

time and in such manner as Heaven wills," he said calmly. "If on the gallows, what then? 'Tis a speedy death, and I'd be the last to deprive my fellow-countrymen of a little innocent amusement. But we detain you. Loose the servants, Jim, and tie up the traces. We must take the firearms, sir,—it's only a wise precaution with such a ready shot as yourself."

They unbound their prisoners, and with the help of the servants cut away the carcasses of the dead horses, and set the coach on its way. Lefroy threw a postboy a couple of crowns and bade him see to his fellow-postilion; but whether the money was designed as balm for the cracked crown of the one, or reward for the neutrality of the other, were a nice question.

The highwaymen mounted their horses and waited for the coach to proceed.

"Good evening," said Lefroy. "Your way lies clear. A pleasant journey to you. And if our next meeting be on Tyburn Hill—why, it will send me out of the world with a laugh, and pleasant recollections of a rare jester."

The old gentleman leaned out of the coach and held out his hand to Lefroy.

"Shake hands, you rascal," he said. "Stap me! you may be a rogue, a damned rogue, but, egad! you're a true blade. Heaven forgive me, if I don't hope you may cheat the gallows yet. Whip up there, fellows—I must go and claim my £100 from the Sheriff."

With another chuckle this eccentric old joker fell back in his seat, and the coach rolled on.

The three horsemen sat motionless, hat in hand, till the coach had disappeared. Then Lefroy pulled off his mask and turned to face Jim. Every trace of laughter had vanished, his eyes were hard, his lips set and stern.

"If it were any other man in the world than Tom Eccles I'd shoot him at sight for this," he said grimly. "But——"

"It's a sheer impossibility, Captain, that Tom should play the traitor," urged Jim eagerly. "He must have had some other reason for leaving us."

"He'll need to give a devilish good reason for such rank