



CHAPTER V

'CLOVELLY COURT IN THE OLDEN TIME

'It was among the ways of good Queen Bess,
Who ruled as well as ever mortal can, sir,
When she was stogg'd, and the country in a mess,
She was wont to send for a Devon man, sir.'

West Country Song.

THE next morning Amyas Leigh was not to be found. Not that he had gone out to drown himself in despair, or even to bemoan himself 'down by the Torridge side.' He had simply ridden off, Frank found, to Sir Richard Grenville at Stow: his mother at once divined the truth, that he was gone to try for a post in the Irish army, and sent off Frank after him to bring him home again, and make him at least reconsider himself.

So Frank took horse and rode thereon ten miles or more: and then, as there were no inns on the road in those days, or indeed in these, and he had some ten miles more of hilly road before him, he turned down the hill towards Clovelly Court, to obtain, after the hospitable humane fashion of those days, good entertainment for man and horse from Mr. Cary the squire.

And when he walked self-invited, like the loud-shouting Menelaus, into the long dark wainscoted hall of the Court,

the first object he beheld was the mighty form of Amyas, who, seated at the long table, was alternately burying his face in a pasty, and the pasty in his face, his sorrows having, as it seemed, only sharpened his appetite, while young Will Cary, kneeling on the opposite bench, with his elbows on the table, was in that graceful attitude laying down the law fiercely to him in a low voice.

'Hillo! lad,' cried Amyas; 'come hither and deliver me out of the hands of this fire-eater, who I verily believe will kill me, if I do not let him kill some one else.'

'Ah! Mr. Frank,' said Will Cary, who, like all other young gentlemen of these parts, held Frank in high honour, and considered him a very oracle and cynosure of fashion and chivalry, 'welcome here: I was just longing for you, too; I wanted your advice on half a dozen matters. Sit down, and eat. There is the ale.'

'None so early, thank you.'

'Ah no!' said Amyas, burying his head in the tankard, and then mimicking Frank, 'avoid strong ale o' mornings. It heats the blood, thickens the animal spirits, and obfuscates the cerebrum with frenetical and lymphatic idols, which cloud the quintessential light of the pure reason. Eh? young Plato, young Daniel, come hither to judgment! And yet, though I cannot see through the bottom of the tankard already, I can see plain enough still to see this, that Will shall not fight.'

'Shall I not, eh? who says that? Mr. Frank, I appeal to you, now; only hear.'

'We are in the judgment-seat,' said Frank, settling to the pasty. 'Proceed, appellation.'

'Well, I was telling Amyas, that Tom Coffin, of Portledge; I will stand him no longer.'

'Let him be, then,' said Amyas; 'he could stand very well by himself, when I saw him last.'

'Plague on you, hold your tongue. Has he any right to look at me as he does, whenever I pass him?'

'That depends on how he looks; a cat may look at a king, provided she don't take him for a mouse.'

‘Oh, I know how he looks, and what he means too, and he shall stop, or I will stop him.’ And the other day, when I spoke of Rose Salterne’—‘Ah!’ groaned Frank, ‘Atè’s apple again!’—‘(never mind what I said) he burst out laughing in my face; and is not that a fair quarrel? And what is more, I know that he wrote a sonnet, and sent it to her to Stow by a market woman. What right has he to write sonnets when I can’t? It’s not fair play, Mr. Frank, or I am a Jew, and a Spaniard, and a Papist; it’s not!’ And Will smote the table till the plates danced again.

‘My dear knight of the burning pestle, I have a plan, a device, a disentanglement, according to most approved rules of chivalry. Let us fix a day, and summon by tuck of drum all young gentlemen under the age of thirty, dwelling within fifteen miles of the habitation of that peerless Oriana.’

‘And all ’prentice-boys too,’ cried Amyas out of the pasty.

‘And all ’prentice-boys. The bold lads shall fight first, with good quarter-staves, in Bideford Market, till all heads are broken; and the head which is not broken, let the back belonging to it pay the penalty of the noble member’s cowardice. After which grand tournament, to which that of Tottenham shall be but a flea-bite and a batrachomyomachy—’

‘Confound you, and your long words, sir,’ said poor Will, ‘I know you are flouting me.’

‘Pazienza, Signor Cavaliere; that which is to come is no flouting, but bloody and warlike earnest. For afterwards all the young gentlemen shall adjourn into a convenient field, sand, or bog—which last wil’ be better, as no man will be able to run away, if he be up to his knees in soft peat: and there stripping to our shirts, with rapiers of equal length and keenest temper, each shall slay his man, catch who catch can, and the conquerors fight again, like a most valiant main of gamecocks as we are, till all be dead, and out of their woes; after which the survivor, bewailing before heaven and earth the cruelty of our Fair Oriana, and the slaughter which her basiliscine eyes have caused, shall fall

gracefully upon his sword, and so end the woes of this our lovelorn generation. *Placeine Domini?* as they used to ask in the Senate at Oxford.'

'Really,' said Cary, 'this is too bad.'

'So is, pardon me, your fighting Mr. Coffin with anything longer than a bodkin.'

'Bodkins are too short for such fierce Bobadils,' said Amyas; 'they would close in so near, that we should have them falling to fisticuffs after the first bout.'

'Then let them fight with squirts across the market-place; for by heaven and the Queen's laws, they shall fight with nothing else.'

'My dear Mr. Cary,' went on Frank, suddenly changing his bantering tone to one of the most winning sweetness; 'do not fancy that I cannot feel for you; or that I, as well as you, have not known the stings of love and the bitterer stings of jealousy. But oh, Mr. Cary, does it not seem to you an awful thing to waste selfishly upon your own quarrel that divine wrath which, as Plato says, is the very root of all virtues, and which has been given you, like all else which you have, that you may spend it in the service of her whom all bad souls fear, and all virtuous souls adore,—our peerless Queen? Who dares, while she rules England, call his sword or his courage his own, or any one's but hers? Are there no Spaniards to conquer, no wild Irish to deliver from their oppressors, that two gentlemen of Devon can find no better place to flesh their blades than in each other's valiant and honourable hearts?'

'By heaven!' cried Amyas, 'Frank speaks like a book; and for me, I do think that Christian gentlemen may leave love quarrels to bulls and rams.'

'And that the heir of Clovelly,' said Frank, smiling, 'may find more noble examples to copy than the stags in his own deer-park.'

'Well,' said Will penitently, 'you are a great scholar, Mr. Frank, and you speak like one; but gentlemen must fight sometimes, or where would be their honour.'

'I speak,' said Frank, a little proudly, 'not merely as a

scholar, but as a gentleman, and one who has fought ere now, and to whom it has happened, Mr. Cary, to kill his man (on whose soul may God have mercy); but it is my pride to remember that I have never yet fought in my own quarrel, and my trust in God that I never shall. For as there is nothing more noble and blessed than to fight in behalf of those whom we love, so to fight in our own private behalf is a thing not to be allowed to a Christian man, unless refusal imports utter loss of life or honour; and even then, it may be (though I would not lay a burden on any man's conscience), it is better not to resist evil, but to overcome it with good.'

'And I can tell you, Will,' said Amyas, 'I am not troubled with fear of ghosts; but when I cut off the Frenchman's head I said to myself, "If that braggart had been slandering me instead of her gracious Majesty, I should expect to see that head lying on my pillow every time I went to bed at night."'

'God forbid!' said Will, with a shudder. 'But what shall I do? for to the market to-morrow I will go, if it were choke-full of Coffins, and a ghost in each coffin of the lot.'

'Leave the matter to me,' said Amyas. 'I have my device, as well as scholar Frank here; and if there be, as I suppose there must be, a quarrel in the market to-morrow, see if I do not——'

'Well, you are two good fellows,' said Will. 'Let us have another tankard in.'

'And drink the health of Mr. Coffin, and all gallant lads of the North,' said Frank; 'and now to my business. I have to take this runaway youth here home to his mother; and if he will not go quietly, I have orders to carry him across my saddle.'

'I hope your nag has a strong back, then,' said Amyas; 'but I must go on and see Sir Richard, Frank. It is all very well to jest as we have been doing, but my mind is made up.'

'Stop,' said Cary. 'You must stay here to-night; first, for good fellowship's sake; and next, because I want the

advice of our Phœnix here, our oracle, our paragon. There, Mr. Frank, can you consirue that for me? Speak low, though, gentlemen both; there comes my father; you had better give me the letter again. Well, father, whence this morning?’

‘Eh, company here? Young men, you are always welcome, and such as you. Would there were more of your sort in these dirty times. How is your good mother, Frank, eh? Where have I been, Will? Round the house-farm, to look at the beeves. That sheeted heifer of Prowse’s is all wrong; her coat stares like a hedge-pig’s. Tell Jewell to go up and bring her in before night. And then up the forty acres; sprang two coveys, and picked a leash out of them. The Irish hawk flies as wild as any haggard still, and will never make a bird. I had to hand her to Tom, and take the little peregrine. Give me a Clovelly hawk against the world, after all; and—heigh ho, I am very hungry! Half-past twelve, and dinner not served? What, Master Amyas, spoiling your appetite with strong ale? Better have tried sack, lad; have some now with me.’

And the worthy old gentleman, having finished his oration, settled himself on a great bench inside the chimney, and put his hawk on a perch over his head, while his cockers coiled themselves up close to the warm peat-ashes, and his son set to work to pull off his father’s boots, amid sundry warnings to take care of his corns.

‘Come, Master Amyas, a pint of white wine and sugar, and a bit of a shoeing-horn to it ere we dine. Some pickled prawns, now, or a rasher off the coals, to what you?’

‘Thank you,’ quoth Amyas; ‘but I have drunk a mort of outlandish liquors, better and worse, in the last three years, and yet never found aught to come up to good ale, which needs neither shoeing-horn before nor after, but takes care of itself, and of all honest stomachs too, I think.’

‘You speak like a book, boy,’ said old Cary; ‘and after all, what a plague comes of these new-fangled hot wines, and aqua vitæ, which have come in since the wars, but maddening of the brains, and fever of the blood?’

'I fear we have not seen the end of that yet,' said Frank. 'My friends write me from the Netherlands that our men are falling into a swinish trick of swilling like the Hollanders. Heaven grant that they may not bring home the fashion with them.'

'A man must drink, they say, or die of the ague, in those vile swamps,' said Amyas. 'When they get home here, they will not need it.'

'Heaven grant it,' said Frank; 'I should be sorry to see Devonshire a drunken county; and there are many of our men out there with Mr. Champernoun.'

'Ah,' said Cary, 'there, as in Ireland, we are proving her Majesty's saying true, that Devonshire is her right hand, and the young children thereof like the arrows in the hand of the giant.'

'They may well be,' said his son, 'when some of them are giants themselves, like my tall schoolfellow opposite.'

'He will be up and doing again presently, I'll warrant him,' said old Cary.

'And that I shall,' quoth Amyas. 'I have been devising brave deeds; and see in the distance enchanters to be bound, dragons choked, empires conquered, though not in Holland.'

'You do!' asked Will, a little sharply; for he had had a half suspicion that more was meant than met the ear.

'Yes,' said Amyas, turning off his jest again, 'I go to what Raleigh calls the Land of the Nymphs. Another month, I hope, will see me abroad in Ireland.'

'Abroad? Call it rather at home,' said old Cary; 'for it is full of Devon men from end to end, and you will be among friends all day long. George Bouchier from Tawstock has the army now in Munster, and Warham St. Leger is Marshal; George Carew is with Lord Grey of Wilton (poor Peter Carew was killed at Glendalough); and after the defeat last year, when that villain Desmond cut off Herbert and Price, the companies were made up with six hundred Devon men, and Arthur Fortescue at their head; so that the old county holds her head as proudly in the Land

of Ire as she does in the Low Countries and the Spanish Main.

'And where,' asked Amyas, 'is Davils of Marsland, who used to teach me how to catch trout, when I was staying down at Stow? He is in Ireland, too, is he not?'

'Ah, my lad,' said Mr. Cary, 'that is a sad story. I thought all England had known it.'

'You forget, sir, I am a stranger. Surely he is not dead?'

'Murdered foully, lad! Murdered like a dog, and by the man whom he had treated as his son, and who pretended, the false knave! to call him father.'

His blood is avenged?' said Amyas fiercely.

'No, by heaven, not yet! Stay, don't cry out again. I am getting old—I must tell my story my own way. It was last July,—was it not, Will?—Over comes to Ireland Saunders, one of those Jesuit foxes, as the Pope's legate, with money and bulls, and a banner hallowed by the Pope, and the devil knows what beside; and with him James Fitzmaurice, the same fellow who had sworn on his knees to Perrott, in the church at Kilmallock, to be a true liegeman to Queen Elizabeth, and confirmed it by all his saints, and such a world of his Irish howling, that Perrott told me he was fain to stop his own ears. Well, he had been practising with the King of France, but got nothing but laughter for his pains, and so went over to the Most Catholic King, and promises him to join Ireland to Spain, and set up Popery again, and what not. And he, I suppose, thinking it better that Ireland should belong to him than to the Pope's bastard, fits him out, and sends him off on such another errand as Stukely's,—though I will say, for the honour of Devon, if Stukely lived like a fool, he died like an honest man.'

'Sir Thomas Stukely dead too?' said Amyas.

'Wait a while, lad, and you shall have that tragedy afterwards. Well, where was I? Oh, Fitzmaurice and the Jesuits land at Smerwick, with three ships, choose a place for a fort, bless it with their holy water, and their

moppings and their scourings, and the rest of it, to purify it from the stain of heretic dominion; but in the meanwhile one of the Courtenays,—a Courtenay of Haccombe, was it?—or a Courtenay of Boconnock? Silence, Will, I shall have it in a minute—yes, a Courtenay of Haccombe it was, lying at anchor near by, in a ship of war of his, cuts out the three ships, and cuts off the Dons from the sea. John and James Desmond, with some small rabble, go over to the Spaniards. Earl Desmond will not join them, but will not fight them, and stands by to take the winning side; and then in comes poor Davils, sent down by the Lord Deputy to charge Desmond and his brothers, in the Queen's name, to assault the Spaniards. Folks say it was rash of his lordship: but I say, what could be better done? Every one knows that there never was a stouter or shrewder soldier than Davils; and the young Desmonds, I have heard him say many a time, used to look on him as their father. But he found out what it was to trust Englishmen turned Irish. Well, the Desmonds found out on a sudden that the Dons were such desperate Paladins that it was madness to meddle, though they were five to one; and poor Davils, seeing that there was no fight in them, goes back for help, and sleeps that night at some place called Tralec. Arthur Carter of Bideford, St. Leger's lieutenant, as stout an old soldier as Davils himself, sleeps in the same bed with him; the lacquey-boy, who is now with Sir Richard at Stow, on the floor at their feet. But in the dead of night, who should come in but James Desmond, sword in hand, with a dozen of his ruffians at his heels, each with his glib over his ugly face, and his skene in his hand. Davils springs up in bed, and asks but this, "What is the matter, my son?" whereon the treacherous villain, without giving him time to say a prayer, strikes at him, naked as he was, crying, "Thou shalt be my father no longer, nor I thy son! Thou shalt die!" and at that all the rest fall on him. The poor little lad (so he says) leaps up to cover his master with his naked body, gets three or four stabs of skenes, and so falls for dead; with his master and Captain Carter, who were dead indeed—God

reward them ! After that the ruffians ransacked the house, till they had murdered every Englishman in it, the lacquey-boy only excepted, who crawled out, wounded as he was, through a window ; while Desmond, if you will believe it, went back, up to his elbows in blood, and vaunted his deeds to the Spaniards, and asked them—“There ! Will you take that as a pledge that I am faithful to you ?” And that, my lad, was the end of Henry Davils, and will be of all who trust to the faith of wild savages.’

‘I would go a hundred miles to see that Desmond hanged !’ said Amyas, while great tears ran down his face. ‘Poor Mr. Davils ! And now, what is the story of Sir Thomas ?’

‘Your brother must tell you that, lad ; I am somewhat out of breath.’

‘And I have a right to tell it,’ said Frank, with a smile. ‘Do you know that I was very near being Earl of the bog of Allen, and one of the peers of the realm to King Buoncompagna, son and heir to his Holiness Pope Gregory the Thirteenth ?’

‘No, surely !’

‘As I am a gentleman. When I was at Rome I saw poor Stukely often ; and this and more he offered me on the part (as he said) of the Pope, if I would just oblige him in the two little matters of being reconciled to the Catholic Church, and joining the invasion of Ireland.’

‘Poor deluded heretic,’ said Will Cary, ‘to have lost an earldom for your family by such silly scruples of loyalty !’

‘It is not a matter for jesting, after all,’ said Frank ; ‘but I saw Sir Thomas often, and I cannot believe he was in his senses, so frantic was his vanity and his ambition ; and all the while, in private matters as honourable a gentleman as ever. However, he sailed at last for Ireland, with his eight hundred Spaniards and Italians ; and what is more, I know that the King of Spain paid their charges. Marquis Vinola—James Buoncompagna, that is—stayed quietly at Rome, preferring that Stukely should conquer his paternal heritage of Ireland for him while he took care of the *bona*

robas at home. I went down to Civita Vecchia to see him off; and though his younger by many years, I could not but take the liberty of entreating him, as a gentleman and a man of Devon, to consider his faith to his queen and the honour of his country. There were high words between us; God forgive me if I spoke too fiercely, for I never saw him again.'

'Too fiercely to an open traitor, Frank? Why not have run him through?'

'Nay, I had no clean life for Sundays, Amyas; so I could not throw away my week-day one; and as for the weal of England, I knew that it was little he would damage it, and told him so. And at that he waxed utterly mad, for it touched his pride, and swore that if the wind had not been fair for sailing, he would have fought me there and then; to which I could only answer, that I was ready to meet him when he would; and he parted from me, saying, "It is a pity, sir, I cannot fight you now; when next we meet, it will be beneath my dignity to measure swords with you."'

'I suppose he expected to come back a prince at least—Heaven knows; I owe him no ill-will, nor I hope does any man. He has paid all debts now in full, and got his receipt for them.'

'How did he die, then, after all?'

'On his voyage he touched in Portugal. King Sebastian was just sailing for Africa with his new ally, Mohammed the Prince of Fez, to help King Abdallah, and conquer what he could. He persuaded Stukely to go with him. There were those who thought that he, as well as the Spaniards, had no stomach for seeing the Pope's son King of Ireland. Others used to say that he thought an island too small for his ambition, and must needs conquer a continent—I know not why it was, but he went. They had heavy weather in the passage; and when they landed, many of their soldiers were sea-sick. Stukely, reasonably enough, counselled that they should wait two or three days and recruit; but Don Sebastian was so mad for the assault, that he must needs

have his *veni, vidi, vici*; and so ended with a *veni, vidi, perii*; for he, Abdallah, and his son Mohammed, all perished in the first battle at Alcasar; and Stukely, surrounded and overpowered, fought till he could fight no more, and then died like a hero with all his wounds in front; and may God have mercy on his soul!

'Ah!' said Amyas, 'we heard of that battle off Lima, but nothing about poor Stukely.'

'That last was a Popish prayer, Master Frank,' said old Mr. Cary.

'Most worshipful sir, you surely would not wish God not to have mercy on his soul?'

'No—ch? Of course not: but that's all settled by now, for he is dead, poor fellow.'

'Certainly, my dear sir. And you cannot help being a little fond of him still.'

'Eh? why, I should be a brute if I were not. He and I were schoolfellows, though he was somewhat the younger; and many a good thrashing have I given him, and one cannot help having a tenderness for a man after that. Beside, we used to hunt together in Exmoor, and have royal nights afterward into Ilfracombe, when we were a couple of mad young blades. Fond of him? Why, I would have sooner given my forefinger than that he should have gone to the dogs thus.'

'Then, my dear sir, if you feel for him still, in spite of all his faults, how do you know that God may not feel for him still, in spite of all his faults? For my part,' quoth Frank in his fanciful way, 'without believing in that Popish Purgatory, I cannot help holding with Plato, that such heroic souls, who have wanted but little of true greatness, are hereafter by some strait discipline brought to a better mind; perhaps, as many ancients have held with the Indian Gymnosophists, by transmigration into the bodies of those animals whom they have resembled in their passions; and indeed, if Sir Thomas Stukely's soul should now animate the body of a lion, all I can say is that he would be a very valiant and royal lion; and also doubtless become in due

time heartily ashamed and penitent for having been nothing better than a lion.'

'What now, Master Frank? I don't trouble my head with such matters—I say Stukely was a right good-hearted fellow at bottom; and if you plague my head with any of your dialectics, and propositions, and college quips and quiddities, you shan't have any more sack, sir. But here come the knaves, and I hear the cook knock to dinner.'

After a madrigal or two, and an Italian song of Master Frank's, all which went sweetly enough, the ladies rose, and went. Whereon Will Cary, drawing his chair close to Frank's, put quietly into his hand a dirty letter.

'This was the letter left for me,' whispered he, 'by a country fellow this morning. Look at it and tell me what I am to do.'

Whereon Frank opened, and read—

'Mister Cary, be you wary
By deer-park end to-night.
Yf Irish ffoxe com out of rocks
Grip and hold hym tight.'

'I would have showed it my father,' said Will, 'but——'

'I verily believe it to be a blind. See now, this is the handwriting of a man who has been trying to write vilely, and yet cannot. Look at that B, and that G; their *formæ formative* never were begotten in a hedge-school. And what is more, this is no Devon man's handiwork. We say "to" and not "by," Will, eh? in the West country?'

'Of course.'

'And "man," instead of "him"?'

'True, O Daniel! But am I to do nothing therefore?'

'On that matter I am no judge. Let us ask much-enduring Ulysses here; perhaps he has not sailed round the world without bringing home a device or two.'

Whereon Amyas was called to counsel, as soon as Mr. Cary could be stopped in a long cross-examination of him as to Mr. Doughty's famous trial and execution.

Amyas pondered awhile, thrusting his hands into his long curls; and then—

‘Will, my lad, have you been watching at the Deer Park End of late?’

‘Never.’

‘Where, then?’

‘At the town-beach.’

‘Where else?’

‘At the town-head.’

‘Where else?’

‘Why, the fellow is turned lawyer! Above Freshwater.’

‘Where is Freshwater?’

‘Why, where the waterfall comes over the cliff, half a mile from the town. There is a path there up into the forest.’

‘I know. I’ll watch there to-night. Do you keep all your old haunts safe, of course, and send a couple of stout knaves to the mill, to watch the beach at the Deer Park End, on the chance; for your poet may be a true man, after all. But my heart’s faith is, that this comes just to draw you off from some old beat of yours, upon a wild goose chase. If they shoot the miller by mistake, I suppose it don’t much matter?’

‘Marry, no.

When a miller’s knock’d on the head,
The less of flour makes the more of bread.’

‘Or, again,’ chimed in old Mr. Cary, ‘as they say in the North—

Find a miller that w’ll not steal,
Or a webster that is leal,
Or a priest that is not greedy,
And lay them three a dead corpse by;
And by the virtue of them three,
The said dead corpse shall quicken’d be.

‘But why are you so ready to watch Freshwater to-night, Master Amyas?’

‘Because, sir, those who come, if they come, will never land at Mouthmill; if they are strangers, they dare not; and if they are bay’s-men, they are too wise, as long as the westerly swell sets in. As for landing at the town, that would be too great a risk; but Freshwater is as lonely as the Bermudas; and they can beach a boat up under the cliff at all tides, and in all weathers, except north and nor’-west. I have done it many a time, when I was a boy.’

‘And give us the fruit of your experience now in your old age, eh? Well, you have a grey head on green shoulders, my lad; and I verily believe you are right. Who will you take with you to watch?’

‘Sir,’ said Frank, ‘I will go with my brother; and that will be enough.’

‘Enough? He is big enough, and you brave enough, for ten; but still, the more the merrier.’

‘But the fewer, the better fare. If I might ask a first and last favour, worshipful sir,’ said Frank very earnestly, ‘you would grant me two things: that you would let none go to Freshwater but me and my brother; and that whatsoever we shall bring you back shall be kept as secret as the commonweal and your loyalty shall permit. I trust that we are not so unknown to you, or to others, that you can doubt for a moment but that whatsoever we may do will satisfy at once your honour and our own.’

‘My dear young gentleman, there is no need of so many courtier’s words. I am your father’s friend, and yours. And God forbid that a Cary—for I guess your drift—should ever wish to make a head or a heart ache; that is, more than——’

‘Those of whom it is written, “Though thou bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his folly depart from him,”’ interposed Frank, in so sad a tone that no one at the table replied; and few more words were exchanged, till the two brothers were safe outside the house; and then—

‘Amyas,’ said Frank, ‘that was a Devon man’s handiwork, nevertheless; it was Eustace’s handwriting.’

‘Impossible!’

‘No, lad. I have been secretary to a prince, and learnt to interpret cipher, and to watch every pen-stroke; and, young as I am, I think that I am not easily deceived. Would God I were! Come on, lad; and strike no man hastily, lest thou cut off thine own flesh.’

So forth the two went, along the park to the eastward, and past the head of the little wood-embosomed fishing-town, a steep stair of houses clinging to the cliff far below them, the bright slate roofs and white walls glittering in the moonlight; and on some half-mile farther, along the steep hillside, fenced with oak-wood down to the water’s edge, by a narrow forest path, to a point where two glens meet and pour their streamlets over a cascade some hundred feet in height into the sea below. By the side of this waterfall a narrow path climbs upward from the beach; and here it was that the two brothers expected to meet the messenger.

Frank insisted on taking his station below Amyas. He said that he was certain that Eustace himself would make his appearance, and that he was more fit than Amyas to bring him to reason by parley; that if Amyas would keep watch some twenty yards above, the escape of the messenger would be impossible. Moreover, he was the elder brother, and the post of honour was his right. So Amyas obeyed him, after making him promise that if more than one man came up the path, he would let them pass him before he challenged, so that both might bring them to bay at the same time.

So Amyas took his station under a high marl bank, and, bedded in luxuriant crown-ferns, kept his eye steadily on Frank, who sat down on a little knoll of rock (where is now a garden on the cliff-edge) which parts the path and the dark chasm down which the stream rushes to its final leap over the cliff.

There Amyas sat a full half-hour, and glanced at whiles from Frank to look upon the scene around. Outside the south-west wind blew fresh and strong, and the moonlight danced upon a thousand crests of foam; but within the black jagged point which sheltered the town, the sea did

but heave, in long oily swells of rolling silver, onward into the black shadow of the hills, within which the town and pier lay invisible, save where a twinkling light gave token of some lonely fisher's wife, watching the weary night through for the boat which would return with dawn. Here and there upon the sea, a black speck marked a herring-boat, drifting with its line of nets; and right off the mouth of the glen, Amyas saw, with a beating heart, a large two-masted vessel lying-to—that must be the *Portugal!* Eagerly he looked up the glen, and listened; but he heard nothing but the sweeping of the wind across the downs five hundred feet above, and the sough of the waterfall upon the rocks below; he saw nothing but the vast black sheets of oak-wood sloping up to the narrow blue sky above, and the broad bright hunter's moon, and the woodcocks, which, chuckling to each other, hawked to and fro, like swallows, between the tree-tops and the sky.

At last he heard a rustle of the fallen leaves; he shrank closer and closer into the darkness of the bank. Then swift light steps—not down the path, from above, but upward, from below; his heart beat quick and loud. And in another half-minute a man came in sight, within three yards of Frank's hiding-place.

Frank sprang out instantly. Amyas saw his bright blade glance in the clear October moonlight.

'Stand, in the Queen's name!'

The man drew a pistol from under his cloak, and fired full in his face. Had it happened in these days of detonators, Frank's chance had been small; but to get a ponderous wheel-lock under weigh was a longer business, and before the fizzing of the flint had ceased, Frank had struck up the pistol with his rapier, and it exploded harmlessly over his head. The man instantly dashed the weapon in his face and closed.

The blow, luckily, did not take effect on that delicate forehead, but struck him on the shoulder: nevertheless, Frank, who with all his grace and agility was as fragile as a lily, and a very bubble of the earth, staggered, and lost his guard, and before

he could recover himself, Amyas saw a dagger gleam, and one, two, three blows fiercely repeated.

Mad with fury, he was with them in an instant. They were scuffling together so closely in the shade that he was afraid to use his sword point; but with the hilt he dealt a single blow full on the ruffian's cheek. It was enough; with a hideous shriek, the fellow rolled over at his feet, and Amyas set his foot on him, in act to run him through.

'Stop! stay!' almost screamed Frank; 'it is Eustace! our cousin Eustace!' and he leant against a tree.

Amyas sprang towards him; but Frank waved him off.

'It is nothing—a scratch. He has papers: I am sure of it. Take them; and for God's sake let him go!'

'Villain! give me your papers!' cried Amyas, setting his foot once more on the writhing Eustace, whose jaw was broken across.

'You struck me foully from behind,' moaned he, his vanity and envy even then coming out, in that faint and foolish attempt to prove Amyas not so very much better a man.

'Hound, do you think that I dare not strike you in front? Give me your papers, letters, whatever Popish devilry you carry; or as I live, I will cut off your head, and take them myself, even if it cost me the shame of stripping your corpse. Give them up! Traitor, murderer! give them, I say!' And setting his foot on him afresh, he raised his sword.

Eustace was usually no craven: but he was cowed. Between agony and shame, he had no heart to resist. Martyrdom, which looked so splendid when consummated *selon les règles* on Tower Hill or Tyburn, before pitying, or (still better) scoffing multitudes, looked a confused, dirty, ugly business there in the dark forest; and as he lay, a stream of moonlight bathed his mighty cousin's broad clear forehead, and his long golden locks, and his white terrible blade, till he seemed, to Eustace's superstitious eye, like one of those fair young St. Michaels trampling on the fiend, which he had seen abroad in old German pictures. He

shuddered; pulled a packet from his bosom, and threw it from him, murmuring, 'I have not given it.'

'Swear to me that these are all the papers which you have in cipher or out of cipher. Swear on your soul, or you die!'

Eustace swore

'Tell me, who are your accomplices?'

'Never!' said Eustace. 'Cruel! have you not degraded me enough already?' and the wretched young man burst into tears, and hid his bleeding face in his hands.

One hint of honour made Amyas as gentle as a lamb. He lifted Eustace up, and bade him run for his life.

'I am to owe my life, then, to you?'

'Not in the least; only to your being a Leigh. Go, or it will be worse for you!' And Eustace went; while Amyas, catching up the precious packet, hurried to Frank. He had fainted already, and his brother had to carry him as far as the park before he could find any of the other watchers. The blind, as far as they were concerned, was complete. They had heard and seen nothing. Whosoever had brought the packet had landed they knew not where; and so all returned to the Court, carrying Frank, who recovered gradually, having rather bruises than wounds; for his foe had struck wildly, and with a trembling hand.

Half an hour after, Amyas, Mr. Cary, and his son Will were in deep consultation over the following epistle, the only paper in the packet which was not in cipher:—

✠ DEAR BROTHER N. *S. in Ch^o. et Ecclesia.*

'This is to inform you and the friends of the cause, that S. Josephus has landed in Smerwick, with eight hundred valiant Crusaders, burning with holy zeal to imitate last year's martyrs of Carrigfolium, and to expiate their offences (which I fear may have been many) by the propagation of our most holy faith. I have purified the fort (which they are strenuously rebuilding) with prayer and holy water, from the stain of he-tical footsteps, and consecrated it afresh to the service of Heaven, as the first-fruits of the isle of saints; and having displayed the consecrated banner to the adoration

of the faithful, have returned to Earl Desmond, that I may establish his faith, weak as yet, by reason of the allurements of this world: though since, by the valour of his brother James, he that hindered was taken out of the way (I mean Davils the heretic, sacrifice well-pleasing in the eyes of Heaven!), the young man has lent a more obedient ear to my counsels. If you can do anything, do it quickly, for a great door and effectual is opened, and there are many adversaries. But be swift, for so do the poor lambs of the Church tremble at the fury of the heretics, that a hundred will flee before one Englishman. And indeed, were it not for that divine charity toward the Church (which covers the multitude of sins) with which they are resplendent, neither they nor their country would be, by the carnal judgment, counted worthy of so great labour in their behalf. For they themselves are given much to lying, theft, and drunkenness, vain babbling, and profane dancing and singing; and are still, as S. Gildas reports of them, "more careful to shroud their villainous faces in bushy hair, than decently to cover their bodies"; while their land (by reason of the tyranny of their chieftains, and the continual wars and plunderings among their tribes, which leave them weak and divided, an easy prey to the myrmidons of the excommunicate and usurping Englishwoman) lies utterly waste with fire, and defaced with corpses of the starved and slain. But what are these things, while the holy virtue of Catholic obedience still flourishes in their hearts? The Church cares not for the conservation of body and goods, but of immortal souls.

'If any devout lady shall so will, you may obtain from her liberality a shirt for this worthless tabernacle, and also a pair of hose; for I am unsavoury to myself and to others, and of such luxuries none here has superfluity; for all live in holy poverty, except the fleas, who have that consolation in this world for which this unhappy nation, and those who labour among them, must wait till the world to come.¹

'Your loving brother,

'N. S.'

¹ See note at end of chapter.

'Sir Richard must know of this before daybreak,' cried old Cary. 'Eight hundred men landed! We must call out the Posse Comitatus, and sail with them bodily. I will go myself, old as I am. Spaniards in Ireland? not a dog of them must go home again.'

'Not a dog of them,' answered Will; 'but where is Mr. Winter and his squadron?'

'Safe in Milford Haven; a messenger must be sent to him too.'

'I'll go,' said Amyas: 'but Mr. Cary is right. Sir Richard must know all first.'

'And we must have those Jesuits.'

'What? Mr. Evans and Mr. Morgans? God help us—they are at my uncle's! Consider the honour of our family!'

'Judge for yourself, my dear boy,' said old Mr. Cary gently: 'would it not be rank treason to let these foxes escape, while we have this damning proof against them?'

'I will go myself, then.'

'Why not? You may keep all straight, and Will shall go with you. Call a groom, Will, and get your horse saddled, and my Yorkshire grey; he will make better play with this big fellow on his back, than the little pony astride of which Mr. Leigh came walking in (as I hear) this morning. As for Frank, the ladies will see to him well enough, and glad enough, too, to have so fine a bird in their cage for a week or two.'

'And my mother?'

'We'll send to her to-morrow by daybreak. Come, a stirrup cup to start with, hot and hot. Now, boots, cloaks, swords, a deep pull and a warm one, and away!'

And the jolly old man hustled them out of the house and into their saddles, under the broad bright winter's moon.

'You must make your pace, lads, or the moon will be down before you are over the moors.' And so away they went.

Neither of them spoke for many a mile. Amyas, because his mind was fixed firmly on the one object of saving the honour of his house; and Will, because he was hesitating

between Ireland and the wars, and Rose Salterne and love-making. At last he spoke suddenly.

‘I’ll go, Amyas.’

‘Whither?’

‘To Ireland with you, old man. I have dragged my anchor at last.’

‘What anchor, my lad of parables?’

‘See, here am I, a tall and gallant ship.’

‘Modest even if not true.’

‘Inclination, like an anchor, holds me tight.’

‘To the mud.’

‘Nay, to a bed of roses—not without their thorns.’

‘Hillo! I have seen oysters grow on fruit-trees before now, but never an anchor in a rose-garden.’

‘Silence, or my allegory will go to noggin-staves.’

‘Against the rocks of my flinty discernment.’

‘Pooh—well. Up comes duty like a jolly breeze, blowing dead from the north-east, and as bitter and cross as a north-easter too, and tugs me away toward Ireland. I hold on by the rose-bed—any ground in a storm—till every strand is parted, and off I go, westward ho! to get my throat cut in a bog-hole with Amyas Leigh.’

‘Earnest, Will?’

‘As I am a sinful man.’

‘Well done, young hawk of the White Cliff!’

‘I had rather have called it Gallantry Bower still, though,’ said Will, punning on the double name of the noble precipice which forms the highest point of the deer park.

‘Well, as long as you are on land, you know it is Gallantry Bower still: but we always call it White Cliff when you see it from the sea-board, as you and I shall do, I hope, to-morrow evening.’

‘What, so soon?’

‘Dare we lose a day?’

‘I suppose not: heigh ho!’

And they rode on again in silence, Amyas in the meanwhile being not a little content (in spite of his late self-renunciation) to find that one of his rivals at least was

going to raise the siege of the Rose garden for a few months, and withdraw his forces to the coast of Kerry.

As they went over Bursdon, Amyas pulled up suddenly.

‘Did you not hear a horse’s step on our left?’

‘On our left—coming up from Welsford moor? Impossible at this time of night. It must have been a stag, or a sownder of wild swine: or may be only an old cow.’

‘It was the ring of iron, friend. Let us stand and watch.’

Bursdon and Welsford were then, as now, a rolling range of dreary moors, unbroken by tor or tree, or anything save few and far between a world-old furze-bank which marked the common rights of some distant cattle farm, and crossed then, not as now, by a decent road, but by a rough confused trackway, the remnant of an old Roman road from Clovelly dikes to Launceston. To the left it trended down towards a lower range of moors, which form the watershed of the heads of Torridge; and thither the two young men peered down over the expanse of bog and furze, which glittered for miles beneath the moon, one sheet of frosted silver, in the heavy autumn dew.

‘If any of Eustace’s party are trying to get home from Freshwater, they might save a couple of miles by coming across Welsford, instead of going by the main track, as we have done.’ So said Amyas, who, though (luckily for him) no ‘genius,’ was cunning as a fox in all matters of tactic and practice, and would have in these days proved his right to be considered an intellectual person by being a thorough man of business.

‘If any of his party are mad, they’ll try it, and be stogged till the day of judgment. There are bogs in the bottom twenty feet deep. Plague on the fellow, whoever he is, he has dodged us! Look there!’

It was too true. The unknown horseman had evidently dismounted below, and led his horse up on the other side of a long furze-dike; till coming to the point where it turned away again from his intended course, he appeared against the sky, in the act of leading his nag over a gap.

‘Ride like the wind!’ and both youths galloped across furze and heather at him; but ere they were within a hundred yards of him, he had leapt again on his horse, and was away far ahead.

‘There is the dor to us, with a vengeance,’ cried Cary, putting in the spurs.

‘It is but a lad; we shall never catch him.’

‘I’ll try, though; and do you lumber after as you can, old heavysides’; and Cary pushed forward.

Amyas lost sight of him for ten minutes, and then came up with him dismounted, and feeling disconsolately at his horse’s knees.

‘Look for my head. It lies somewhere about among the furze there; and oh! I am as full of needles as ever was a pincushion.’

‘Are his knees broken?’

‘I daren’t look. No, I believe not. Come along, and make the best of a bad matter. The fellow is a mile ahead, and to the right, too.’

‘He is going for Moorwinstow, then; but where is my cousin?’

‘Behind us, I dare say. We shall nab him at least.’

‘Cary, promise me that if we do, you will keep out of sight, and let me manage him.’

‘My boy, I only want Evan Morgans and Morgan Evans. He is but the cat’s paw, and we are after the cats themselves.’

And so they went on another dreary six miles, till the land trended downwards, showing dark glens and masses of woodland far below.

‘Now, then, straight to Chapel, and stop the foxes’ earth? Or through the King’s Park to Stow, and get out Sir Richard’s hounds, hue and cry, and Queen’s warrant in proper form?’

‘Let us see Sir Richard first; and whatsoever he decides about my uncle, I will endure as a loyal subject must.’

So they rode through the King’s Park, while Sir Richard’s colts came whinnying and staring round the intruders, and

down through a rich woodland lane five hundred feet into the valley, till they could hear the brawling of the little trout-stream, and beyond, the everlasting thunder of the ocean surf.

Down through warm woods, all fragrant with dying autumn flowers, leaving far above the keen Atlantic breeze, into one of those delicious Western Coombes, and so past the mill, and the little knot of flower-clad cottages. In the window of one of them a light was still burning. The two young men knew well whose window that was; and both hearts beat fast; for Rose Salterne slept, or rather seemed to wake, in that chamber.

'Folks are late in Combe to-night,' said Amyas, as carelessly as he could.

Cary looked earnestly at the window, and then sharply enough at Amyas; but Amyas was busy settling his stirrup; and Cary rode on, unconscious that every fibre in his companion's huge frame was trembling like his own.

'Muggy and close down here,' said Amyas, who, in reality, was quite faint with his own inward struggles.

'We shall be at Stow gate in five minutes,' said Cary, looking back and down longingly as his horse climbed the opposite hill; but a turn of the zigzag road hid the cottage, and the next thought was, how to effect an entrance into Stow at three in the morning without being eaten by the ban-dogs, who were already howling and growling at the sound of the horse-hoofs.

However, they got safely in, after much knocking and calling, through the postern-gate in the high west wall, into a mansion, the description whereof I must defer to the next chapter, seeing that the moon has already sunk into the Atlantic, and there is darkness over land and sea.

Sir Richard, in his long gown, was soon downstairs in the hall; the letter read, and the story told; but ere it was half finished—

'Anthony, call up a groom, and let him bring me a horse round. Gentlemen, if you will excuse me five minutes, I shall be at your service.'

'You will not go alone, Richard?' asked Lady Grenville, putting her beautiful face in its night-coif out of an adjoining door.

'Surely, sweet chuck, we three are enough to take two poor polecats of Jesuits. Go in, and help me to boot and gird.'

In half an hour they were down and up across the valley again, under the few low ashes clipt flat by the sea-breeze which stood round the lonely gate of Chapel.

'Mr. Cary, there is a back path across the downs to Marsland; go and guard that.' Cary rode off; and Sir Richard, as he knocked loudly at the gate—

'Mr. Leigh, you see that I have consulted your honour, and that of your poor uncle, by adventuring thus alone. What will you have me do now, which may not be unfit for me and you?'

'Oh, sir!' said Amyas, with tears in his honest eyes, 'you have shown yourself once more what you always have been—my dear and beloved master on earth, not second even to my admiral Sir Francis Drake.'

'Or the Queen, I hope,' said Grenville, smiling, '*but pocas palabras*. What will you do?'

'My wretched cousin, sir, may not have returned—and if I might watch for him on the main road—unless you want me with you.'

'Richard Grenville can walk alone, lad. But what will you do with your cousin?'

'Send him out of the country, never to return; or if he refuses, run him through on the spot.'

'Go, lad.' And as he spoke, a sleepy voice asked inside the gate, 'Who was there?'

'Sir Richard Grenville. Open, in the Queen's name!'

'Sir Richard? He is in bed, and be hanged to you. No honest folk come at this hour of night.'

'Amyas!' shouted Sir Richard. Amyas rode back.

'Burst that gate for me, while I hold your horse.'

Amyas leaped down, took up a rock from the roadside, such as Homer's heroes used to send at each other's heads,

and in an instant the door was flat on the ground, and the serving-man on his back inside, while Sir Richard, quietly entering over it, like Una into the hut, told the fellow to get up and hold his horse for him (which the clod, who knew well enough that terrible voice, did without further murmurs), and then strode straight to the front door. It was already opened. The household had been up and about all along, or the noise at the entry had aroused them.

Sir Richard knocked, however, at the open door; and, to his astonishment, his knock was answered by Mr. Leigh himself, fully dressed, and candle in hand.

‘Sir Richard Grenvile! What, sir! is this neighbourly, not to say gentle, to break into my house in the dead of night?’

‘I broke your outer door, sir, because I was refused entrance when I asked in the Queen’s name. I knocked at your inner one, as I should have knocked at the poorest cottager’s in the parish, because I found it open. You have two Jesuits here, sir! and here is the Queen’s warrant for apprehending them. I have signed it with my own hand, and, moreover, serve it now, with my own hand, in order to save you scandal—and it may be, worse. I must have these men, Mr. Leigh.’

‘My dear Sir Richard!—’

‘I must have them, or I must search the house; and you would not put either yourself or me to so shameful a necessity?’

‘My dear Sir Richard!—’

‘Must I, then, ask you to stand back from your own doorway, my dear sir?’ said Grenvile. And then changing his voice to that fearful lion’s roar, for which he was famous, and which it seemed impossible that lips so delicate could utter, he thundered, ‘Knaves, behind there! Back!’

This was spoken to half a dozen grooms and serving-men, who, well armed, were clustered in the passage.

‘What? swords out, you sons of cliff rabbits?’ And in a moment, Sir Richard’s long blade flashed out also, and putting Mr. Leigh gently aside, as if he had been a child,

he walked up to the party, who vanished right and left; having expected a cur dog, in the shape of a parish constable, and come upon a lion instead. They were stout fellows enough, no doubt, in a fair fight: but they had no stomach to be hanged in a row at Launceston Castle, after a preliminary running through the body by that redoubted admiral and most unpeaceful justice of the peace.

'And now, my dear Mr. Leigh,' said Sir Richard, as blandly as ever, 'where are my men? The night is cold; and you as well as I need to be in our beds.'

'The men, Sir Richard—the Jesuits—they are not here, indeed.'

'Not here, sir?'

'On the word of a gentleman, they left my house an hour ago. Believe me, sir, they did. I will swear to you if you need.'

'I believe Mr. Leigh of Chapel's word without oaths. Whither are they gone?'

'Nay, sir—how can I tell? They are—they are, as I may say, fled, sir; escaped.'

'With your connivance; at least with your son's. Where are they gone?'

'As I live, I do not know.'

'Mr. Leigh—is this possible? Can you add untruth to that treason from the punishment of which I am trying to shield you?'

Poor Mr. Leigh burst into tears.

'O my God! my God! is it come to this? Over and above having the fear and anxiety of keeping these black rascals in my house, and having to stop their villainous mouths every minute, for fear they should hang me and themselves, I am to be called a traitor and a liar in my old age, and that, too, by Richard Grenville! Would God I had never been born! Would God I had no soul to be saved, and I'd just go and drown care in drink, and let the Queen and the Pope fight it out their own way!' And the poor old man sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands, and then leaped up again.

‘ Bless my heart ! Excuse me, Sir Richard—to sit down and leave you standing. ’Slife, sir, sorrow is making a hawbuck of me. Sit down, my dear sir ! my worshipful sir ! or rather come with me into my room, and hear a poor wretched man’s story, for I swear before God the men are fled ; and my poor boy Eustace is not home either, and the groom tells me that his devil of a cousin has broken his jaw for him ; and his mother is all but mad this hour past. Good lack ! good lack ! ’

‘ He nearly murdered his angel of a cousin, sir ! ’ said Sir Richard severely.

‘ What, sir ? They never told me. ’

‘ He had stabbed his cousin Frank three times, sir, before Amyas, who is as noble a lad as walks God’s earth, struck him down. And in defence of what, forsooth, did he play the ruffian and the swashbuckler, but to bring home to your house this letter, sir, which you shall hear at your leisure, the moment I have taken order about your priests. ’ And walking out of the house he went round and called to Cary to come to him.

‘ The birds are flown, Will, ’ whispered he. ‘ There is but one chance for us, and that is Marsland Mouth. If they are trying to take boat there, you may be yet in time. If they are gone inland we can do nothing till we raise the hue and cry to-morrow. ’

And Will galloped off over the downs towards Marsland, while Sir Richard ceremoniously walked in again, and professed himself ready and happy to have the honour of an audience in Mr. Leigh’s private chamber. And as we know pretty well already what was to be discussed therein, we had better go over to Marsland Mouth, and, if possible, arrive there before Will Cary : seeing that he arrived hot and swearing, half an hour too late.

Note.—I have shrunk somewhat from giving these and other sketches (true and accurate as I believe them to be) of Ireland during Elizabeth’s reign, when the tyranny and lawlessness of the feudal chiefs had reduced the island to such a state of weakness and barbarism, that it was absolutely necessary for England either to crush the Norman-Irish nobility, and organise some sort of law and order, or to leave Ireland an easy prey

to the Spaniards, or any other nation which should go to war with us. The work was done—clumsily rather than cruelly; but wrongs were inflicted, and avenged by fresh wrongs, and those by fresh again. May the memory of them perish for ever! It has been reserved for this age, and for the liberal policy of this age, to see the last ebullitions of Celtic excitability die out harmless and ashamed of itself, and to find that the Irishman, when he is brought as a soldier under the regenerative influence of law, discipline, self-respect, and loyalty, can prove himself a worthy rival of the more stern Norse-Saxon warrior. God grant that the military brotherhood between Irish and English, which is the special glory of the present war, may be the germ of a brotherhood industrial, political, and hereafter, perhaps, religious also; and that not merely the corpses of heroes, but the feuds and wrongs which have parted them for centuries, may lie buried, once and for ever, in the noble graves of Alma and Inkerman.

