, and opening into another spacious chamber, whose crusted walls sparkled brightly as the rays of the rough-and-ready lamp glinted upon them.

"Ha! ha! my good wild man of the woods, I hope I don't intrude," said Julian with a laugh, and probably emboldened by the proximity of his friend.

For Julian had found what he had sought, and Neilson, from the shadow in which he elected to remain, could see that the sick man of the hollow gum-tree, and the tenant of the Fairy Cave, were one and the same. He was in a cot like a ship's bunk, and in evident pain. A pistol lay on a three-legged stool at his side; a couple of guns stood handy against the wall. The room was rudely but comfortably furnished; a crevice in one of the corners, through which a draft of air perpetually blew, was hidden by a screen covered with dingy pictures clipped from English and American illustrated papers. But the poor King of Fairyland was in sad straits, weak and in pain, and unable and unwilling to speak. His lack-lustre eyes were nevertheless fixed upon the gentleman who, like Paul Pry, hoped he did not intrude. Upon first becoming aware of the presence of a stranger, he had mechanically attempted to reach toward the stool, but he dropped his arm with a groan upon the 'possum skin coverlid, turned his face to the wall, moaned, and wearily closed his eyes.

"You are ill, my poor fellow," said Julian, adroitly shifting the pistol from the stool and seating himself; "I told you you required doctoring."

The patient shook his head, and the gesture, through all its feebleness, evinced the most obstinate determination.

"Another faint?" remarked Julian, unscrewing his flask. "Try the prescription."

The man of the woods, nothing loth, by a little assistance raised himself, and did not refuse the watered brandy which Julian placed to his lips. As before, it revived him almost instantaneously, and his first use of restored strength was to take down from a shelf overhead a coal black pipe, with which he motioned, and fell back from sheer exhaustion. Julian understood the movement, charged the old man's pipe, charged his own, and the same light kindled both. For several minutes they smoked in silence.

"Now, then, my friend, what can I do for you?" asked Julian.

"Go away," said the sick man.

"No, I mean to stay here till you are better," asserted Julian, quietly.

If the occupant of the bunk had been in health he would, judging from the sudden effort he made to spring out, have leaped at the young man's throat. But he fell back again, savagely pointing to the muskets against the wall. Motioning Neilson still to remain unseen, Julian smiled, and said:

"Nonsense, old man; you won't frighten me. My duty is to look after you, and I mean to do it; so the best thing you can do is to be obedient. What do you say?"

"Clear out," he growled.

"That won't do," Julian answered. "Let us make a bargain. I won't tell a soul about you and your beautiful castle here, until I have been to consult a friend in camp yonder. He knows something about doctoring, and he'll be as silent as the grave. We'll both take a big oath of secrecy, if you like."

"Who told you I want secrecy?"

"My common sense. Come, come! Don't be afraid of me. I'm here as a friend, if you'll only believe it."

The man, however, was apparently not moved by this offer of friendship; he received it with a sneer which was nothing if not ferocious, and with a shake of the head that the mildest man must have acknowledged to be impatient. Julian, however, feared nothing, and by this time interested in the adventure, determined to maintain possession. This he frankly told the patient, laughingly reminding him that in high civilization possession is nine points of the law. The man here glanced towards the fowling-pieces, and Julian pretending to understand that he wanted to look at them, leisurely took up the nearest, which was capped. He handed it to its owner, who stared at the intruder, and again turned his face away, while Julian replaced the gun against the wall. By and by he built a fire, and boiled a quart pot of tea from materials he found by rummaging in the outer apartment, where he whispered Neilson to remain *perdu* till further notice—made himself, in short, useful, and very much at home. In the course of an hour or two the sick man was able to move feebly about, and Julian accompanied him at his request to secure the tortress by putting the stone door into the roof.

"Now, you see," said Julian, "I am in your power altogether." (Neilson had effectually kept out of sight.) "It is like the story-books, is it not?—giants, ogres, dungeons and all the rest. But I dare say you won't eat me."

The person thus appealed to shook his head sadly, very much, it must be confessed, as if he thought he should be pleased to enact the *role* of fee-fi-fo-fum, had he but the energy to go through with it. At this time he was sitting on a projection in the wall; nature having here provided, not only a dining and a drawing room finely ventilated, and on the same floor, but a quantity of seats whenever the tenant required rest. Soon, however, another humor passed over him, and he held out his hand. Julian imagining he desired to be helped to his feet, acted accordingly, but the king of the cave shook his head decisively, and uttered the one word—

"Right."

"Then right it is," said Julian, supporting him back to the chief apartment.

And right it was. By degrees the man became more talkative; then communicative. His story was full of startling episodes. His history proved for the ten thousandth time—as it does every day in the colonies—that fact is stranger than fiction. He had the makings of one whose footprints might have been left, honored examples, on the sands of time, but—old, old—story! his talents had been converted at the outset into the wrong channel. Not until Julian had enlisted his confidence, in exchange for honest and transparent sympathy, did the man open his heart. Towards afternoon, the hours having meanwhile passed with nimble heels, Julian said he would return to camp, obtain a few necessaries from the "medical comforts," saddle and relieve his friend from the alarm he would naturally feel at so prolonged an absence. He tried first to obtain a promise from the sick man to give him free entrance on his return. Though this promise was for a while peremptorily and even surlily refused, the desired assurance was at length gruffly given in the laconic utterance—"Right," which in the old fellow's philosophy seemed to be all that was typical of loyalty and trust.

The hermit was now in great pain, and being unable to move out of his bunk, in which Julian had made him comfortable, explained how the trapdoor might be managed from the outside—a fortunate occurrence in one sense, since it enabled Neilson to disappear from the scene without detection. Julian was forced into two promises in return for the one given; he was to say nothing to his people at the camp of what he had seen, and was to secure the circular door in the roof with religious care—promises which, as the reader will agree, he could make with a clear conscience. Neilson, who was leader of the party, did not like the idea of wasting time, but admitted there was no avoiding a prolongation of their halt. There is a deal of sterling humanity amongst even the very roughest bushmen, and the least tutored of their own black fellows would have been ashamed if they knew that their chiefs had abandoned a sick man to his fate.

Julian, after mature deliberation, resolved to spend the night with the king of the cave. Returning, therefore, at dusk, he found the trap-door open to welcome him; he ascended, replaced the barrier, and entered the inner chamber.

"Now, sir, I think we understand each other," he said, depositing the saddle pouch in which he had brought his supplies, and seating himself on the stool by the side of the bunk. "You trust me, and I trust you."

Though this remark was hazarded as much in the tone of interrogation as of a statement, the sick man would not treat it as such. He grunted and performed that favorite trick—King Hezekiah is credited with a similar movement—of turning his face to the wall.

"Well, sir, is it a bargain?" asked Julian, pausing for a reply, and repeating the query thrice before he obtained an answer.

"Right," at length burst from the man, as he got out of the bunk and straightened himself as he had done near the hollow tree.

"Then that is settled; and here I am to camp till to-morrow," was the reply.

The thing was settled in that way, and Master Julian proceeded to make himself at home in his own cool, comfortable fashion. It may now be seen how confidence begat sympathy, and sympathy confidence, and how both together unlocked the heart which had been sealed for many a long, stern year.

"By the way," observed Julian by-and-by, "we have not been formally introduced to each other. True, we are here in something of Robinson Crusoe style, but we may as well, notwithstanding, observe the formalities. My name is Fallerton—Julian Fallerton."

Fallerton!" exclaimed the hermit, opening wide his eyes. "Why, I knew a village of that name; I was born there. I have been taken with queer fainting fits for a month past, and in the half doze and half wakefulness that kept me living about while I was getting round, it was nothing but Fallerton church, with the towers smothered with ivy, out of which I have taken many a sparrow's egg and young jackdaw, that I had before my eyes. Harper's Mead, down there by Barker's mill, and the hazel copse where we went nutting on Sunday afternoons, have risen up one after another like pictures, and the funny thing is, I was always in the picture a little chap in pinafore and leggings, just as I was when I went to school in the old thatched house near the churchyard. Fallerton! Ha! God help us!"

The old man's auditor had opened his eyes too on hearing this, for in the description he recognised the village from which his family derived its name. Fallerton of Fallerton you may hunt up for yourself in any good country history. The astonishment Julian felt, however, he did not exhibit. He smiled encouragingly, for the old fellow had buried his face in his hands towards the conclusion of his remarks.

"Cheer up," he said; "you are weak just now. It will be, to use your own word, 'right' presently. Now, then, you have my name, what is yours?"

"Well," was the hesitating reply, "I have had many names in my time, but I was pretty generally known as—But stop; let me go back. I can see you are a gentleman. I know these colonies well; the gentleman sometimes is as big a blackguard as the rest, but you can always see he is a gentleman born. But that is neither here nor there. If ever you go back to England, and should find yourself in Fallerton churchyard, stroll across the graves to the last yew-tree; there's a headstone on the farther side of it, and this is what you'll read on it: 'Sacred to the memory of Barnaby Shipton.' Barnaby Shipton was my father."

"And your Christian name?" inquired Julian quickly.

"Ask any of the people in Fallerton who was the worst scapegrace ever known in those parts, and they'll say it was Farmer Shipton's son Luke. That's me."

Here Julian rose from his stool, threw up his hands in amazement, and paced to and fro along the smooth floor.

"Oh! there's worse to come, Mr. Fallerton; so don't be shocked yet," proceeded the speaker, imagining that his hearer was horrified at the mere mention of his juvenile delinquencies.

But Julian, in the half-dozen turns he took in the chamber, had been taken captive by a host of thoughts that came in like a flood, and he scarcely noticed that Luke Shipton, as he now was confessed, had, exhausted, closed his face, as before, to the wall. No trace of short-hand writing has yet been discovered that can keep pace with the irresistible speed of human thoughts. There are times when soul and body are quivering with pulsations, and we live a long life in a few moments of time. Something like this Julian was experiencing now.

If that undiscovered system of short-hand had been invented for Julian, this would have been its transcription: "This poor fellow, as he says, has a history, and by some strange fatility I can myself fill up the earlier chapters. Luke Shipton? It is a strange coincidence. I am almost led to think the finger of Providence is here. Let me think. Yet there is not much thinking required of this self-same scapegrace, upon whom I felt Death has laid his stealthy grisly hand. Then this is Luke Shipton, the poacher, the prodigal, the rustic Don Juan, the dare devil, the law-breaker, who was at last transported for what many said was the very trivial offence of knocking down a hare. And the villagers, I remember, talked of him and all his faults with a good deal of tenderness. It was always 'Poor Luke.' Ay, the Fallerton Keeper would recount his exploits until Luke Shipton was somewhat of a hero in our boyish fancy. I have heard the women call to mind the handsome figure, tawny skin, and raven hair; and the men I have heard them at harvest time, resting in the midday heat over their bread-and-cheese and cider flagons, remind each other of his pluck and good nature. At dinner, sometimes, people in our condition would sum him up as a wild fellow. That was the Squire's dining-room verdict, but out in the fields, or in the barn, or on the rude elm benches under the chestnut tree by the 'Hare and Hounds,' they would always end their mention of him with 'Poor Luke.' And here is poor Luke thinking of the rural life whose peace he disturbed. Yet hold! It occurs to me that one of the justices who assisted in the committal of Luke Shipton was Fallerton of Fallerton, Esquire. It was certainly so. I have heard my father defend the committal, which afterwards weighed heavily on the magisterial mind, by saying that Luke was transported, not so much for knocking down a hare and thrashing a keeper, as for a long line of misdeeds. And here lies 'Poor Luke!' I wonder how far he deserves the pity which has been handed down with the tradition of his faults."

"And what do you think was my last name, young gentleman?" asked the man from his berth.

Julian shook his head, still in reverie.

"Well, it was Clawdevil."

"Clawdevil?"

"My common sense. Come, come! Don't be afraid of me. I'm here as a friend, if you'll only believe it."

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"Well, sir, is it a bargain?" asked Julian, pausing for a reply, and repeating the query thrice before he obtained an answer.

"Right," at length burst from the man, as he got out of the bunk and straightened himself as he had done near the hollow tree.

"Then that is settled; and here I am to camp till to-morrow," was the reply.

The thing was settled in that way, and Master Julian proceeded to make himself at home in his own cool, comfortable fashion. It may now be seen how confidence begat sympathy, and sympathy confidence, and how both together unlocked the heart which had been sealed for many a long, stern year.

"By the way," observed Julian by-and-by, "we have not been formally introduced to each other. True, we are here in something of Robinson Crusoe style, but we may as well, notwithstanding, observe the formalities. My name is Fallerton—Julian Fallerton."

Fallerton!" exclaimed the hermit, opening wide his eyes. "Why, I knew a village of that name; I was born there. I have been taken with queer fainting fits for a month past, and in the half doze and half wakefulness that kept me living about while I was getting round, it was nothing but Fallerton church, with the towers smothered with ivy, out of which I have taken many a sparrow's egg and young jackdaw, that I had before my eyes. Harper's Mead, down there by Barker's mill, and the hazel copse where we went nutting on Sunday afternoons, have risen up one after another like pictures, and the funny thing is, I was always in the picture a little chap in pinafore and leggings, just as I was when I went to school in the old thatched house near the churchyard. Fallerton! Ha! God help us!"

The old man's auditor had opened his eyes too on hearing this, for in the description he recognised the village from which his family derived its name. Fallerton of Fallerton you may hunt up for yourself in any good country history. The astonishment Julian felt, however, he did not exhibit. He smiled encouragingly, for the old fellow had buried his face in his hands towards the conclusion of his remarks.

"Cheer up," he said; "you are weak just now. It will be, to use your own word, 'right' presently. Now, then, you have my name, what is yours?"

"Well," was the hesitating reply, "I have had many names in my time, but I was pretty generally known as—But stop; let me go back. I can see you are a gentleman. I know these colonies well; the gentleman sometimes is as big a blackguard as the rest, but you can always see he is a gentleman born. But that is neither here nor there. If ever you go back to England, and should find yourself in Fallerton churchyard, stroll across the graves to the last yew-tree; there's a headstone on the farther side of it, and this is what you'll read on it: 'Sacred to the memory of Barnaby Shipton.' Barnaby Shipton was my father."

"And your Christian name?" inquired Julian quickly.

"Ask any of the people in Fallerton who was the worst scapegrace ever known in those parts, and they'll say it was Farmer Shipton's son Luke. That's me."

Here Julian rose from his stool, threw up his hands in amazement, and paced to and fro along the smooth floor.

"Oh! there's worse to come, Mr. Fallerton; so don't be shocked yet," proceeded the speaker, imagining that his hearer was horrified at the mere mention of his juvenile delinquencies.

But Julian, in the half-dozen turns he took in the chamber, had been taken captive by a host of thoughts that came in like a flood, and he scarcely noticed that Luke Shipton, as he now was confessed, had, exhausted, closed his face, as before, to the wall. No trace of short-hand writing has yet been discovered that can keep pace with the irresistible speed of human thoughts. There are times when soul and body are quivering with pulsations, and we live a long life in a few moments of time. Something like this Julian was experiencing now.

If that undiscovered system of short-hand had been invented for Julian, this would have been its transcription: "This poor fellow, as he says, has a history, and by some strange fatility I can myself fill up the earlier chapters. Luke Shipton? It is a strange coincidence. I am almost led to think the finger of Providence is here. Let me think. Yet there is not much thinking required of this self-same scapegrace, upon whom I felt Death has laid his stealthy grisly hand. Then this is Luke Shipton, the poacher, the prodigal, the rustic Don Juan, the dare devil, the law-breaker, who was at last transported for what many said was the very trivial offence of knocking down a hare. And the villagers, I remember, talked of him and all his faults with a good deal of tenderness. It was always 'Poor Luke.' Ay, the Fallerton Keeper would recount his exploits until Luke Shipton was somewhat of a hero in our boyish fancy. I have heard the women call to mind the handsome figure, tawny skin, and raven hair; and the men I have heard them at harvest time, resting in the midday heat over their bread-and-cheese and cider flagons, remind each other of his pluck and good nature. At dinner, sometimes, people in our condition would sum him up as a wild fellow. That was the Squire's dining-room verdict, but out in the fields, or in the barn, or on the rude elm benches under the chestnut tree by the 'Hare and Hounds,' they would always end their mention of him with 'Poor Luke.' And here is poor Luke thinking of the rural life whose peace he disturbed. Yet hold! It occurs to me that one of the justices who assisted in the committal of Luke Shipton was Fallerton of Fallerton, Esquire. It was certainly so. I have heard my father defend the committal, which afterwards weighed heavily on the magisterial mind, by saying that Luke was transported, not so much for knocking down a hare and thrashing a keeper, as for a long line of misdeeds. And here lies 'Poor Luke!' I wonder how far he deserves the pity which has been handed down with the tradition of his faults."

"And what do you think was my last name, young gentleman?" asked the man from his berth.

Julian shook his head, still in reverie.

"Well, it was Clawdevil."

"Clawdevil?"

"My common sense. Come, come! Don't be afraid of me. I'm here as a friend, if you'll only believe it."

The man, however, was apparently not moved by this offer of friendship; he received it with a sneer which was nothing if not ferocious, and with a shake of the head that the mildest man must have acknowledged to be impatient. Julian, however, feared nothing, and by this time interested in the adventure, determined to maintain possession. This he frankly told the patient, laughingly reminding him that in high civilization possession is nine points of the law. The man here glanced towards the fowling-pieces, and Julian pretending to understand that he wanted to look at them, leisurely took up the nearest, which was capped. He handed it to its owner, who stared at the intruder, and again turned his face away, while Julian replaced the gun against the wall. By and by he built a fire, and boiled a quart pot of tea from materials he found by rummaging in the outer apartment, where he whispered Neilson to remain *perdu* till further notice—made himself, in short, useful, and very much at home. In the course of an hour or two the sick man was able to move feebly about, and Julian accompanied him at his request to secure the tortress by putting the stone door into the roof.

"Now, you see," said Julian, "I am in your power altogether." (Neilson had effectually kept out of sight.) "It is like the story-books, is it not?—giants, ogres, dungeons and all the rest. But I dare say you won't eat me."

The person thus appealed to shook his head sadly, very much, it must be confessed, as if he thought he should be pleased to enact the *role* of fee-fi-fo-fum, had he but the energy to go through with it. At this time he was sitting on a projection in the wall; nature having here provided, not only a dining and a drawing room finely ventilated, and on the same floor, but a quantity of seats whenever the tenant required rest. Soon, however, another humor passed over him, and he held out his hand. Julian imagining he desired to be helped to his feet, acted accordingly, but the king of the cave shook his head decisively, and uttered the one word—

"Right."

"Then right it is," said Julian, supporting him back to the chief apartment.

And right it was. By degrees the man became more talkative; then communicative. His story was full of startling episodes. His history proved for the ten thousandth time—as it does every day in the colonies—that fact is stranger than fiction. He had the makings of one whose footprints might have been left, honored examples, on the sands of time, but—old, old—story! his talents had been converted at the outset into the wrong channel. Not until Julian had enlisted his confidence, in exchange for honest and transparent sympathy, did the man open his heart. Towards afternoon, the hours having meanwhile passed with nimble heels, Julian said he would return to camp, obtain a few necessaries from the "medical comforts," saddle and relieve his friend from the alarm he would naturally feel at so prolonged an absence. He tried first to obtain a promise from the sick man to give him free entrance on his return. Though this promise was for a while peremptorily and even surlily refused, the desired assurance was at length gruffly given in the laconic utterance—"Right," which in the old fellow's philosophy seemed to be all that was typical of loyalty and trust.

The hermit was now in great pain, and being unable to move out of his bunk, in which Julian had made him comfortable, explained how the trapdoor might be managed from the outside—a fortunate occurrence in one sense, since it enabled Neilson to disappear from the scene without detection. Julian was forced into two promises in return for the one given; he was to say nothing to his people at the camp of what he had seen, and was to secure the circular door in the roof with religious care—promises which, as the reader will agree, he could make with a clear conscience. Neilson, who was leader of the party, did not like the idea of wasting time, but admitted there was no avoiding a prolongation of their halt. There is a deal of sterling humanity amongst even the very roughest bushmen, and the least tutored of their own black fellows would have been ashamed if they knew that their chiefs had abandoned a sick man to his fate.

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