EGERTON CASTLE

THE LIGHT OF SCARTHEY

HISTORICAL NOVEL

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The Light of Scarthey (Historical Novel)

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PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

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Among the works of every writer of Fiction there are generally one or two that owe their being to some haunting *thought, long communed with—a thought which has at last found a living shape in some story of deed and passion.*

I say one or two advisedly: for the span of man's active life is short and such haunting fancies are, of their essence, solitary. As a matter of fact, indeed, the majority of a novelist's creations belong to another class, must of necessity (if he be a prolific creator) find their conception in more sudden impulses. The great family of the "children of his brain" must be born of inspirations ever new, and in alluring freshness go forth into the world surrounded by the atmosphere of their author's present mood, decked in the colours of his latest imaginings, strengthened by his latest passional impressions and philosophical conclusions.

In the latter category the lack of long intimate acquaintance between the author and the friends or foes he depicts, is amply compensated for by the enthusiasm appertaining to new discoveries, as each character reveals itself, often in quite unforeseen manner, and the consequences of each event shape themselves inevitably and sometimes indeed almost against his will.

Although dissimilar in their genesis, both kinds of stories can, in the telling, be equally life-like and equally alluring to the reader. But what of the writer? Among his literary family is there not one nearer his heart than all the rest—his dream-child? *It may be the stoutest of the breed or it may*

be the weakling; it may be the first-born, it often is the Benjamin. Fathers in the flesh know this secret tenderness. Many a child and many a book is brooded over with a special love even before its birth.—Loved thus, for no grace or merit of its own, this book is my dream-child.

* * * * *

Here, by the way, I should like to say my word in honour of Fiction*—"fiction" contradistinguished from what is popularly termed "serious" writing.*

If, in a story, the characters and the events are truly convincing; if the former are appealingly human and the latter are so carefully devised and described as never to evoke the idea of improbability, then it can make no difference in the intellectual pleasure *of the reader whether what he is made to realise so vividly is a record of fact or of mere fancy. Facts we read of are of necessity past: what is past, what is beyond the immediate ken of our senses, can only be realised in imagination; and the picture we are able to make of it for ourselves depends altogether on the sympathetic skill of the recorder. Is not Diana Vernon, born and bred in Scott's imagination, to the full as living now before us as Rob Roy Macgregor whose existence was so undeniably tangible to the men of his days? Do we not see, in our mind's eye, and know as clearly the lovable "girt John Ridd" of* Lorna Doone *the romance as his contemporaries, Mr. Samuel Pepys of the hard and uncompromising* Diary *or King James of* English Annals?

Pictures, alike of the plainest facts or of the veriest imaginings, are but pictures: it matters very little therefore whether the man or the woman we read of but never can see in the flesh has really lived or not, if what we do read

raises an emotion in our hearts. To the novelist, every character, each in his own degree, is almost as living as a personal acquaintance; every event is as clear as a personal experience. And if this be true of the story written à la grâce de la plume, *where both events and characters unfold themselves like the buds of some unknown plant, how much more strongly is it the case of the story that has so long been mused over that one day it had to be told! Then the marking events of the actors' lives, their adventures, whether of sorrow or of joy, their sayings and doings, noble or bright or mistaken, recorded in the book, are but a tithe of the adventures, sayings and doings with which the writer seems to be familiar. He might write or talk about them, in praise or vindictiveness as he loves or dreads them, for many a longer day—but he has one main theme to make clear to his hearers and must respect the modern canons of the Story-telling Art. Among the many things therefore he could tell, an he would, he selects that only which will unravel a particular thread of fate in the tangle of endless consequences; which will render plausible the growth of passions on which, in a continuous life-drama, is based one particular episode.*

Of such a kind is the story of Adrian Landale.

The haunting thought round which the tale of the sorely tempest-tossed dreamer is gathered is one which, I think, must at one time or other have occurred to many a man as he neared the maturity of middle-life:—What form of turmoil would come into his heart if, when still in the strength of his age but after long years of hopeless separation, he were again brought face to face with the woman who had been the one passion of his life, the first and only love of his youth? And what if she were still then exactly as he had last seen her—she, untouched by years even as she had so long

lived in his thoughts: he, with his soul scarred and seamed by many encounters bravely sustained in the Battle of Life?

The problem thus propounded is not solvable, even in fiction, unless it be by "fantastic" treatment. But perhaps the more so on this account did it haunt me. And out of the travail of my mind around it, out of the changing shadows of restless speculation, gradually emerged, clear and alive, the being of Adrian Landale and his two loves.

Here then was a man, whose mind, moulded by nature for grace and contemplation, was cast by fate amid all the turmoils of Romance *and action. Here was one of those whose warm heart and idealising enthusiasm must wreathe the beauty of love into all the beauties of the world; whose ideals are spent on one adored object; who, having lost it, seems to have lost the very sense of love; to whom love never could return, save by some miracle. But fortune, that had been so cruelly hard on him, one day in her blind way brings back to his door the miraculous restitution—and there leaves him to struggle along the new path of his fate! It is there also that I take up the thread of the speculation, and watch through its vicissitudes the working of the problem raised by such a strange circumstance.*

The surroundings in a story of this kind are, of the nature of things, all those of Romance. *And by* Romance, *I would point out, is not necessarily meant in tale-telling, a chain of events fraught with greater improbability than those of so-called real life. (Indeed where is now the writer who will for a moment admit, even tacitly, that his records are not of reality?) It simply betokens, a specialisation of the wider genus* Novel; *a narrative of strong action and moving incident, in addition to the necessary analysis of character; a story in which the uncertain violence of the outside world turns the course of the actors' lives from the more obvious*

channels. It connotes also, as a rule, more poignant emotions—emotions born of strife or peril, even of horror; it tells of the shock of arms in life, rather than of the mere diplomacy of life.

Above all Romance *depends upon picturesque and varied setting; upon the scenery of the drama, so to speak. On the other hand it is not essentially (though this has sometimes been advanced) a narrative of mere adventures as contrasted to the observation and dissection of character and manners we find in the true "novel." Rather be it said that it is one in which the hidden soul is made patent under the touchstone of blood-stirring incidents, of hairbreadth risks, of recklessness or fierceness. There are soaring passions, secrets of the innermost heart, that can only be set free in desperate situations—and those situations are not found in the tenor in every-day, well-ordered life: they belong to Romance.*

Spirit-fathers have this advantage that they can bring forth their dream-children in what age and place they list: it is no times of now-a-days, no ordinary scenery, that would have suited such adventures as befell Adrian Landale, or Captain Jack, or "Murthering Moll the Second."

Romantic enough is the scene, which, in a manner, framed the display of a most human drama; and fraught it is, even to this day, in the eyes of any but the least imaginative, with potentialities for strange happenings.[1] *It is that great bight of Morecambe; that vast of brown and white shallows, deserted, silent, mysterious, and treacherous with its dreaded shifting sands; fringed in the inland distance by the Cumbrian hills, blue and misty; bordered outwards by the Irish sea, cold and grey. And in a corner of that waste, the islet, small and green and secure, with its ancient Peel, ruinous even as the noble abbey of which it was once the*

dependant stronghold; with its still sturdy keep, and the beacon, whose light-keeper was once a Dreamer of Beautiful Things.

And romantic the times, if by that word is implied a freer scope than can be found in modern years for elemental passions, for fighting and loving in despite of every-day conventions; for enterprise, risks, temptations unknown in the atmosphere of humdrum peace and order. They are the early days of the century, days when easy and rapid means of communication had not yet destroyed all the glamour of distance, when a county like Lancashire was as a far-off country, with a spirit, a language, customs and ideas unknown to the Metropolis; days when, if there were no lifeboat crews, there could still be found rather experienced "wreckers," and when the keeping of a beacon, to light a dangerous piece of sea, was still within the province of a public-spirited landlord. They are the days when the spread of education had not even yet begun (for weal or for woe) its levelling work; days of cruel monopolies and inane prohibitions, and ferocious penal laws, inept in the working, baleful in the result; days of keel-hauling and flogging; when the "free-trader" still swung, tarred and in chains, on conspicuous points of the coast—even as the highwayman rattled at the cross-road—for the encouragement of the brotherhood; when it was naturally considered more logical (since hang you must for almost any misdeed) to hang for a sheep than a lamb, and human life on the whole was held rather cheap in consequence. They are the days when in Liverpool the privateers were daily fitting out or bringing in the "prizes," and when, in Lord Street Offices, distant cargoes of "living ebony" were put to auction by steady, intensely respectable, Church-going merchants. But especially they are the days of war and the fortunes of war;

days of pressgangs, to kidnap unwilling rulers of the waves; of hulks and prisons filled to overflowing, even in a mere commercial port like Liverpool, with French prisoners of war.

A long course of relentless hostilities, lasting the span of a full-grown generation, had cultivated the predatory instinct of all men with the temperament of action, and seemed to justify it. Venturesome, hot-spirited youths, with their way to make in the world (who in a former age might have been reduced to "the road") took up privateering on a systematic scale. In such an atmosphere there could not fail to return a belief in the good old border rule, *"the simple plan: that they should take who have the power, and they should keep who can." And it must be remembered that an island country's border is the enemy's coast! On that ethical understanding many privateer owners built up large fortunes, still enjoyed by descendants who in these days would look upon high-sea looting of non-combatants with definite horror.*

The years of the great French war, however, fostered a species of nautical enterprise more venturesome even than privateering, raiding, blockade-running and all the ordinary forms of smuggling that are usual when two coast lines are at enmity. I mean that smuggling of gold specie and bullion which incidentally was destined to affect the course of Sir Adrian's life so powerfully.

* * * * *

As Captain Jack's last venture may, at this distance of time, appear a little improbable, it is well to state here some little-known facts concerning the now rather incomprehensible pursuit of gold smuggling—a romantic subject if ever there was one.

The existence at one time of this form of "free-trade" is all but forgotten. Indeed very little was ever heard of it in the world, except among parties directly interested, even at the time when it played an important part in the machinery of governments. Its rise during the years of Napoleonic tyranny on the continent of Europe, and its continuance during the factitious calm of the First Restoration in France, were due to circumstances that never existed before and are little likely to occur again.

The accumulation of a fund of gold *coin, reserved against sudden contingency, was one of Bonaparte's imperial ideas. In a modified and more modern form, this notion of a "war-chest," untouched and unproductive in peace-time, is still adhered to by the Germans: they have kept to heart many of their former conqueror's lessons, lessons forgotten by the French themselves—and the enormous treasure of gold bags guarded at Spandau is a matter of common knowledge. Napoleon, however, in his triumphant days never, and for obvious reasons, lacked money. It was less an actual treasure that he required and valued so highly for political and military purposes, than an ever ready reserve of wealth easily portable, of paramount value at all times; "concentrated," so to speak. And nothing could come nearer to that description than rolls of English guineas. Indeed the vast numbers of these coins which fitfully appeared in circulation throughout Europe justified the many weird legends concerning the power of "British Gold"*—l'or Anglais!

There is every reason to believe that, in days when the national currency consisted chiefly of lumbering silver écus, *the Bourbon government also appreciated to the full the value of a* private *gold reserve. At any rate it was at the time of the first Restoration that the golden guinea of England found in France its highest premium.*

Without going into the vexed and dreary question of single or double standard, it will suffice to say that during the early years of the century now about to close, gold coin was leaving England at a rate which not only appeared phenomenal but was held to be injurious to the community.

As a matter of fact most of it was finding its way to France, whilst Great Britain was flooded with silver. It was then made illegal to export gold coin or bullion. The prohibition was stringently, indeed at one time, ruthlessly, enforced. In this manner the new and highly profitable traffic in English guineas entered the province of the "free-trader"; the difference introduced in his practice being merely one of degree. Whereas, in the case of prohibited imports, the chief task lay in running the illicit goods and distributing them, in the case of guinea-smuggling its arduousness was further increased by the danger of collecting the gold inland and clearing from home harbours.

Very little, as I said, has ever been heard of this singular trade, and for obvious reasons. In the first place it obtained only for a comparatively small number of years, the latter part of the Great War: the last of it belonging to the period of the Hundred Days. *And in the second it was, at all times, of necessity confined to a very small number of free-trading skippers. Of adventurous men, in stirring days, there were of course a multitude. But few, naturally, were the men to whose honour the custody of so much ready wealth could safely be intrusted. "That is where," as Captain Jack says sometimes in this book, "the 'likes of me' come in."*

The exchange was enormously profitable. As much as thirty-two shillings in silver value could, at one time, be obtained on the other side of the water for an English guinea. But the shipper and broker, in an illegal venture where contract could not be enforced, had to be a man

whose simple word was warranty—and indeed, in the case of large consignments, this blind trust had to be extended to almost every man of his crew. What a romance could be written upon this theme alone!

In the story of Adrian Landale, however, it plays but a subsidiary part. Brave, joyous-hearted Captain Jack and his bold venture for a fortune appear only in the drama to turn its previous course to unforeseen channels; just as in most of our lives, the sudden intrusion of a new strong personality —transient though it may be, a tempest or a meteor— changes their seemingly inevitable trend to altogether new issues.

* * * * *

It was urged by my English publishers that, in "The Light of Scarthey," *I relate two distinct love-stories and two distinct phases of one man's life; and that it were wiser (by which word I presume was meant more profitable) to distribute the tale between two books, one to be a sequel to the other. Happily I would not be persuaded to cut a fully composed canvas in two for the sake of the frames. "It is the fate of sequels," as Stevenson said in his dedication of* Catriona*, "to disappoint those who have waited for them." Besides, life is essentially continuous.—It may not be inept to state a truism of this kind in a world of novels where the climax of life, if not indeed its very conclusion, is held to be reached on the day of marriage! There is often, of course, more than one true passion of love in a man's life; and even if the second does not really kill the memory of the first, their course (should they be worth the telling) may well be told separately. But if, in the story of a man's love for two women, the past and the present are so closely interwoven*

as were the reality and the "might-have-been" in the mind of Adrian Landale, any separation of the two phases, youth and maturity, would surely have stultified the whole scheme of the story.

I have also been taken to task by some critics for having, the tale once opened at a given time and place, harked back to other days and other scenes: an inartistic and confusing method, I was told. I am still of contrary opinion. There are certain stories which belong, *by their very essence, to certain places. All ancient buildings have, if we only knew them, their human dramas: this is the very soul of the hidden but irresistible attraction they retain for us even when deserted and dismantled as now the Peel of Scarthey. For the sake of harmonious proportions, and in order to give it its proper atmosphere, it was imperative that in this drama—wherever the intermediate scenes might be placed, whether on the banks of the Vilaine, on the open sea, or in Lancaster Castle—the Prologue should be witnessed on the green islet in the wilderness of sands, even as the Crisis and the Closing Scene of rest and tenderness.*

E. C.,
49, Sloane Gardens,
London, S. W.

October 1899.

1. *Those who like to associate fiction with definite places may be interested to know that the prototype of Scarthey is the* Piel of Foudrey, *on the North Lancashire coast, near the edge of Morecambe Bay, and that Pulwick was suggested by Furness Abbey. Barrow-in-Furness was then but a straggling village. A floating light, facing the mouth of the Wyre, now fulfils the duties devolving on the beacon of Scarthey at the time of this story.*

PART I
SIR ADRIAN LANDALE, LIGHT-KEEPER OF SCARTHEY

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We all were sea-swallowed, though some cast again;
And by that destiny to perform an act,
Whereof what's past is Prologue.
The Tempest

CHAPTER I
THE PEEL OF SCARTHEY

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He makes a solitude and calls it peace.
Byron.

Alone in the south and seaward corner of the great bight on the Lancastrian coast—mournfully alone some say, gloriously alone to my thinking—rises in singular unexpected fashion the islet of Scarthey; a green oasis secure on its white rocky seat amidst the breezy wilderness of sands and waters.

There is, in truth, more sand than water at most times round Scarthey. For miles northward the wet strand stretches its silent expanse, tawny at first, then merging into silver grey as in the dim distance it meets the shallow advance of briny ripple. Wet sand, brown and dull, with here and there a brighter trail as of some undecided river seeking an aimless way, spreads westward, deep inland, until stopped in a jagged line by bluffs that spring up abruptly in successions of white rocky steps and green terraces.

Turn you seaward, at low tide there lies sand again and shingle (albeit but a narrow beach, for here a depth of water sinks rapidly) laved with relentless obstinacy by long, furling, growling rollers that are grey at their sluggish base and emerald-lighted at their curvetting crest. Sand yet again to the south, towards the nearer coast line, for a mile or perhaps less, dotted, along an irregular path, with grey rocks that look as though the advance guard of a giant army had attempted to ford its insecure footing, had sunk into its

treacherous shifting pits, and left their blanching skull-tops half emerging to record the disaster.

On the land side of the bight, far away beyond the grandly desolate, silent, yellow tract, a misty blue fringe on the horizon heralds the presence of the North Country; whilst beyond the nearer beach a sprinkling of greenly ensconced homesteads cluster round some peaceful and paternal looking church tower. Near the salty shore a fishing village scatters its greystone cabins along the first terrace of the bluffs.

Outwards, ever changing in colour and temper roll and fret the grey waters of the Irish Sea, turbulent at times, but generally lenient enough to the brown-sailed ketches that break the regular sweep of the western horizon as they toil at the perpetual harvest of the deep.

Thus stands Scarthey. Although appearing as an island on the charts, at low tides it becomes accessible dry-foot from the land by a narrow causeway along the line of the white shallow reefs, which connect the main pile to the rocky steps and terraces of the coast. But woe betide man or beast that diverges many feet from the one secure path! The sands of the great bay have already but too well earned their sinister reputation.

During the greater part of the day, however, Scarthey justifies its name—Skard- or Scarth-ey, the Knoll Island in the language of the old Scandinavian masters of the land.

In fair weather, or in foul, whether rising out of sunny sands when the ebbing waters have retired, or assailed on all sides by ramping breakers, Scarthey in its isolation, with its well-preserved ruins and its turret, from which for the last hundred years a light has been burning to warn the seafarer, has a comfortable look of security and privacy.

The low thick wall which in warlike times encompassed the bailey (now surrounding and sheltering a wide paddock and neat kitchen gardens) almost disappears under a growth of stunted, but sturdy trees; dwarf alders and squat firs that shake their white-backed leaves, and swing their needle clusters, merrily if the breeze is mild, obstinately if the gale is rousing and seem to proclaim: "Here are we, well and secure. Ruffle and toss, and lash, O winds, the faithless waters, *we* shall ever cling to this hospitable footing, the only kindly soil amid this dreariness; here you once wafted our seed; here shall we live and perpetuate our life."

On the sea front of the bailey walls rise, sheer from the steep rock, the main body and the keep of the Peel. They are ruinous and shorn of their whilom great height, humbled more by the wilful destruction of man than by the decay of time.

But although from a distance the castle on the green island seems utterly dismantled, it is not, even now, all ruin. And, at the time when Sir Adrian Landale, of Pulwick, eighth baronet, adopted it as his residence, it was far from being such.

True, the greater portion of that mediæval building, half monastic, half military, exposed even then to the searching winds many bare and roofless chambers; broken vaults filled with driven sands; more than one spiral stair with hanging steps leading into space. But the massive square keep had been substantially restored. Although roofless its upper platform was as firm as when it was first built; and in a corner, solidly ensconced, rose the more modern turret that sheltered the honest warning light.

The wide chambers of the two remaining floors, which in old warlike days were maintained bare and free, and lighted only by narrow watching loopholes on all sides, had been,

for purposes of peaceful tenanncy, divided into sundry small apartments. New windows had been pierced into the enormous thickness of stone and cement; the bare coldness of walls was also hidden under more home-like panellings. Close-fitting casements and solid doors insured peace within; the wind in stormy hours might moan or rage outside this rocky pile, might hiss and shriek and tear its wings among the jagged ruins, bellow and thunder in and out of opened vaults, but it might not rattle a window of the modern castellan's quarters or shake a latch of his chamber door.

There, for reasons understood then only by himself, had Sir Adrian elected, about the "year seven" of this century and in the prime of his age, to transplant his lares and penates.

The while, this Adrian Landale's ancestral home stood, in its placid and double pride of ancient and settled wealth, only some few miles away as the bee flies, in the midst of its noble park, slightly retired from the coast-line; and from its upper casements could be descried by day the little green patch of Scarthey and the jagged outline of its ruins on the yellow or glimmering face of the great bay, and by night the light of its turret. And there he was still living, in some kind of happiness, in the "year fourteen," when, out of the eternal store of events, began to shape themselves the latter episodes of a life in which storm and peace followed each other as abruptly as in the very atmosphere that he then breathed.

For some eight years he had nested on that rock with no other companions but a dog, a very ancient housekeeper who cooked and washed for "t' young mester" as she obstinately persisted in calling the man whom she had once nursed upon her knee, and a singular sturdy foreign man

(René L'Apôtre in the language of his own land, but known as Renny Potter to the land of his adoption); which latter was more than suspected of having escaped from the Liverpool Tower, at that time the lawful place of custody of French war prisoners.

His own voluntary captivity, however, had nothing really dismal for Adrian Landale. And the inhabited portions of Scarthey ruins had certainly nothing prison-like about them, nothing even that recalled the wilful contrition of a hermitage.

On the second floor of the tower (the first being allotted to the use, official and private, of the small household), clear of the surrounding walls and dismantled battlements, the rooms were laid out much as they might have been up at Pulwick Priory itself, yonder within the verdant grounds on the distant rise. His sleeping quarters plainly, though by no means ascetically furnished, opened into a large chamber, where the philosophic light-keeper spent the best part of his days. Here were broad and deep windows, one to the south with a wide view of the bay and the nearer coast, the other to the west where the open sea displayed her changeable moods. On three sides of this room, the high walls, from the white stone floor to the time-blackened beams that bore the ceiling, almost disappeared under the irregular rows of many thousand of volumes. Two wooden arm-chairs, bespeaking little aversion to an occasional guest, flanked the hearth.

The hearth is the chief refuge of the lone thinker; this was a cosy recess, deep cut in the mediæval stone and mortar; within which, on chilly days, a generous heap of sea-cast timber and dried turf shot forth dancing blue flames over a mound of white ash and glowing cinders; but which, in warmer times, when the casements were

unlatched to let in with spring or summer breeze the cries of circling sea-fowls and the distant plash of billows, offered shelter to such green plants as the briny air would favour.

At the far end of the room rose in systematical clusters the pipes of a small organ, built against the walls where it bevelled off a corner. And in the middle of the otherwise bare apartment stood a broad and heavy table, giving support to a miscellaneous array of books, open or closed, sundry philosophical instruments, and papers in orderly disorder; some still in their virginal freshness, most, however, bearing marks of notemaking in various stages.

Here, in short, was the study and general keeping-room of the master of Scarthey, and here, for the greater part, daily sat Sir Adrian Landale, placidly reading, writing, or thinking at his table; or at his organ, lost in soaring melody; or yet, by the fireside, in his wooden arm-chair musing over the events of that strange world of thought he had made his own; whilst the aging black retriever with muzzle stretched between his paws slept his light, lazy sleep, ever and anon opening an eye of inquiry upon his master when the latter spoke aloud his thoughts (as solitary men are wont to do), and then with a deep, comfortable sigh, resuming dog-life dreams.

CHAPTER II
THE LIGHT-KEEPER

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He who sits by the fire doth dream,
Doth dream that his heart is warm.
But when he awakes his heart is afraid for the bitter cold.
Luteplayer's Song.

The year 1814 was eventful in the annals of the political world. Little, however, of the world's din reached the little northern island; and what there came of it was not willingly hearkened to. There was too much of wars past and present, too many rumours of wars future about it, for the ear of the recluse.

Late in the autumn of that red-letter year which brought a short respite of peace to war-ridden Europe—a fine, but rather tumultuous day round Scarthey—the light-keeper, having completed the morning's menial task in the light-turret (during a temporary absence of his factotum) sat, according to custom, at his long table, reading.

With head resting on his right hand whilst the left held a page ready to turn, he solaced himself, pending the appearance of the mid-day meal, with a few hundred lines of a favourite work—the didactic poems, I believe, of a certain Doctor Erasmus Darwin, on the analogies of the outer world.

There was quite as little of the ascetic in Adrian Landale's physical man as of the hermitage in his chosen abode.

With the exception of the hair, which he wore long and free, and of which the fair brown had begun to fade to silver-grey, the master of Scarthey was still the living presentment of the portrait which, even at that moment, presided among the assembly of canvas Landales in the gallery of Pulwick Priory. Eight years had passed over the model since the likeness had been fixed. But in their present repose, the features clear cut and pronounced, the kindly thoughtful eyes looked, if anything, younger than their counterfeit; indeed, almost incongruously young under the flow of fading hair.

Clean shaven, with hands of refinement, still fastidious, his long years of solitude notwithstanding, as to general neatness of attire, he might at any moment of the day have walked up the great stair of honour at Pulwick without by his appearance eliciting other remarks than that his clothes, in cut and colour, belonged to fashions now some years lapsed.

The high clock on the mantelshelf hummed and gurgled, and with much deliberation struck one. Only an instant later, lagging footsteps ascended the wooden, echoing stairs without, and the door was pushed open by the attendant, an old dame. She was very dingy as to garb, very wrinkled and feeble as to face, yet with a conscious achievement of respectability, both in appearance and manner, befitting her post as housekeeper to the "young master." The young master, be it stated at once, was at that time fast approaching the end of his second score years.

"Margery," said Adrian, rising to take the heavy tray from the knotted, trembling hands; "you know that I will not allow you to carry those heavy things upstairs yourself." He raised his voice to sing-song pitch near the withered old ear. "I

have already told you that when Renny is not at home, I can take my food in your kitchen."

Margery paused, after her wont, to wait till the sounds had filtered as far as her intellect, then proceeded to give a few angry headshakes.

"Eh! Eh! It would become Sir Adrian Landale o' Pulwick—Barrownite—to have 's meat i' the kitchen—it would that. Nay, nay, Mester Adrian, I'm none so old but I can do my day's work yet. Ah! an' it 'ud be well if that gomerl, Renny Potter, 'ud do his'n. See here, now, Mester Adrian, nowt but a pint of wine left; and it the last," pointing her withered finger, erratically as the palsy shook it, at a cut-glass decanter where a modicum of port wine sparkled richly under the facets. "And he not back yet, whatever mischief's agate wi' him, though he kens yo like your meat at one." And then circumstances obliged her to add: "He is landing now, but it's ower late i' the day."

"So—there, Margery," sang the "Squire," giving his old nurse affectionate little taps on the back. "Never fash yourself; tides cannot always fit in with dinner-hours, you know. And as for poor Renny, I believe after all you are as fond of him, at the bottom of your heart, as I am. Now what good fare have you got for me to-day?" bending from his great height to inspect the refection, "Ah—hum, excellent."

The old woman, after another pause for comprehension, retired battling with dignity against the obvious pleasure caused by her master's affectionate familiarity, and the latter sat down at a small table in front of the south window.

Through this deep, port-hole-like aperture he could, whilst disposing of his simple meal, watch the arrival of the yawl which did ferrying duty between Scarthey and the mainland. The sturdy little craft, heavily laden with packages, was being hauled up to its usual place of safety

high on the shingle bank, under cover of a remnant of walling which in the days of the castle's strength had been a secure landing-place for the garrison's boats, but which now was almost filled by the cast-up sands and stone of the beach.

This was done under the superintendence of René, man of all work, and with the mechanical intermediary of rollers and capstan, by a small white horse shackled to a lever, and patiently grinding his steady rounds on the sand.

His preliminary task achieved, the man, after a few friendly smacks, set the beast free to trot back to his loose pasture: proceeding himself to unship his cargo.

Through the narrow frame of his window, the master, with eyes of approval, could see the servant dexterously load himself with a well-balanced pile of parcels, disappearing to return after intervals empty-handed, within the field of view, and select another burden, now heavier now more bulky.

In due course René came up and reported himself in person, and as he stopped on the threshold the dark doorway framed a not unstriking presentment; a young-looking man for his years (he was a trifle junior to his master), short and sturdy in build, on whose very broad shoulders sat a phenomenally fair head—the hair short, crisp, and curly, in colour like faded tow—and who, in smilingly respectful silence, gazed into the room out of small, light-blue eyes, brimful of alertness and intelligence, waiting to be addressed.

"Renny," said Adrian Landale, returning the glance with one of comfortable friendliness, "you will have to make your peace with Margery; she considers that you neglect me shamefully. Why, you are actually twenty minutes late after three days' journeying, and perils by land and sea!"

The Frenchman answered the pleasantry by a broader smile and a scrape.

"And, your honour," he said, "if what is now arriving on us had come half an hour sooner, I should have rested planted there" (with a jerk of the flaxen head towards the mainland), "turning my thumbs, till to-morrow, at the least. We shall have a grain, number one, soon."

He spoke English fluently, though with the guttural accent of Brittany, and an unconquerable tendency to translate his own jargon almost word for word.

In their daily intercourse master and man had come for many years past to eschew French almost entirely; René had let it be understood that he considered his proficiency in the vernacular quite undeniable, and with characteristic readiness Sir Adrian had fallen in with the little vanity. In former days the dependant's form of address had been *Monseigneur* (considering, and shrewdly so, an English landowner to stand in that relation to a simple individual like himself); in later days "Monseigneur" having demurred at the appellation, "My lord," in his own tongue, the devoted servant had discovered "Your honour" as a happy substitute, and adhered to this discovery with satisfaction.

"Oh, we are going to have a squall, say you," interpreted the master, rising to inspect the weather-glass, which in truth had fallen deep with much suddenness. "More than a squall, I think; this looks like a hurricane coming. But since you are safe home, all's well; we are secure and sound here, and the fishing fleet are drawing in, I see," peering through the seaward window. "And now," continued Adrian, laying down his napkin, and brushing away a few crumbs from the folds of a faultless silk stock, "what have you for me there—and what news?"

"News, your honour! Oh, for that I have news this time," said Mr. Renny Potter, with an emphatic nod, "but if your honour will permit, I shall say them last. I have brought the clothes and the linen, the wine, the brandy, and the books. Brandy and wine, your honour, I heard, out of the last prize brought into Liverpool, and a Nantes ship it was, too"—this in a pathetically philosophical tone. Then after a pause: "Also provisions and bulbs for the devil's pot, as Margery will call it. But there is no saying, your honour eats more when I have brought him back onions, eschalot, and *ail*; now do I lie, your honour? May I?" added the speaker, and forthwith took his answer from his master's smile; "may I respectfully see what the old one has kitchened for you when I was not there?"

And Adrian Landale with some amusement watched the Frenchman rise from the package he was then uncording to examine the platters on the table and loudly sniff his disdain.

"Ah, ah, boiled escallops again. Perfectly—boiled cabbage seasoned with salt. Not a taste in the whole affair. Prison food—oh, yes, old woman! Why, we nourished ourselves better in the Tower, when we could have meat at all. Ah, your honour," sighed the man returning to his talk; "you others, English, are big and strong, but you waste great things in small enjoyment!"

"Oho, Renny," said the light-keeper squire, as he leant against the fireplace leisurely filling a long clay pipe, "this is one of your epigrams; I must make a note of it anon; but let me see now what you really have in those parcels of books—for books they are, are they not? so carefully and neatly packed."

"Books," assented the man, undoing the final fold of paper. "Mr. Young in the High Street of Liverpool had the

packets ready. He says you must have them all; and all printed this year. What so many people can want to say, I for my count cannot comprehend. Three more parcels on the stairs, your honour. Mr. Young says you must have them. But it took two porters to carry them to the Preston diligence."

Not without eagerness did the recluse of Scarthey bend over and finger the unequal rows of volumes arrayed on the table, and with a smile of expectation examine the labels.

"The Corsair" and "Lara" he read aloud, lifting a small tome more daintily printed than the rest. "Lord Byron. What's this? Jane Austen, a novel. 'Roderick, last of the Goths.' Dear, dear," his smile fading into blankness; "tiresome man, I never gave him orders for any such things."

René, battling with his second parcel, shrugged his shoulders.

"The librarian," he explained, "said that all the world read these books, and your honour must have them."

"Well, well," continued the hermit, "what else? 'Jeremy Bentham,' a new work; Ricardo, another book on economy; Southey the Laureate, 'Life of Nelson.' Really, Mr. Young might have known that naval deeds have no joy for me, hardly more than for you, Renny," smiling grimly on his servant. "'Edinburgh Review,' a London magazine for the last six months; 'Rees's Cyclopædia,' vols. 24–27; Wordsworth, 'The Recluse.' Ah, old Willie Wordsworth! Now I am anxious to see what he has to say on such a topic."

"Dear Willie Wordsworth," mused Sir Adrian, sitting down to turn over the pages of the 'Excursion,' "how widely have our lives drifted apart since those college days of ours, when we both believed in the coming millennium and the noble future of mankind—noble mankind!"

He read a few lines and became absorbed, whilst René noiselessly busied himself in and out of the chamber. Presently he got up, book in hand, slowly walked to the north window, and passively gazed at the misty distance where rose the blue outline of the lake hills.

"So my old friend, almost forgotten," he murmured, "that is where you indite such worthy lines. It were enough to tempt me out into men's world again to think that there would be many readers and lovers abroad of these words of yours. So, that is what five and twenty years have done for you—what would you say to what they have done for me…?"

It was a long retrospect.

Sir Adrian was deeply immersed in thought when he became aware that his servant had come to a standstill, as if waiting for a return of attention. And in answer to the mute appeal he turned his head once more in René's direction.

"Your honour, everything is in its place," began the latter, with a fitting sense of his own method. "I have now to report that I saw your man of business in Lancaster, and he has attended to the matter of the brothers Shearman's boat that was lost. I saw the young men themselves this morning. They are as grateful to Sir Adrian as people in this country can express." This last with a certain superiority.

Sir Adrian received the announcement of the working of one of his usual bounties with a quiet smile of gratification.

"They also told me to say that they would bring the firewood and the turf to-morrow. But they won't be able to do that because we shall have dirty weather. Then they told me that when your honour wants fish they begged your honour to run up a white flag over the lantern—they thought that a beautiful idea—and they would bring some as soon as