

THE IDLERS

CHAPTER I.

As a boy, he was full of desire to be of service to England, for he had the instincts of a fighting race at the back of him. When he was dragged into the thorny thickets of history by a tutor, he almost forgot his dislike of learning as soon as he found that the history of his country was one of picturesque robbery and bloodshed. He smote the French at Crécy and Poitiers and Agincourt; he sank the Spaniards like kittens in a basket when the Armada invaded the British seas. He asked if he could see a live Spaniard now, and asked it eagerly and with clenched hands. But, as he said with a sigh, perhaps there weren't any. He determined to be a Drake. Some time later he fell across Southey's *Nelson*, and read it through a long summer night. He refused to go on with the vain task of learning French afterward. He