

“But you know, sir,” said I, in conclusion, “that I fancied the whereabouts of that book a secret known only to—to—to my friend and myself.”

“Your—your—your friend and yourself. Why, man alive! don’t you call him by his name, instead of stammering away like a school boy over his French version?”

“Only the fear of displeasing you by speaking of one who, I am aware, has offended you causes me to refrain from naming him.”

“Very well, as you please; still you cannot refuse to drink a bumper to the health of your—your—your friend, who, I trust, will soon be my—my—*my* friend.”

“Really, sir, I cannot but fancy that there must be a mistake somewhere. The friend I mean ——”

“Is Ned Gray! anything else you can urge against his being the friend *I* mean?”

“No sir; I can only give in and sit in silent wonder.”

“That you shall not—at least for more than a few hours. Be kind enough to mount your horse which is now brought to the front door, and ride to Mr. Gray’s; present my compliments to him and say I would feel obliged by his coming to dinner to-night. As he may not care to come alone, you had better get that other accomplice of yours, Dick Westfield, and betake yourselves hither by seven o’clock. And take care that Mr. Gray be not late, as we shall not wait for any one.”

“Be sure of that, sir. The difficulty will be to keep him from being here an hour before. But may I not ——”

“No certainly. Take yourself off as rapidly as you can and don’t forget Julia’s note to Miss Stanley. There, be off.”

“As you please, sir. *Au revoir* then, and for a speedy solution of the mystery.”

In another minute, I was careering over the smooth turf of the park, striking towards a well-known fence, frequently leapt by me when going to see Ned after having been at Marston Hall, and wondering how the owner of this mansion had come to know about the Vergil—(about the other affair, the love-matter, I mean, he was already pretty well informed,) and puzzled to account for this sud-