bed and hurled a boot which silenced that alarum for ever.

Bang, bang, bang! "Five o'clock, master." That was the boy calling him. He composed his shattered nerves as well as he could, and proceeded to dress. It was with a mixture of foolish shame and pride that he put on his corduroys, button-up waistcoat, and clean white smock; these assumed, he descended the stairs, lit the fire, made his tea, managed to get through a little bread and butter; five o'clock is really too early for breakfast—tied his red handkerchief round his neck, put on his soft felt hat, and sallied forth a new Don Quixote. He naturally felt uncomfortable in his new garb: that was to be expected. And as he walked rapidly down the village street, along which the labourers were slouching along to their work, it was not pleasant to hear the rustics, whose sense of humour is naturally strongest when the point of the epigram refers to their own familiar pursuits, exploded as he passed, and choked respectfully.

In the farmyard, besides the usual belongings, was a cart and horse ready for use, led by a boy. Bailiff Bostock, his own horse ready saddled, was waiting impatiently for Alan.

"Now, Squire," he said, pointing to such a heap as might have come from the Augean stables, "you see that pile o' muck. It's got to be carted to the fields and spread out in little piles, same as you've often seen when you go out shooting."

"I understand," said Alan, his heart warming with the prospect of real work; "it's got to be pitchforked into the cart, driven to the field, and pitchforked back again. Isn't it boys' work, Bailiff?"

The Bailiff grinned.

"Ask me that in half an hour," he said, and, jumping into his saddle, rode off on the business of the day.

Alan rolled up the sleeves of his smock, and took up the pitchfork. The boy went behind the cart to grin. The smock-frock was white, and the job was so very, very likely to destroy that whiteness that the boy needs must go behind the cart to laugh. Had he not been afraid of the Squire he would have told him that he should begin by taking off the smock and the smart waistcoat under it.

Then the job began. To handle a pitchfork, like other responsible work, requires practice. The crafty pitchforker grasps his instrument at some point experimentally ascertained to be that of least weight and greatest leverage. Had Alan been a Cambridge instead of an Oxford man, he would have known something of such points. But he was ignorant of mechanics, and had to find out for himself.

Half a dozen times that boy, who should have been on the shafts, assisting at the reception of the stuff, came from behind the shafts, each time to go back again and laugh as noiselessly as he could. Alan heard him, though he condoned the offence, considering the novelty of the thing.

The first time that boy looked round the cart the Squire was beginning to puff and pant; the second time he looked, the Squire had pulled off his hat, and his face was shining as the face of one in a Turkish bath; the third time he had thrown aside his red neckerchief and the prespiration was streaming from his brows. But still the Squire worked on. Never before had that boy seen a cart filled more swiftly.

"Now, boy," he said, good-humouredly, "when you have done laughing you may tell me where we have to take this load."

The boy essayed to speak, but choked. The situation was altogether too funny. He could only point.

Alan drove the cart down one lane and up another without any disaster, the boy following behind him, still grinning as noiselessly as he knew. Then they came to their field, and the boy pointed to the spot where they had to begin. "This will be easy work," said Allan, mounting the cart.

The task, indeed, was simple. Only to pitch out the manure in small heaps, standing in the cart.

The boy went to the horse's head.

After the first heap was out—rather dexterously, Alan thought—the boy made a remarkable utterance:

"O—osier!"

Instantly the cart went on, and Alan, losing his balance, was prostrated into the cart itself, where he lay supine, his legs kicking up. At this sight the boy broke down altogether and laughed, roaring, and bellowing, and weeping with laughter so that the welkin rang.

Alan got up rather ruefully. To be sure, it was absurd to quarrel with the boy for laughing. And yet the condition of that