

time, but he was harder than the thing, or people that had hit him ; he boasted, indeed, of being as "hard as nails," imagining that to be in a man as moral excellence, which in the rhinoceros he would have only admitted to be an accident of birth. He had at no time of his life been young ; that is, he had neither felt himself to be so, nor looked like it ; and hence he reaped the great advantage of not perceiving any particular change in himself, nor having it observed by others, now he was old. Everybody who saw him now, and had known him in past days, remarked that Sandy Ray looked much the same. In the cold of Canada he had not shivered, in the heat of the West Indies he had not perspired, but had defied all climates and all weathers. He had never given way to a folly nor a weakness ; never experienced the temptation of an impulse of any sort ; and hence, upon a very small stock of intelligence, had acquired the reputation of a long-headed fellow. He was also reputed to be wealthy, notwithstanding—or, perhaps, in consequence of—the poverty of his domestic ménage. He had held various semi-military appointments all over the world ; and though the "pickings" contingent to such positions are not large, there *are* pickings, and Sandy Ray was supposed to have swept them all up into a very close-meshed net. His Christian name was Alexander, but no one had ever abbreviated that ; he was not a man to have his name shortened through affection or familiarity ; he was called Sandy from the tint of his hair, whereon the red bristles still contended with the gray for every inch of pate. His features were large and inexpressive, except of hardness ; his gray eyes cold and slow of movement ; his teeth white and strong as a wolf's. He spoke with an elaborate caution, which was never so marked as when in conversation with his fidus Achates, Colonel Juxon ; whose words flowed like a torrent set with crags and rocks, and crammed with imprecations in place of foam.

What bond of union existed between these two men, in most respects so different, it is hard to tell. They had both of them "frugal minds," and it was by some suggested they had private investments in common ; others, however, of a livelier fancy, did not hesitate to express their conviction that "Swearing Juxon," and "Sandy Ray," who it was notorious had known one another years ago, in outlandish quarters, shared the knowledge of some secret crime between them, which had probably filled both their pockets.

What was a much greater mystery that how the commissary had secured the Colonel's friendship, was, how he had won his wife. She must have been, when he married her, a beautiful girl ; indeed, the remnants of great beauty still lingered about her feeble and shattered frame, and "what she could ever have seen in her husband," was the inquiry every woman put to herself when she saw the pair together.