

A half-dozen rustics stood gaping, not far away. He touched his horse with a heel. Saracen sprang towards them, and they fell back alarmed. Belward now drank his beer quietly, and asked question after question of the landlord, sometimes waiting for an answer, sometimes not—a kind of cross-examination. Presently he dismounted.

As he stood questioning, chiefly about Ridley Court and its people, a coach showed on the hill, and came dashing down and past. He lifted his eyes idly, though never before had he seen such a coach as swings away from Northumberland Avenue of a morning. He was not idle, however; but he had not come to England to show surprise at anything. As the coach passed his face lifted above the arm on the neck of the horse, keen, dark, strange. A man on the box-seat, attracted at first by the uncommon horses and their trappings, caught Belward's eyes. Not he alone, but Belward started then. Some vague intelligence moved the minds of both, and their attention was fixed till the coach rounded a corner and was gone.

The landlord was at Belward's elbow.

"The gentleman on the box-seat be from Ridley Court. That's Maister Ian Belward, sir."

Gaston Belward's eyes half closed, and a sombre look came, giving his face a handsome malice. He wound his fingers in his horse's mane, and put a foot in the stirrup.

"Who is 'Maister Ian'?"

"Maister Ian be Sir William's eldest, sir. On'y one that's left, sir. On'y three to start wi': and one be killed i' battle, and one had trouble wi' his faither and Maister Ian; and he went away and never was heard on again, sir. That's the end on *him*."