



LONG ODDS.

CHAPTER I.

TAKE CARE OF DAMOCLES.



GLORIOUS night. The moon, pale regent of the sky, with all her glittering court is marching like an army through the heavens. The numberless lights of Cairo twinkle brightly, and the cigars glow like fire-flies under the verandah of Shepherd's Hotel. Just visible from the lounging-chairs there, an unusually brilliant gleam of light catches the eye, evidently proceeding from some large building which is garishly illuminated. From that spot, at that time of night, the most striking object perhaps in the city of the Khedive.

'So you're getting pretty tired of the place you have to save, Jack, eh?'

'Yes,' replied the Honourable Jack Cuxwold of her Majesty's —th Lancers. 'Before Tel-el-Kebir the certainty that we had work before us kept us going. Then the ride down here was glorious, a match against time, whether we reached Cairo in time to save the city.'

'Yes,' said Flood, 'from all accounts you weren't an hour too soon. Arabi's defeated troops would have fired and sacked it in another four-and-twenty-hours.'

'Just so,' replied Jack Cuxwold. 'I fancy that's what would have taken place. Defeated soldiery "out of hand" would probably treat a wealthy city in that way.'

'Well, it's all over now; and I suppose you'll be soon coming home again?'