

who are doubtless not quite *compos mentis*, but who pretend to be much less sane than they really are, probably from finding that they can turn such a supposed infirmity to a good and profitable account. They are generally not exactly beggars, but hangers-on of some rather rich man's establishment; and it is wonderful to note, to what cunning and curious expedients they will often have recourse, to create and maintain an influence with all the inferior members of the "great house," and not unfrequently even with the head of it; at least he will generally suffer himself to be considered the dupe of the poor "innocent," as such characters in these districts are very inaptly designated; for cunning, not deep and intricate, but low, mean and despicable, is among their chief and most striking characteristics; but this is tolerated from an indulgent consideration of the infirmity in which it is supposed, but often fullaciously, to have originated.

And such was Billy Stone, who that morning thought, or pretended to think, that he had some information to communicate to the young master at the Hall, which might possibly be considered by him as of some importance; and consequently, at the first peep of day, he took his rod, and went a-fishing in the Eden; to catch a trout or two, which he would take up for the master's breakfast, when he could tell him his news—as if he had not been as fully aware as any one else would have been, that the information he had to convey along with his present, which was to be the ostensible reason for going up to the Hall—while to get his own breakfast was the real one—was of such a nature as to prevent one thought from being bestowed upon all the trout in the Eden, and the salmon to boot.

As he was an excellent angler, he soon caught a fine fish, and, slinging it upon a small willow-twig, started upon his errand, and in passing the front of the mansion, which was anything but the direct road to the kitchen, he lingered a little, in the hope that the master might be up, and notice him from his chamber window, and he was not mistaken, for he not only did see him, but he saw also from his important look and mysterious air and manner, that he was charged with some interesting intelligence, to obtain a knowledge of which, required no small degree of management, and this master Harry well knew, and he knew as well, that to elicit his secret, which he was very anxious to arrive at, as it most likely had some reference to certain circumstances in which, at that particular juncture, he was deeply interested, he must carefully avoid all enquiries directly leading to the main point, to which Billy had a most unconquerable and stub-

born aversion; he therefore threw open his case-ment and thus accosted him.

"Well, Billy, you've got a fine fish there, which if you caught this morning, you must have been early astir, or else you caught him with a night-line?"

"Neet-lines! me set neet-lines! I wad scorn to catch the fine golden trout in the dark! No, Sir," he replied, more respectfully; "I went out early this morning into the fings, to see if they would tak the May fly, although its rather late for it, for being a cauld back'ard season, I thought that, maybe, they wadn't know, having no almanack, that May was gone, and that I wad have the best chance with it, of getting something for your honor's breakfast."

"But why this morning in particular?" naturally enough asked Master Harry.

But this was a direct question, to which, as I have already stated, Billy had a most extraordinary antipathy, and Harry saw at once, that in his over-anxiety to arrive at his object, he had committed himself; but he was not to give up the contest on the first rebuff, for if the bastion proved impregnable, the counter scarp might yet be carried, he therefore commenced the attack anew.

"Well, I suppose that fine fellow afforded you some sport?"

"Aye indeed ye *may* say that, for he rose no less nor six times, afore I fairly hooked him. He first, just popped his muzzel out o' the watter, as it were to smell at the fly of my awn dressing, to see if there was na deception in it, and nae hooks about it, for these gentry are varra know-in', and then he hung aboot under the brae; I saw him weel enough, although he thought I didn't, and made believe as if it was all a cheat, and wouldn't look at it, when I just threw in gently ower the edge of the lumb, where I knew weel enough he was darking, and drew out instantly, as much as to say, if ye won't take it, why ye won't be hanged to ye; when the brute, as if he'd heard me say it, although I only said it to mysel, immediately darted outside the foot of the little ripplin' current, running into the place where he was hidin' like, and made a flusterin' jump at it, for fear he wasn't goin to get another chance, when I struck the hook into his gills, and had my gentleman hard and fast; but he soon found out his mistake, and was like to go mad and break every thing, rather than quietly give in at once, as he had to do at last, so I gave him his way, and to see him run oot my line the way he did was worth a king's ransom!—fifty yards without a turn! and then, whew! he came back again as if the constables were after him, to get his tail to it, but, by run-