

was about to slacken his pace, despite the admonition. "Hudson is a deep and an unprincipled villain; I wonder my father could have employed him," he continued as if ruminating with himself; "and I will take it as a friendly hint and e'en spur on; for I think these vagabonds would do me a friendly turn after all, as I always make a point of giving them silver when I pass their gate, a cheap method of purchasing their forbearance at least, and perhaps, in this instance, their friendship. On, on! therefore, my gallant steed," he said aloud, apostrophising in mock heroics his noble charger; "if thou bring me safe to Forest Hall before it pass into other hands, a week's rest shall be thy guerdon."

These and such like thoughts were forgotten ere he had advanced a mile or two beyond the cottage of the Mitchels, but they were succeeded by others which were still stronger incentives to hasten on; the friend of his childhood was in distress—an orphan like himself—the fond and affectionate playmate of his youth, one with whom he had often exchanged vows of eternal friendship, when neither knew what such vows meant; and although he had not seen her for years, yet he was impressed with the idea, formed originally of course in the heyday of thoughtless and inconsiderate youth, that she was every thing as lovely and amiable, and beautiful, and good, and affectionate, as poets ever painted or enthusiastic lovers ever dreamt of. And then again he thought of the many little attentions she had received from her when playing together as children; how the first violet and primrose of the early spring had evidently been esteemed by her only as they would give pleasure to him for whom she had gathered them; how gayly bloomed in his bosom the cowslip and blue-bell she placed there, which her sad thoughts for years and years—but this he knew nothing of—had converted into emblems of the fading and transitoriness of "love's young dream."

With the varied thoughts and feelings and affections of a dozen years—a long life for youth to look back upon—he found himself sooner than he thought it could have been possible, at the gate of the Forest, which was opened by a decently dressed and good-looking boy, the son of the porter, to whom he threw a few ha'pence, and passed on into the narrow avenue through the thicket already mentioned, leading to the Hall, which was yet full three miles off.

Harry of course had never been in this romantic dale before; indeed it had been forbidden ground to any of his name and lineage, for several generations; and he had but half divested himself of the prejudices of his boyhood, imbibed from the distorted representations of the adherents

of his house, concerning the wild and desolate mountain holds of that band of robbers and murderers, the Musgraves; what was then his amazement, on reaching the first little rising ground, to find himself in a perfect paradise of terrestrial beauty, which, however, he could not then stop to contemplate; but the thought came o'er him like a pleasing dream, as he slowly rode along the little ridge, beneath the shadow of those lofty and majestic oaks which crowned the verdant summit: "Were Alice on her palfrey by my side, how much more lovely would that scene appear!" On the left the sheep and cattle browsing on the grassy slope, or calmly ruminating in quiet and placid rest, sheltered by the thick foliage from the noontide heat, their eyes half closed, as if the soothing murmur of a tiny waterfall hard by were lulling them to sleep. On the right, in the far off distance beyond the little lake, embosomed thick in woods, stood Forest Hall, as he supposed from the curling smoke which alone gave note of human habitation in that fairy land; then there was the babbling streamlet right before him, winding its tortuous course along a rocky glade, half hidden by the fringe of bushes on its banks, while ever and anon its crystal waters would expand as if it thought itself a river. "But what's that!" he almost exclaimed, as he mounted the slope on the other side of the rivulet, after he had forded, and perceived the figure of a man stretched at full length on a mossy knoll, apparently asleep, under the wide spreading branches of the trees around, with his little wakeful watch-dog at his feet; which, by its barking at master Harry's approach, awoke its master, who rubbed his eyes and slowly rose, when no less a personage than Billy Stone stood, in all his self-importance, fully portrayed before him.

"What in the world has brought you here?" inquired master Harry, in undisguised astonishment.

But Bill, as we have already said, had a very strong and morbid antipathy to every species of direct interrogation, and consequently answered the master's question by asking, not only another, but half a dozen, as for instance:

"Do you ken, Sir, where you are? Do you ken the way to Forest Ha', round that lake, as they ca' it, yonder? Do you ken that Durley Hudson is there afore you? There! just where you see you smoke, for that's the ha', an' if you don't ride as hard as you can, it'll be his yet, and then, heigh for *Mistress Hudson o' Forest Ha'!*" and then he set up a loud uproarious laugh, which made the forest ring again; but suddenly recollecting himself, he relapsed into a serious mood, and told the master to "ride as far dear life, or he would be over feat," when Harry took the hint