

afraid that if he drove straight up to the door the sudden delight of seeing him would be too much for his mother.

John Petersham opened the door, and recognizing him at once was about to exclaim loudly, when James made a motion for him to be silent.

"Show me quietly into the squire's study, John," he said, grasping the butler's hand with a hearty squeeze, "and don't say anything about my being here until he has seen my mother. They are all well, I hope?"

"All well, sir, and right glad they will be to see you; for Mrs. Walsham and all of them have been fretting sorely since the news came that you were badly wounded."

"I have had a narrow shave of it," James said; "but thank God I am as well now as ever!"

As he spoke he opened the door of the study and entered.

The squire, who was reading the paper, looked up, and leaped to his feet with a cry of satisfaction.

"My dear boy, I am glad—thank God you are back again! What a relief your coming will be to us all!" And he shook James warmly by both hands. "I should hardly have known you, and yet you are not so much changed either. Dear, dear, how delighted your mother will be! You have not seen her yet?"

"No, sir," James said. "I dismissed the post-chaise at the gate and walked up quietly. I was afraid if I drove suddenly up the shock might be too much for her."

"Quite right!" the squire said; "we must break it to her quietly. Wilks must do it—or no, he shall tell Aggie, and she shall tell your mother."

He rang the bell, and John, who had been expecting a summons, instantly appeared.

"Tell Mr. Wilks I want to speak to him, John."

The old soldier speedily appeared, and his delight was as great as if James had been his son. He went off to break the news, and in a short time Mrs. Walsham was in the arms of her son.