

diality, embracing, and—as was not unusual—kissing each other on the cheek, after which Lopré led his young guest to a chamber, and while the latter made some change in his toilet, busied himself in preparing the materials for what promised to be a convivial evening.

The resources of both Garcosh and Thankerton had been taxed for that supper, the like of which had never been heard of in Holyton; but the kindly Dorcas was glad to see her mournful-tenant roused and cheered, and did her utmost to gratify the epicurean visitor.

It is to be inferred that she succeeded, for the mirth and merriment that began from the moment the stranger rejoined his host ceased not for hours to startle the quiet Friends of the immediate vicinity with unseemly shout and song. The younger reveler had a sweet and musical voice, and the lyrics he selected, though, being—perhaps fortunately—in the French tongue, their purport was to the listeners unintelligible, sounded pleasant to the ear; and, judging from the incessant croak of Lopré's laughter, afforded to that gentleman, at least, unmitigated satisfaction.

One thing, to the credit of the latter, was observable—that, whenever little Ruth was present, he exercised a certain control over his companion's wild and reckless talk, and once, when the young libertine, attracted by the little damsel's extreme beauty, began to address her with silly words, Lopré silenced him with a look no man could misunderstand.

When at length they came forth, which was not till long after moonrise, and the guest's horse, in the custody of the lesser John, was heard pawing at the gate, the youth showed fewer signs of the carouse than did the far more temperate entertainer. The latter looked flushed, was agitated, and had his arm round his friend's shoulder. Was it in affection, or to steady his own steps?

"Farewell, my Frank," he said, as his friend put foot in the stirrup.

The young man looked up to the star-sown sky. The light Ruth was holding full upon his upturned face, and showed it curiously grave and pale.

"I mean to be guided by that star," he said, "and it has gone out. How singular!"

"Most of her sisters will have followed suit before you get through the wood," said Lopré. "But you cannot miss the way. None have done so yet."

"What the devil do you mean by giving a fellow God-speed in such a tone as that? I—I tell you what, Augustus," he added, irresolutely, "I am loth to part with you so soon, and I—"

"You shall not, then," interrupted Lopré. "I'll walk beside, and put you in the way. My cloak and hat, Ruth."

She brought them, and the stranger leading his horse, they walked away together.

"Thy friend hath forgotten his weapons of wrath, and I am glad of it, Augustus," said little Ruth, next morning, suddenly exhibiting a pair of pistols.

Lopré gave a quick start, and the colour rose to his brow, as he snatched them from her.

"I marvel not that he was ashamed of them in a house of peace, and so hid them beneath thy reading-chair," continued the little damsel, with some severity.

Lopré laughed, and the circumstance was forgotten.

Frank's visit seemed to work a remarkable change for the better in the tenant of Tabernacle Lodge. He gained colour and flesh. His appetite improved. He was cheerful—almost sociable. No accents of truth were heard, as before, issuing from his chamber. He delighted in Ruth, and held long bantering conversations with her—sometimes opposing her arguments and exhortations, sometimes exhibiting tokens of most suspiciously sudden conversion.

It was probably about three months after Frank's visit, that the appearance of Ninian Small—that de-red yet de-ivided tinker—roused Holyton from its accustomed torpor. Having been absent somewhat longer than usual, Nin had his hands full, and it was not till the close of the fourth day that he had leisure to commence

the drunken orgie that, surely as day follows night, succeeded his intervals of labour.

It was customary with the quaker portion of the community, as soon as it was satisfactorily ascertained that Mr. Small was drunk, to withdraw into their respective tabernacles or dwellings, and make the entrances thereto as secure as possible. But, at present, Nin was in a stage so little advanced as to be harmless company, and more than one Friend lingered round the spot where Mr. Small, seated upon an inverted bucket—which he preferred to any description of chair hitherto in use—amused a knot of villagers with news from London.

He had got through his political budget, and come to subjects of a miscellaneous character, in which may be termed court and criminal gossip, bore a considerable share, and mightily interested the listening circle. It must be confessed that Mr. Small kept his imagination under no very stern control, and when he found, from the open mouths and eyes about him, that he had got hold of a good thing, usually went in for what would, in this age, be called "sensation."

"Ses the king—God bless'n' (hats, except those of the Friends, removed), 'ses he, 'I'll nivir stand it, Charlotte, d'ye mind me? I won't. He's my godson, is George Frank. Bein' a saviourin and a godfather, my parlyment shall offer a 'ansum reward. Twenty Pounds."

'Come, that worn't extravagant, for a Lord,' growled a bystander. "But he never come back?"

"Never more heard on," said Ninian. "He had spent all his fortune. But his jewels, his nags, his picters, his— Well, whatever else my lord took his pleasures in, they was kft, as if he meant to come back next day. Five pounds was added to the reward (parwad'n he was found murdered), and—here's the bill—no 'tain't—I spiled it w' a sausage—but it was gir' out that, 'Whereas the Lord George Francis Olliphant had disappeared, aged eighteen, and nobody know'd what the devil had become of him, but thought that a cruel, barbarous, and detestable murder had been committed on his carcase—thus here reward, exetterer. GEORGE REX."

The recital of this important and authentic document justified a pause and a draught, the former short, the latter long, after which Mr. Small resumed:

"He had been heard by his vally to say he were invited to visit an old friend, whose name he didn't mention, and which lived nowhere about. Consequently, it was thought to be one Captain Gullayne, a very nice gentleman indeed, but unlucky at play, and had took, it was thought, to the road. The captain, bein' advertised in the Flyin' Postman, tellin' him a aunt had died at an advanced age, and left him a legacy, declined to answer—and was accordingly described. Fifty guineas reward. He was a pale, thin,—a pale—a th—"

The speaker's voice faltered, and became inarticulate. His massive jaw dropped, and his great eyes seemed glued to some object without the circle. It was the face of Lopré, steady and white as the moonlight, exactly fronting him.

"Go on, my worthy friend," he said, quietly. "The description. You have it in your pouch."

"Tis lost—be cursed to it," said the tinker, sullenly. But he ceased to fumble in his pocket, and suddenly changed his subject and his manner together. Swallowing another hasty draught, he rose, and, with a powerful kick, sent the bucket spanging among the shins of his audience.

"There's enough of stories!" he bellowed, "more ale, there. Hilloo for a rouse?"

And Mr. Small, throwing his gigantic person into an attitude that might be accepted either as an invitation to drink or fight, gave notice by this gesture that the moment had arrived when the lovers of peace and order might gracefully retire.

Two or three Friends could be seen slipping away, like rabbits to their burrows, and even the "Tip us a stave, Jehosaphat!" addressed to one of them, as he trundled off, failed to arrest that gentleman's flight. Lopré had passed on his way, and there remained only two or three rough fellows who were accustomed, so long as

their means permitted, to share the potations of the convivial Small.

Ninian continued to drink and roar, but evinced a less social disposition than usual, and finally staggered away, forbidding his friends to follow. But, first, leaning—or, rather, falling—against the shoulder of the nearest, he managed to blurt out the question:

"Where do 'e live?"

"Who live?" inquired his friend.

"Pale face—gellyman—" explained Mr. Small.

The other informed him, adding, however, that the party in question was, probably, at this moment, in accordance with his well-known habit, rambling in the woods.

Mr. Small thrust his friend from him, playfully indeed, but so forcibly, that the latter reced some paces and fell, being asked at the same time, what the something he meant by leaning upon him, Small? This done, Ninian tacked away in the direction of the woods. As he went, his muddled brain wrestled with a little sum.

"Fifty guineas—and t-twenty pounds is—s-sev-enty pou—nef mind th'od shill—and fipounmore—make handern—I must have it all— Stay, where's Scripsion?" But he had blundered into the wood-path, and could no longer see at all.

Lopré had not taken his accustomed way. He had gone slowly home. At the gate he found Dorcas, with a pale and anxious expression on her usually composed features, watching and listening. The poor woman did not attempt to conceal her uneasiness. Little Ruth, who was in the habit of going twice a week to a farmhouse, nearly a mile distant, across an angle of the woods, Ruth, who should have returned two hours since, had not made her appearance.

While she was yet speaking, the disturbance made by the brawling tinker reached their ears, and a neighbour, who passed, told Dorcas that the ruffian had reeled away, mad with drink, towards the woods.

The mother turned whiter yet—and made a faint step in the direction indicated.

"He is a savage creature, in these seasons of drink," she said, "he might not even respect my innocent. I'll—"

Lopré touched her arm.

"Have no fear. I will seek her," he said, and strode away.

"Thee wilt be careful of theeself, too," cried Dorcas, after him. "Strive not, if thou canst help it, lest he proves stronger than thou."

Lopré turned his face in acknowledgment of this discreet counsel, but his short hollow laugh was the only reply.

Ruth, fearless little messenger, had been delayed far beyond her usual time, but, nevertheless, refused all escort, and was already half through the darker portion of her way, when she became conscious of the approach of the drunken giant, who, swaying about his mighty arms, and roaring fragments of a ribald song, appeared to be seeking an outlet from the wood. Suddenly, as if abandoning the effort, he flung himself down at the side of the path.

Ruth hoped he would go to sleep.

"Then," she thought, "I can slip by."

After a pause of some minutes, the attempt was made. But, unhappily, Mr. Small was not only awake, but active. If Ruth had walked coolly past, it is possible he might not have molested her, but the manifest purpose of escape acted as an incentive. He made a swoop at the little sitting figure, and clutched her dress. Ruth shrieked, for she had an intense dislike and dread of the man.

"Stop your something screeching, you something'd little something!" growled Small, tossing her from one arm to the other, as though she were a doll. "Kiss me, or I'll drown yo in the ditch! What, scratch me, will ye?" bellowed the infuriated ruffian, "then, here goes."

He lifted her high in the air, with what fell purpose who can say? for at that instant the child uttered another cry.

"Ah! Augustus! Dost thou see?"

A hand of steel was twisted in his neckerchief. Another hand caught Ruth as she fell, fo. the