

It was about midnight when Amyas leaped to his feet, or rather fell upon his back, upsetting saddle, settle, and finally, table, under the notion that ten thousand flying dragons were bursting in the window close to his ear, with howls most fierce and fell. The flying dragons past, however, being only a flock of terror-stricken geese, which flew flapping and screaming round the corner of the house: but the noise which had startled them did not pass; and another minute made it evident that a sharp fight was going on in the courtyard, and that Yeo was hallooing lustily for help.

Out turned the men, sword in hand, burst the back door open, stumbling over pails and pitchers and into the courtyard, where Yeo, his back against the stable-door, was holding his own manfully with sword and buckler against a dozen men.

Dire and manifold was the screaming; geese screamed, chickens screamed, pigs screamed, donkeys screamed, Mary screamed from an upper window; and to complete the chorus, a flock of plovers, attracted by the noise, wheeled round and round overhead, and added their screams also to that Dutch concert.

The screaming went on, but the fighting ceased; for, as Amyas rushed into the yard, the whole party of ruffians took to their heels, and vanished over a low hedge at the other end of the yard.

"Are you hurt, Yeo?"

"Not a scratch, thank Heaven! But I've got two of them, the ringleaders, I have. One of them's against the wall. Your horse did for t'other."

The wounded man was lifted up; a huge ruffian, nearly as big as Amyas himself. Yeo's sword had passed through his body. He groaned and choked for breath.

"Carry him indoors. Where is the other?"

"Dead as a herring, in the straw. Have a care, men, have a care how you go in! the horses are near mad!"

However, the man was brought out after awhile. With him all was over. They could feel neither pulse nor breath.

"Carry him in too, poor wretch. And now, Yeo, what is the meaning of all this?"

Yeo's story was soon told. He could not get out of his Puritan head the notion (quite unfounded, of course) that Eustace had meant to steal the horses. He had seen the

innkeeper sneak off at their approach; and expecting some night-attack, he had taken up his lodging for the night in the stable.

As he expected, an attempt was made. The door was opened (how, he could not guess, for he had fastened it inside), and two fellows came in, and began to loose the beasts. Yeo's account was, that he seized the big fellow, who drew a knife on him, and broke loose; the horses, terrified at the scuffle, kicked right and left; one man fell, and the other ran out, calling for help, with Yeo at his heels; "Whereon," said Yeo, "seeing a dozen more on me with clubs and bows, I thought best to shorten the number while I could, ran the rascal through, and stood on my ward; and only just in time I was, what's more; there's two arrows in the house-wall, and two or three more in my buckler, which I caught up as I went out, for I had hung it close by the door, you see, sir, to be all ready in case," said the cunning old Philistine-slayer as they went in after the wounded man.

But hardly had they stumbled through the low doorway into the back-kitchen when a fresh hubbub arose inside—more shout for help. Amyas ran forward breaking his head against the doorway, and beheld, as soon as he could see for the flashes in his eyes, an old acquaintance, held on each side by a sturdy sailor.

With one arm in the sleeve of his doublet, and the other in a not over spotless shirt; holding up his hose with one hand, and with the other a candle, whereby he had lighted himself to his own confusion; foaming with rage, stood Mr. Evan Morgans, alias Father Parsons, looking, between his confused habiliments and his fiery visage (as Yeo told him to his face), "the very moral of a half-plucked turkey-cock." And behind him, dressed, stood Eustace Leigh.

"We found the maid letting these here two out by the front door," said one of the captors.

"Well, Mr. Parsons," said Amyas; "and what are you about here? A pretty nest of thieves and Jesuits we seem to have routed out this evening."

"About my calling, sir," said Parsons stoutly. "By your leave, I shall prepare this my wounded lamb for that account to which your man's cruelty has untimely sent him."

The wounded man, who lay upon the floor, heard Parsons' voice, and moaned for the "Patrico."



"You see, sir," said he pompously, "the sheep know their shepherd's voice."

"The wolves you mean, you hypocritical scoundrel!" said Amyas, who could not contain his disgust. "Let the fellow truss up his points, lads, and do his work. After all, the man is dying."

"The requisite matters, sir, are not at hand," said Parsons unabashed.

"Eustace, go and fetch his matters for him; you seem to be in all his plots."

Eustace went silently and sullenly.

"What's that fresh noise at the back, now?"

"The maid, sir, a wailing over her uncle; the fellow that we saw sneak away when we came up. It was him the horse killed."

It was true. The wretched host had slipped off on their approach, simply to call the neighboring outlaws to the spoil; and he had been filled with the fruit of his own devices.

"His blood be on his own head," said Amyas.

"I question, sir," said Yeo in a low voice, "whether some of it will not be on the heads of those proud prelates who go clothed in purple and fine linen, instead of going forth to convert such as he, and then wonder how these Jesuits get hold of them. If they give place to the devil in their sheepfolds, sure he'll come in and lodge there. Look, sir, there's a sight in a gospel land!"

And, indeed, the sight was curious enough. For Parsons was kneeling by the side of the dying man, listening earnestly to the confession which the man sobbed out in his gibberish, between the spasms of his wounded chest. Now and then Parsons shook his head; and when Eustace returned with the holy wafer, and the oil for extreme unction, he asked him in a low voice, "Ballard, interpret for me."

And Eustace knelt down on the other side of the sufferer, and interpreted his thieves' dialect into Latin; and the dying man held a hand of each, and turned first to one and then to the other stupid eyes,—not without affection, though, and gratitude.

"I can't stand this mummery any longer," said Yeo. "Here's a soul perishing before my eyes, and it's on my conscience to speak a word in season."

"Silence," whispered Amyas, holding him back by the

arm; "he knows them, and he don't know you; they are the first who ever spoke to him as if he had a soul to be saved, and first come, first served; you can do no good. See, the man's face is brightening already."

"But, sir, 'tis a false peace."

"At all events he is confessing his sins, Yeo; and if that's not good for him, and you, and me, what is?"

"Yea, Amen! sir; but this is not to the right person after all, though he may not send them there? By heaven! the man is dead!"

It was so. The dark catalogue of brutal deeds had been gasped out; but ere the words of absolution could follow, the head had fallen back, and all was over.

"Confession in extremis is sufficient," said Parsons to Eustace ("Ballard," as Parsons called him to Amyas' surprise), as he rose. "As for the rest, the intention will be accepted instead of the act."

"The Lord have mercy on his soul," said Eustace.

"His soul is lost before our very eyes," said Yeo.

"Mind your own business," said Amyas.

"Humph; but I'll tell you, sir, what our business is, if you'll step aside with me. I find that poor fellow that lies dead is none other than the leader of the Gubbings; the king of them, as they dare to call him."

"Well, what of that?"

"Mark my words, sir, if we have not a hundred stout rogues upon us before two hours are out; forgive us they never will; and if we get off with our lives, which I don't much expect, we shall leave our horses behind; for we can hold the house, sir, well enough till morning, but the courtyard we can't, that's certain!"

"We had better march at once, then!"

"Think, sir: if they catch us up—as they are sure to do, knowing the country better than we—how will our shot stand their arrows?"

"True, old wisdom; we must keep the road; and we must keep together; and so be a mark for them, while they will be behind every rock and bank; and two or three flight of arrows will do our business for us. Humph! stay, I have a plan." And stepping forward he spoke—

"Eustace, you will be so kind as to go back to your lambs, and tell them, that if they meddle with us cruel wolves again tonight, we are ready and willing to fight to the death, and have plenty of shot and powder at their



service. Father Parsons, you will be so kind as to accompany us; it is but fitting that the shepherd should be hostage for his sheep."

"If you carry me off this spot, sir, you carry my corpse only," said Parsons. "I may as well die here as be hanged elsewhere, like my martyred Brother Campian."

"If you take him you must take me too," said Eustace.

"What if we won't?"

"How will you gain by that? You can only leave me here. You cannot make me go to the Gubbings, if I do not choose."

Amyas uttered sotto voce an anathema on Jesuits, Gubbings, and things in general. He was in a great hurry to get to Bideford, and he feared that this business would delay him as it was, a day or two. He wanted to hang Parsons: he did not want to hang Eustace; and Eustace, he knew, was well aware of that latter fact, and played his game accordingly: but time ran on, and he had to answer sulkily enough—

"Well then, if you, Eustace, will go and give my message to your converts, I will promise to set Mr. Parsons free again before we come to Lydford town; and I advise you, if you have any regard for his life, to see that your eloquence be persuasive enough; for as sure as I am an Englishman, and he none, if the Gubbings attack us, the first bullet that I shall fire at them will have gone through his scoundrelly brains."

Parsons still kicked.

"Very well, then, my merry men all. Tie this gentleman's hands behind his back, get the horses out, and we'll right away up into Dartmoor, find a good high tor, stand our ground there till morning, and then carry him into Okehampton to the nearest justice. If he chooses to delay me in my journey, it is fair that I should make him pay for it."

Whereon Parsons gave in, and being fast tied by his arm to Amyas' saddle, trudged alongside his horse for several weary miles, while Yeo walked by his side, like a friar by a condemned criminal; and in order to keep up his spirits, told him the woeful end of Nicholas Saunders, the Legate, and how he was found starved to death in a bog.

"And if you wish, sir, to follow in his blessed steps, which I heartily hope you will do, you have only to go

over that big cow-backed hill there on your right hand, and down again the other side to Crawmere pool, and there you'll find as pretty a bog to die in as ever Jesuit needed: and your ghost may sit there on a grass tummock, and tell your beads without any one asking for you till the day of judgment; and much good may it do you."

At which imagination Yeo was actually heard, for the first and last time in this history, to laugh most heartily.

His ho-ho's had scarcely died away when they saw shining under the moon the old Tower of Lydford Castle.

"Cast the fellow off now," said Amyas.

"Ay, ay, sir!" and Yeo and Simon Evans stopped behind, and did not come up for ten minutes after.

"What have you been about so long?"

"Why, sir," said Evans, "you see the man had a very fair pair of hose on, and a bran-new kersey doublet, very warm lined; and so, thinking it a pity good clothes should be wasted on such noxious trade, we've just brought them along with us."

"Spoiling the Egyptians," said Yeo as comment.

"And what have you done with the man?"

"Hove him over the bank, sir. He pitched into a big furze-bush, and for aught I know, there he'll bide."

"You rascal, have you killed him?"

"Never fear, sir," said Yeo in his cool fashion. "A Jesuit has as many lives as a cat, and, I believe, rides broomsticks post, like a witch. He would be at Lydford now before us, if his master Satan had any business for him there."

Leaving on their left Lydford and its ill-omened castle (which, a century after, was one of the principal scenes of Judge Jeffreys' cruelty), Amyas and his party trudged on through the mire toward Okehampton till sunrise; and ere the vapors had lifted from the mountain-tops, they were descending the long slopes from Sourton down, while Yestor and Amicombe slept steep and black beneath their misty pall; and roaring far below unseen,

"Ockment leapt from crag and cloud,  
Down her cataracts, laughing loud."

The voice of the stream recalled these words to Amyas' mind. The nymph of Torridge had spoken them upon the day of his triumph. He recollected, too, his vexation on that day at not seeing Rose Salterne. Why,



he had never seen her since. Never seen her now for six years and more! Of her ripened beauty he knew only by hearsay; she was still to him the lovely fifteen years' girl for whose sake he had smitten the Barnstaple draper over the quay. What a chain of petty accidents had kept them from meeting, though so often within a mile of each other! "And what a lucky one!" said practical old Amyas to himself. "If I had seen her as she is now, I might have loved her as Frank does—Poor Frank! what will he say? What does he say, for he must know it already? And what ought I to say—to do rather, for talking is no use on this side the grave, nor on the other either, I expect!" And then he asked himself whether his old oath meant nothing or something; whether it was a mere tavern frolic, or a sacred duty. And he held, the more that he looked at it, that it meant the latter.

But what could he do? He had nothing on earth but his sword, so he could not travel to find her. After all, she might not be gone far. Perhaps not gone at all. It might be a mistake, an exaggerated scandal. He would hope so. And yet it was evident that there had been some passages between her and Don Guzman. Eustace's mysterious words about the promise at Lundy proved that. The villain! He had felt all along that he was a villain: but just the one to win a woman's heart, too. Frank had been away—all the brotherhood away. What a fool he had been, to turn the wolf loose into the sheepfold! And yet who would have dreamed of it?

"At all events," said Amyas, trying to comfort himself, "I need not complain. I have lost nothing. I stood no more chance of her against Frank than I should have stood against the Don. So there is no use for me to cry about the matter." And he tried to hum a tune concerning the general frailty of women, but nevertheless, like Sir Hugh, felt that "he had a great disposition to cry."

He never had expected to win her, and yet it seemed bitter to know that she was lost to him forever. It was not so easy for a heart of his make to toss away the image of a first love; and all the less easy because that image was stained and ruined.

"Curses on the man who had done that deed! I will yet have his heart's blood somehow, if I go round the world again to find him. If there's no law for it on earth, there's law in heaven, or I'm much mistaken."

With which determination he rode into the ugly, dirty, and stupid town of Okehampton, with which fallen man (by some strange perversity) has chosen to defile one of the loveliest sites in the pleasant land of Devon. And heartily did Amyas abuse the old town that day; for he was detained there, as he expected, full three hours, while the Justice Shallow of the place was sent for from his farm (whither he had gone at sunrise, after the early-rising fashion of those days) to take Yeo's deposition concerning last night's affray. Moreover, when Shallow came, he refused to take the depositions, because they ought to have been made before a brother Shallow at Lydford; and in the wrangling which ensued, was very near finding out what Amyas (fearing fresh loss of time and worse evils beside) had commanded to be concealed, namely, the presence of Jesuits in that Moorland Utopia. Then, in broadest Devon—

"And do you call this Christian conduct, sir, to set a quiet man like me upon they Gubbings, as if I was going to risk my precious life—no, nor ever a constable to Okehampton neither? Let Lydford men mind Lydford roogs, and by Lydford law if they will, hang first and try after; but as for me, I've rade my Bible, and 'He that meddleth with strife is like him that taketh a dog by the ears.' So if you choose to sit down and ate your breakfast with me, well and good: but depositions I'll have none. If your man's inquired for, you'll be answerable for his appearing in course; but I expect mortally" (with a wink), "you waint hear much more of the matter from any hand. 'Leave well alone is a good rule, but leave ill alone is a better.'—So we says round about here; and so you'll say, captain, when you be so old as I."

So Amyas sat down and ate his breakfast, and went on afterwards a long and weary day's journey, till he saw at last beneath him the broad shining river, and the long bridge, and the white houses piled up the hillside; and beyond, over Raleigh downs, the dear old tower of Northam Church.

Alas! Northam was altogether a desert to him then; and Bideford, as it turned out hardly less so. For when he rode up to Sir Richard's door, he found that the good knight was still in Ireland, and Lady Grenville at Stow. Whereupon he rode back again down the High street to that same bow-windowed Ship Tavern where the Brother-



hood of the Rose made their vow, and settled himself in the very room where they had supped.

"Ah! Mr. Leigh—Captain Leigh now, I beg pardon," quoth mine host. "Bideford is an empty place now-a-days, and nothing stirring, sir. What with Sir Richard to Ireland, and Sir John to London, and all the young gentlemen to the wars, there's no one to buy good liquor, and no one to court the young ladies, neither. Sack, sir? I hope so. I haven't brewed a gallon of it this fortnight, if you'll believe me; ale, sir, and aqua vitæ, and such low-bred trade, is all I draw now-a-days. Try a pint of sherry, sir, now, to give you an appetite. You mind my sherry of old? Jane! Sherry and sugar, quick, while I pull off the captain's boots."

Amyas sat weary and sad, while the innkeeper chattered on. "Ah, sir! two or three like you would set the young ladies all alive again. By-the-by, there's been strange doings among them since you were here last. You mind Mistress Salterne?"

"For God's sake, don't let us have that story, man! I heard enough of it at Plymouth!" said Amyas, in so disturbed a tone that mine host looked up, and said to himself—

"Ah, poor young gentleman, he's one of the hard hit ones."

"How is the old man?" asked Amyas, after a pause.

"Bears it well enough, sir; but a changed man. Never speaks to a soul, if he can help it. Some folks say he's not right in his head; or turned miser, or somewhat, and takes nought but bread and water, and sits up all night in the room as was hers, turning over her garments. Heaven knows what's on his mind—they do say he was over hard on her, and that drove her to it. All I know is, he has never been in here for a drop of liquor (and he came as regular every evening as the town clock, sir) since she went, except a ten days ago, and then he met young Mr. Cary at the door, and I heard him ask Mr. Cary when you would be home, sir."

"Put on my boots again. I'll go and see him."

"Bless you, sir! What, without your sack?"

"Drink it yourself, man."

"But you wouldn't go out again this time o' night on an empty stomach, now?"

"Fill my men's stomachs for them, and never mind

mine. It's market-day; is it not? Send out and see whether Mr. Cary is still in town;" and Amyas strode out, and along the quay to Bridgeland Street, and knocked at Mr. Salterne's door.

Salterne himself opened it, with his usual stern courtesy.

"I saw you coming up the street, sir. I have been expecting this honor from you for some time past. I dreamt of you only last night, and many a night before that, too. Welcome, sir, into a lonely house. I trust the good knight, your general, is well."

"The good knight, my general, is with God, who made him, Mr. Salterne."

"Dead, sir?"

"Founded at sea on our way home; and the Delight lost, too."

"Humph!" growled Salterne, after a minute's silence.

"I had a venture in her. I suppose it's gone. No matter—I can afford it, sir, and more, I trust. And he was three years younger than I! And Draper Heard was buried yesterday, five years younger.—How is it that every one can die, except me? Come in, sir, come in; I have forgotten my manners."

And he led Amyas into his parlor, and called to the apprentices to run one way, and to the cook to run another.

"You must not trouble yourself to get me supper, indeed."

"I must though, sir, and the best of wine too; and old Salterne had a good tap of Alicant in the old time, old time, old time, sir! and you must drink it now, whether he does or not!" and out he bustled.

Amyas sat still, wondering what was coming next, and puzzled at the sudden hilarity of the man, as well as his hospitality, so different from what the innkeeper had led him to expect.

In a minute more one of the apprentices came in to lay the cloth, and Amyas questioned him about his master.

"Thank the Lord that you are come, sir," said the lad.

"Why, then?"

"Because there'll be a chance of us poor fellows getting a little broken meat. We'm half-starved this three months—bread and dripping, bread and dripping, oh dear, sir! And now he's sent out to the inn for chickens, and game, and salads and all that money can buy, and down in the



cellar haling out the best of wine,"—and the lad smacked his lips audibly at the thought.

"Is he out of his mind?"

"I can't tell; he saith as how he must save mun's money now-a-days; for he's got a great venture on nand; but what a be he tell'th no man. They call'th mun 'bread and dripping' now, sir, all town over," said the 'prentice, confidentially, to Amyas.

"They do, do they, sirrah! Then they will call me bread and no dripping tomorrow!" and old Salterne, entering from behind, made a dash at the poor fellow's ears: but luckily thought better of it, having a couple of bottles in each hand.

"My dear sir," said Amyas, "you don't mean us to drink all that wine?"

"Why not, sir?" answered Salterne, in a grim, half-sneering tone, thrusting out his square-grizzled beard and chin. "Why not, sir? why should I not make merry when I have the honor of a noble captain in my house? one who has sailed the seas, sir, and cut Spaniards' throats; and may cut them again, too; eh, sir! Boy, where's the kettle and the sugar?"

"What on earth is the man at?" quoth Amyas to himself—"flattering me, or laughing at me?"

"Yes," he ran on, half to himself, in a deliberate tone, evidently intending to hint more than he said, as he began brewing the sack—in plain English, hot negus; "Yes, bread and dripping for those who can't fight Spaniards; but the best that money can buy for those who can. I heard of you at Smerwick, sir—Yes, bread and dripping for me, too—I can't fight Spaniards: but for such as you. Look here, sir; I should like to feed a crew of such up, as you'd feed a main of fighting-cocks, and then start them with a pair of Sheffield spurs a-piece—you've a good one there to your side, sir; but don't you think a man might carry two, now, and fight as they say those Chinese do a sword to each hand? You could kill more that way, Captain Leigh, I reckon?"

Amyas half laughed.

"One will do, Mr. Salterne, if one is quick enough with it."

"Humph!—Ah—No use being in a hurry. I haven't been in a hurry. No—I waited for you; and here you are and welcome, sir! Here comes supper: a light matter,

sir, you see. A capon and a brace of partridges. I had no time to feast you as you deserve."

And so he ran on all supper-time, hardly allowing Amyas to get a word in edgeways: but heaping him with coarse flattery, and urging him to drink, till after the cloth was drawn, and the two left alone, he grew so outrageous that Amyas was forced to take him to task good humoredly.

"Now, my dear sir, you have feasted me royally, and better far than I deserve; but why will you go about to make me drunk twice over, first with vainglory and then with wine?"

Salterne looked at him a while fixedly, and then, sticking out his chin—"Because, Captain Leigh, I am a man who has all his life tried the crooked road first, and found the straight one the safer after all."

"Eh, sir? That is a strange speech for one who bears the character of the most upright man in Bideford."

"Humph. So I thought myself once, sir; and well I have proved it. But I'll be plain with you, sir. You've heard how—how I've fared since you saw me last?"

Amyas nodded his head.

"I thought so. Shame rides post. Now then, Captain Leigh, listen to me. I, being a plain man and a burgher, and one that never drew iron in my life except to mend a pen, ask you, being a gentleman and a captain and a man of honor, with a weapon to your side, and harness to your back—what would you do in my place?"

"Humph!" said Amyas, "that would very much depend on whether 'my place' was my own fault or not."

"And what if it were, sir? What if all that the charitable folks of Bideford—(Heaven reward them for their tender mercies!)—have been telling you in the last hour be true, sir,—true! and yet not half the truth?"

Amyas gave a start.

"Ah, you shrink from me! Of course a man is too righteous to forgive those who repent, though God is not."

"God knows, sir—"

"Yes, sir, God does know—all; and you shall know a little—as much as I can tell—or you understand. Come upstairs with me, sir, as you'll drink no more; I have a liking for you. I have watched you from your boyhood, and I can trust you, and I'll show you what I never showed to mortal man but one."



And, taking up a candle, he led the way upstairs, while Amyas followed wondering.

He stopped at a door, and unlocked it.

"There, come in. Those shutters have not been opened since she—" and the old man was silent.

Amyas looked round the room. It was a low wainscoted room, such as one sees in old houses; everything was in the most perfect neatness. The snow-white sheets on the bed were turned down as if ready for an occupant. There were books arranged on the shelves, fresh flowers on the table; the dressing-table had all its woman's mundus of pins, and rings, and brushes; even the dressing-gown lay over the chair-back. Everything was evidently just as it had been left.

"This was her room, sir," whispered the old man.

Amyas nodded silently, and half drew back.

"You need not be modest about entering it now, sir," whispered he, with a sort of sneer. "There has been no frail flesh and blood in it for many a day."

Amyas sighed.

"I sweep it out myself every morning, and keep all tidy. See here!" and he pulled open a drawer. "Here are all her gowns, and there are her hoods; and there—I know 'em all by heart now, and the place of every one. And there, sir—"

And he opened a cupboard, where lay in rows all Rose's dolls, and the worn-out playthings of her childhood.

"That's the pleasantest place of all in the room to me," said he, whispering still: "for it minds me of when—and maybe, she may become a little child once more, sir; it's written in the Scripture, you know—"

"Amen!" said Amyas, who felt, to his own wonder, a big tear stealing down each cheek.

"And now," he whispered, "one thing more. Look here!"—and pulling out a key, he unlocked a chest, and lifted up tray after tray of necklaces and jewels, furs, lawns, cloth of gold. "Look there! Two thousand pounds won't buy that chest. Twenty years have I been getting those things together. That's the cream of many a Levant voyage, and East Indian voyage, and West Indian voyage. My Lady Bath can't match those pearls in her grand house at Tawstock; I got 'em from a Genoese, though, and paid for 'em. Look at that embroidered lawn! There's not such a piece in London; no, nor in Alexandria, I'll warrant;

nor short of Calicut, where it came from. . . . Look here again, there's a golden cup! I bought that of one that was out with Pizarro in Peru. And look here, again!"—and the old man gloated over the treasure.

"And whom do you think I kept all these for? These were for her wedding-day—for her wedding-day. For your wedding-day, if you'd been minded, sir! Yes, yours sir! And yet, I believe, I was so ambitious that I would not have let her marry under an earl, all the while I was pretending to be too proud to throw her at the head of a squire's son. Ah well! There was my idol, sir. I made her mad, I pampered her up with gew-gaws and vanity; and then, because my idol was just what I had made her, I turned again and rent her.

"And now," said he, pointing to the open chest, "that was what I meant; and that" (pointing to the empty bed) "was what God meant. Never mind. Come downstairs and finish your wine. I see you don't care about it all. Why should you! you are not her father, and you may thank God you are not. Go, and be merry while you can, young sir! . . . And yet, all this might have been yours. And—but I don't suppose you are one to be won by money—but all this may be yours still and twenty thousand pounds to boot."

"I want no money, sir, but what I can earn with my own sword."

"Earn my money, then!"

"What on earth do you want of me!"

"To keep your oath," said Salterne, clutching his arm, and looking up into his face with searching eyes.

"My oath! How did you know that I had one?"

"Ah! you were well ashamed of it, I suppose, next day! A drunken frolic all about a poor merchant's daughter! But there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed, nor done in the closet that is not proclaimed on the house-tops."

"Ashamed of it, sir, I never was: but I have a right to ask how you came to know it?"

"What if a poor fat squinny rogue, a low-born fellow even as I am, whom you had baffled and made a laughing-stock, had come to me in my loneliness and sworn before God that if you honorable gentlemen would not keep your words, he, the clown, would?"

"John Brimblecombe?"

"And what if I had brought him where I have brought