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Harry Coverdale's Courtship, and All That Came of It

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PREFACE

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his Tale of "Harry Coverdale's Courtship" has been a kind of *enfant terrible*—a thankless child—to its Author. It was originally begun as a short story, but the characters grew and expanded upon his hands, until they forced him to allow them wider proportions than he had originally intended.

Then the Magazine in which the tale had been commenced changed owners, and the new proprietor, not being inclined to agree to the arrangements of his predecessor, saw fit to end the story himself, after a much more vivacious and dashing fashion than that of the present "lame and impotent conclusion."

These and other mishaps, *quæ nunc perscribere longam est*, as dear Dr. Valpy's Latin Grammar has it, have occasioned the story to be written—à *plusieurs reprises*, to use the "correct" phrase.

The conclusion of the tale has been perpetrated at a time when, on account of severe nervous headaches, the Author was under strict medical orders not to write a line upon any consideration; and it is with the fear of the doctor before his eyes that he is penning these "few last words." They are not written in the "forlorn hope" of disarming hostile criticism, but simply to assure those friends who have hitherto looked with an indulgent eye upon his writings, that if "Harry Coverdale's Courtship" does not come up to any expectations they may have formed from the perusal of his

previous works, it is rather the misfortune than the fault, of their grateful and obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR.

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arry Coverdale stood six feet one in or out of his stockings, rode something over eleven stone, was unusually good, or, as young ladies term it, interesting-looking, numbered six-and-twenty years last grass, and lived at Coverdale Park when he was at home, with five thousand a-year to pay for his housekeeping, of which he spent about two. At the happy moment in which we have the pleasure of introducing him to our readers, he was *not* at home, at least not literally, though figuratively he appeared to be making himself so very decidedly.

He had arrived in London that morning, and had dined at his club, and strolled down to the Temple afterwards, where, finding that his friend, Arthur Hazlehurst, was expected to return every minute, he had taken possession of his vacant chambers, lighted a cigar, laid hands on a number of *The Sporting Magazine*, and flinging himself at full-length on the sofa (sofas do occasionally appear in the chambers of the briefless) looked, and was, especially comfortable. He was not, however, allowed to enjoy his position long in peace; for scarcely had he established himself, when a man's footstep was heard running hastily up the interminable staircase, while a quick eager voice, addressing the small boy who did duty for clerk, exclaimed—

"Eh! a gentleman whom you don't know lying on my sofa and smoking my last cigar! that's coming to the point and no mistake; cool though—I wonder who the deuce it can be —not a client, of course.—Ah! Harry, my dear old boy, this is an unexpected pleasure; why I'm as glad to see you as if you were a client almost. I thought you were in the Red Sea, man, dredging for defunct Egyptians, or chipping old blocks with Layard, or some such slow thing; when did you return?"

Arthur Hazlehurst, the originator of the foregoing speech, was an old college chum of Coverdale's, who, when his friend had taken his degree (a highly respectable one) and started on an enlarged edition of the grand tour, had gone to read with a special pleader. Having by a special slice of luck contrived to acquire a knowledge of the law from that process, instead of the more usual result of learning how to spend five hundred per annum out of an allowance of two, and possessing, moreover, an acute intellect, and a fair portion of industry, Arthur Hazlehurst was looked upon as a rising young man. In appearance he was, for a fair man, rather handsome than otherwise, but if his talent for rising could have been exercised bodily, as well as professionally, it would have been as well for him, for his friend had the advantage of him in stature by some three inches; his manner and way of speaking were quick and eager, and he had altogether a wide-awake look about him, as though he regarded society at large as perpetually in a witness-box, and was always prepared to cross-examine and be down upon it.

"I returned to England some three weeks since," replied Coverdale, abstracting the cigar from his mouth, and lazily flipping off the ashes from the lighted end with his finger; "but I went quietly down to the Park, and have been plodding over accounts with the agent ever since. Shocking

bad tobacco they make you put up with here; you shall try the glorious stuff I've brought back from Constantinople your Turk is the boy to smoke. So you've become learned in the law, I hear, since I went abroad."

"Eh! Yes, I believe I've picked up a thing or two," returned Hazlehurst modestly; "I've found out the great secret of life; the next move is to make the knowledge pay, and that's not so easy."

"I didn't know there was a great secret to find out," observed Coverdale, stroking his curly black whiskers, "the rule of life seems easy enough to me—make up your mind what you want to do, and then quietly do it—that's my recipe."

"A very good one for you, my dear fellow, you've only to put your hand in your pocket, and, as your money rattles, difficulties disappear; but we're not all born to £5000 a-year, worse luck; fathers have flinty hearts, and even the amenities of the nineteenth century have failed to macadamise them—'I've given you an expensive education, sir, and I expect to see you turn it to account.' That's about the style of blessing we inherit now-a-day; however, my secret of life is this: everything has a culminating point, and the dodge is to hit upon it yourself, and bring others to it, with the least delay possible; in these four words—come to the point, is embodied the whole philosophy of existence."

"Well, yes, I dare say there is something in it," returned Coverdale, meditatively, "it never exactly struck me before, but there's a beautiful simplicity about it that I rather admire—a little too railroadish, perhaps, unless a man's in an awful hurry; you lose the bright sunny peeps and the jolly

old road-side alehouses of life, by rushing so straight to your object."

"Sunny nonsenses," was the uncourteous rejoinder—"none of your old slow-coaching days for me; life's not long enough for dreaming—Parr's life pills are a swindle, and Methusaleh died without leaving his recipe behind him;—so come to the point say I."

"Though I won't promise to adopt your philosophy for a permanency, I'll act upon it for once, at all events," replied Coverdale, smiling (and a nice, genial, pleasant smile it was too, showing a white, even row of teeth, and lighting up a pair of large, dark, intelligent eyes, and making the "smiler" look particularly handsome). "So to come to the point, I'm here to enlist you in my service for what the women call a 'day's shopping' to-morrow: I've no clothes to my back, no horses to ride, no dog-cart to knock about in—in fact, none of the necessaries of life;—then, having benefited by your advice and experience, I mean to carry you off to Coverdale for a crack at the rabbits; thank goodness! they've got the game up and the poachers down, since I've been abroad: that was the only thing I made a row about when I came into the property. Why, there are no preserves like the Coverdale woods in the county, and yet my poor uncle never had a pheasant on his table. Things are rather different now, my boy, and my only real sorrow at the present moment is, that there are two whole months to be got rid of before the first of September: well! what do you say to my proposal?"

"Done, along with you," replied Hazlehurst; "but on one condition only, viz., that when we've polished off the

rabbits, you'll come with me to the Grange, and make acquaintance with those members of the worthy family of Hazlehurst, whose virtues are as yet unknown to you."

"You're very kind; but you've a lot of sisters, or shecousins, or some creatures of that dangerous nature, haven't you? Of course I mean no disparagement to the ladies of *your* family in particular; but 'pon my word, my dear fellow, I cannot stand women: in Turkey they shut 'em up, you know, so that I'm not accustomed to them; I've given up flirting and dangling, and all the rest of it, long ago; it's very well for green boys, but at my time of life a man has something better to think about," and, as he spoke, Coverdale flung the end of his cigar into the empty fireplace, pitched *The Sporting Magazine* unceremoniously on the table, and, looking at his watch, continued, "It's eight o'clock; I took a couple of stalls for the 'Prophète' this morning, on the chance of catching you; so jump into a pair of black trousers and let us be off."

"Not a bad move," replied his companion, "I'll adorn and be with you in——"

"Einem augenblick," suggested the grand tourist, philologically.

"If that's German for the twinkling of a bed-post, yes!" was the rejoinder, and in less than ten minutes the friends descended the staircase arm-in-arm, Hazlehurst leaving strict directions with the small clerk to inform any one who might ask for him, that he was summoned to attend a very important consultation.

The next day was devoted to the purchase of Coverdale's necessaries of life. Owing to Hazlehurst's perseverance in

bringing all the tradesmen to the point, a vast deal of business was transacted, and before nightfall Harry was the fortunate possessor of a spicy dog-cart, a blood mare to run in it, who *could* trot fourteen miles an hour, and really did perform ten miles in that space of time, equally to her own satisfaction and to that of her new master—two showy saddle-horses, the best being up to fifteen stone with any hounds—a double-barrelled gun, by a famous maker—a brace of thorough-bred pointers—and a whole host of the minor "necessaries" animate and inanimate, all of which, put together, made a considerable hole in a thousand pounds; but, as Harry sapiently observed, "a man could not live in the country without them, so where was the use of bothering."

On the following morning, the two young men and all the purchases, horses included, started by the Midland Counties Railway, and dinner-time found them safely deposited at Coverdale Park, a fine old place, which, with its picturesque mansion, beautiful view, and goodly extent of wood and water, field and fell, was as desirable a property as any English gentleman need wish to possess. After dinner the gamekeeper was summoned: he was a sturdy, good-looking fellow, who had filled the post of under-keeper in the time of Admiral Coverdale (Harry's deceased uncle, an old bachelor, to whose invincible hatred of matrimony his nephew was indebted for his present position). Harry, before he went abroad, had discovered the head-keeper to be in league with a gang of poachers, receiving a per centage on all the game they sold; he had accordingly dismissed him, and

elected his subordinate to fill the vacant situation—an experiment which had proved eminently successful.

"Take a glass of wine, Markum; this is my friend, Mr. Hazlehurst. We mean to have a slap at the rabbits tomorrow; so be here at eight o'clock, and then we shall get a good long day: any more poachers since we caught those last fellows?" And, as Coverdale spoke, he filled a large claret-glass to the brim with splendid old port, and handed it to the keeper, who, received it bashfully, and then, scraping with his foot and ducking his head twice with an expression of countenance as of a sheep about to butt, replied, "Your 'ealth, Mr. Coverdale, sir—your 'ealth, gents both," tossed it off at a draught—"there aint been no reglur poarchin a-goin on, sir," he continued, setting down his glass as if it burned his fingers, and then jibbing away from the table as though he had shyed at it; "but that 'are young Styles has been a shooting rabids on Wild Acre farm, and seems to say as he considers he's a right so to do."

"Styles? who is he?" inquired Harry, quickly.

"Well, he's the son of old Farmer Styles, and he used to shoot just when and where he liked in the Admiral's time, and that's how he fancies he's got a sort of right, do ye see, Mr 'Enry—that is, Mr. Coverdale, sir."

"Rabbits are not game, so you can't touch him on the score of poaching, Harry; but, to come to the point, if he's on your land without your permission, he's trespassing, and that's where you can be down upon him," interrupted Hazlehurst, sententiously.

"Then I shall have the law o' my side in pitching into him, I suppose, sir?" inquired Markum eagerly.

"Ho, no, my good fellow; I don't wish to quarrel with any of my tenantry, about here," exclaimed Coverdale hastily, "they'll be breaking pheasants' eggs, and playing up all sorts of mischief,—no: we must have nothing of that kind—I'll speak to the young man myself; there's a *quiet* way of doing these things, as I must teach you all. Good night; remember eight o'clock tomorrow:" and Markum, looking sheepish and rebuked, quitted the room, to tell the tale in the kitchen with the following reflection appended, "And if that 'are young Styles happens to be as cheeky to master as he is to other folks, it strikes me the quiet dodge won't pay."

CHAPTER II.—AFFORDS A SPECIMEN OF HARRY'S "QUIET MANNER" WITH HIS TENANTRY.

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By two o'clock next day, Coverdale and Hazlehurst had walked for some six hours, and conjointly taken the lives of seven couple of rabbits, ten unfortunates having fallen victims to the new double-barrel, while Hazlehurst had disposed of the remaining four. A sumptuous luncheon, with unlimited pale ale and brown stout, awaited them at the gamekeeper's cottage, to which repast they did ample justice.

"I tell you what it is, Harry," exclaimed Hazlehurst, setting down an empty tumbler, "if I eat any more luncheon, you will have to send me home in a wheelbarrow, for to walk I shall not be able—as it is, I feel like an alderman after a city feast."

"In that case, you'd require a very capacious wheelbarrow, and I should pity the individual who had to trundle it. Come! finish the bottle—you won't? then I will—and now we'll be off—it strikes me, fatigue has something to do with it, as well as the luncheon; you've been smokedrying in London, young man, till you're out of condition," returned Coverdale, laughing, as he remarked the stiff manner in which his friend rose and walked across the cottage.

Another hour's striding through high grass and fern proved the correctness of this assertion; for Hazlehurst,

unaccustomed to such severe exercise, began to show unmistakable symptoms of knocking up. His friend observed him with attention—"You really are tired, Arthur," he said, good naturedly, "you'll be fit for nothing to-morrow, if you walk much farther. Go back, Markum, and send one of your boys for the shooting pony; let him bring it to us at the bridge foot—I am going over Wild Acre farm next: I shall try through the spinney and round the large meadow, so you can cut across and join us again in half-an-hour—and Markum—wait one moment:—What sort of person is this man Styles? How should I know him if I should happen to run against him?"

"Well, he be a tall, broad-shouldered, roughish-looking chap, rather an orkard customer for to tackle, Mr. Coverdale, sir, and he generally have a sort of cross-bred, lurcher-like dog along with him, if you please Mr. 'Enry, that is, Mr. Coverdale, sir"—and so saying, Markum started at a swinging trot to execute his master's wishes.

"The fellow looks as if he could go on at that pace for a fortnight without turning a hair," observed Hazlehurst, pausing to wipe his brow; "I never saw such a cast-iron animal."

"He's at it every day, and that keeps him in good order," replied Coverdale; "but I've walked him down before now, and should not wonder if I were to do so to-day—I'm just getting what the jockeys call my 'second wind,' and am good for the next four hours at least—ha! there's a rabbit sitting, pull at it when I clap my hands."

"It's too long a shot for me," replied Hazlehurst, "bag him yourself."

Thus urged, Coverdale brought his gun to his shoulder and drew the trigger, but the cap was a bad one, and would not go off, and his second barrel being loaded with small shot, in the hope of picking up a landrail (of which Markum had reported the probable whereabouts), the rabbit skipped away uninjured. It had not proceeded ten paces, however, when it sprang into the air, and rolled over dead—at the same moment the report of a gun rang out from behind some low bushes, and a lurcher dog dashed forward, and picked up the defunct rabbit. Coverdale's face flushed with anger, and hastily exchanging the defective percussion cap for a sound one, he raised his gun with the intention of shooting the dog; but, though guick-tempered, Harry was a thoroughly kind-hearted fellow, and a moment's reflection caused him to relinquish his purpose; recovering his gun, he muttered—

"Poor brute, why should I kill it?—it's not his fault, but his master's."

As he spoke a tall figure rose from behind the bushes, whence the shot had proceeded, and whistling to the dog, took the rabbit from him, and put it in the pocket of a voluminous-skirted shooting-jacket.

"That's the redoubtable Mr. Styles, in propriâ personâ, I imagine," observed Hazlehurst.

"And a cool hand he seems too," returned Coverdale, scowling at the delinquent, who stood quietly reloading his gun, as though *he* were "monarch of all he surveyed,"—"however, I'm not going to lose my temper about it; it's a great object with me, just now, to conciliate all the neighbouring farmers."

"Then are you going to give him *carte blanche* to spiflicate rabbits when and where he likes?" inquired his friend.

"Not a bit of it!" was the reply, "I mean to put a stop once for all to such practices; but there is a *quiet* way of managing these matters quite as effectual as putting oneself into a rage."

"Don't be a week about it, that's all—come to the point at once, there's a good fellow, for I want to knock over another rabbit or two before my Bucephalus arrives," rejoined Hazlehurst.

Thus urged, Coverdale advanced towards the stranger, and slightly raising his wide-awake as he approached him, said with an air of Grandisonian politeness—"Mr. Styles I presume?"

"Yes, young man, my name's Styles. What's yourn?" was the unceremonious reply.

He does not know me, thought Harry: now for astonishing him—rather! "My name, sir, is—ahem!—Henry Coverdale, of Coverdale Park, at your service." He paused to watch the effect of this announcement. Ha! I thought so, he trembles, he is—why, confound the scoundrel! I do believe he's grinning—he can't have understood me—"My name is Coverdale, I say, sir."

"Well then, Mr. Coverdale, if that's your name, the sooner you take yourself back to Coverdale Park the better I shall be pleased, for I'm a shooting rabbits, and your jabbering scares the creeturs," was the astounding rejoinder.

Coverdale could scarcely believe his ears; however, he contrived by a strong effort to subdue his rising passion, as

he answered; "If, as I imagine, you are the son of old Farmer Styles, of Wild Acre, you must be aware, sir, that the farm your father rents is *my* property, and that the rabbits you are shooting are *my* rabbits; I must, therefore, trouble you to hand over the one you have just killed, and to abstain from shooting entirely, except on any occasion when I may invite you to join me, or otherwise give you permission."

"I knows this, that father and I have got a thirty years' lease to run, and that when I wants a day's rabbiting, I means to take it, whether you likes it, or whether you doesn't. Why, the old Admiral never said a word agen it; but he was something like a gentleman, he was!" was the surly answer.

Harry's eyes flashed fire. "Do you mean to insinuate that I am not one then, fellow?" he asked in a voice that trembled with passion.

"And suppose I does, what then? feller!" returned the other insolently.

"This!" was the reply, as springing hastily forward, Coverdale struck Styles so violent a blow on the cheek with the back of his open hand, that he staggered and nearly fell; —recovering himself with difficulty, and holding one hand to his injured jaw, he muttered with an oath, "If it wasn't for the confounded guns, I'd give you the heartiest thrashing ever you had in your life."

"Or get one yourself," replied Harry, now thoroughly roused; "but, if you're at all inclined that way, don't disturb yourself about the guns; if you will discharge yours, I and my friend will do the same by ours, it's only wasting a charge or two of powder"—and, as he spoke, he fired both

barrels in the air. Styles paused a moment, to assure himself that no stratagem was contemplated, and then discharged his gun also, while Hazlehurst having glanced at his friend with an expression of the deepest astonishment, hastened to follow their example. At this moment the clatter of a horse's hoofs was heard, and Markum, the keeper, cantered up on the shooting pony. "Ah! that's right!" exclaimed Coverdale, who appeared suddenly to have regained his good temper—"tie the pony up to a tree and come here. Hazlehurst, you will pick me up if I require it, and Markum will do the same kind office by Mr. Styles, and I don't intend him to have a sinecure either." he added, sotto voce.

"You don't mean seriously you're going to fight the fellow:" inquired Hazlehurst.

"Indeed, I do, and, what's more, nobody shall prevent me, unless he shows the white feather," was the positive answer.

"But—but you'll get knocked about so: besides, the brute's a bigger, heavier man than you, and as strong as an elephant. Suppose he should injure you," remonstrated Hazlehurst.

"He may if he can," was the confident reply; "why Arthur, you're as nervous as a girl; this is not the first time you've seen me use my fists, and I've taken lessons from Ben Caunt since the old Eton days."

"Go in and win, then, if you will make a fool of yourself," rejoined Hazlehurst moodily, as he helped his friend to divest himself of his shooting-jacket and waistcoat.

"Now, Mr. Styles, I'm at your service," remarked Coverdale, addressing his antagonist politely.

"So you mean fighting do you?" inquired Styles, half incredulously.

"I mean to try and give you the thrashing with which you have threatened me," was the reply.

"And if you do, I'll promise never to shoot another rabbit without your permission; but if I'm best man, blest if I don't smash 'em when and where I likes," was the rejoinder.

"It's a bargain," returned Coverdale, "so come on."—As his antagonist bared his brawny arms and muscular throat, Harry felt that, if his skill were at all commensurate with his strength, he had cut himself out a somewhat troublesome task, and he began to own, in his secret soul, that Hazlehurst was right, and that he was about to do a very foolish thing. However, he had great confidence in his own skill and activity, and to these qualities did he trust to him from his difficulties. If relieve those amiable philanthropists, whose ranks, once numbering a large majority of the aristocracy and gentry of the land, have, as civilisation has spread, grown "small by degrees and beautifully less" (we allude to the "Patrons of the Ring,")—if these humane and enlightened individuals expect a detailed account, à la Bell's Life, of the "stunning mill between the Coverdale Cove and the Stylish Farmer," they must be doomed to the pangs of disappointment; for unfortunately neither our taste, nor our talent, lies in that direction. Suffice it then to relate, that Mr. Styles' science proving an article of the very roughest country manufacture, while his antagonist went to work with the skill and composure of a finished artist, Coverdale soon perceived that he had only to stop or avoid his opponent's blows, to keep cool and to

abide his time, in order to insure him an easy victory—and the event justified his expectations. After six rounds—in the course of which the farmer acquired two beautiful black eyes, while Coverdale had not got a scratch—time was called, and the seventh round commenced. Styles, smarting from the punishment he had received, and irritated to the highest degree by his adversary's coolness, rushed on so furiously, and hailed such a shower of blows upon his opponent, that Coverdale found it would be impossible entirely to ward them off, and, not wishing to be disfigured by a black eye or flattened nose, was forced to exert himself in real earnest to endeavour to bring the battle to a conclusion;—watching his opportunity, therefore, he drew back; stopped a terrific hit cleverly with his left hand, and then flinging out his right arm straight from the shoulder, and bounding forward at the same moment, he struck his antagonist a crashing blow, which, catching him full on the side of the head, sent him down like a shot.

"That has terminated the case for the defendant, I expect," observed Hazlehurst, sententiously, as, breathless and with bleeding knuckles, his friend seated himself on his extended knee—"he had had nearly enough before, and he has got rather too much now. You hit him an awful crack!"

"It was his own fault," returned Coverdale. "I did not want to hurt the man if he would have fought quietly, and like a civilised Christian, instead of a raging lunatic;—but he's only stunned—see he's reviving already. Confound the fellow, his head is as hard as a cannon-ball, to which fact my knuckles bear witness." So saying, Coverdale rose, and resuming his coat and waistcoat, approached his fallen foe,

who, with his head leaning against Markum's shoulder, was staring vacantly at the sky.

"He's as unconscionable as a hinfant, Mr. Coverdale, sir: you've been and knocked his hintellects slap out of him, which only sarves him right, and is what all poachers 'andsomely desarves," remarked the gamekeeper cheerfully.

"I know what will be the medicine to cure him," exclaimed Hazlehurst, producing a pocket-flask, and applying it to the lips of the vanquished Styles. At first the patient seemed inclined to resist; but as soon as he tasted the flavour of the contents of the pocket-pistol, he raised his hand, and pushing aside Hazlehurst'a fingers, drained it to the bottom.

"Gently, my friend," remonstrated the young barrister, "that's Kinahan's best whisky—fortunately I supplied the vacuum created at luncheon with spring water. Ah, I thought as much, that's the true elixir vitæ," he continued, as Styles, relinquishing the flask, sat up and began to stare wildly about him.

"Styles, my good fellow; how do you feel now? You were stunned, you know; but I shall be very sorry if I've hurt you," observed Coverdale, good-naturedly. As he spoke, Styles turned and regarded him attentively, measuring his tall, active figure with his glance from top to toe. At length he muttered, "Well, I didn't think he had it in him, that I didn't;" he then rubbed his head, with a look of thorough perplexity, once more fixing his eyes on his late opponent, as if he were some strange monster wonderful to behold: having, apparently, satisfied himself that he was a real flesh and

blood man, and not some newfangled, cast-iron boxing-machine, he turned to the gamekeeper, observing, "Markum, lend us a fin, old man, for I feels precious staggery-like, I can tell you. Your guv'nor hits hard." On obtaining the required assistance, he rose, not without difficulty, approached Coverdale, and holding out a hand somewhat smaller than a shoulder of mutton, said, "Shake hands, sir, you're a gentleman, and what's far more in my eyes, you're a man every inch of you, and I humbly begs your pardon for insulting of you."

"Say no more about it, my good friend," returned Coverdale, heartily shaking his proffered hand, "we did not understand each other before, but we do now, and shall get on capitally for the future I don't doubt."

"I shan't disturb your rabbits again, sir," continued the penitent Styles, entirely subdued by Coverdale's hearty manner, "and if the creeturs should do any damage to the crops, why I know a gentleman like you will bear it in mind on the rent-day."

"Certainly," was the eager reply; "my object now is to get up the game, and no tenant who assists me in this will find me a hard landlord."

And so, after an amicable colloquy, they parted the best friends imaginable; Styles observing, as he turned to go, "I did not think there was a man living who could have sewn me up in ten minutes like that; but you are unaccountable quick with your fists, to be sure, Mustur Coverdale."

"Pray Harry, is this to be considered a specimen of your 'quiet manner' with your tenantry?" inquired Hazlehurst dryly, as he bestrode the broad back of his shooting pony.

His friend coloured as he replied with a forced laugh, "Well, I must confess that for once in my life I a little lost temper;—but you see, old boy." he continued, bringing his hand down upon Hazlehurst's knee with a smack which caused that delicate youth to spring up in his saddle—"but you see I managed to conciliate him after all."

CHAPTER III.—HAZLEHURST PLEADS HIS CAUSE AND WINS IT.

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nd the worst of it is the fellow's right—what a bore life is—confound everything!—" As he gave utterance to this sweeping anathema, Harry Coverdale lifted a shaggy Scotch terrier by the ears out of an easy chair wherein it was reposing, and flinging himself on the seat thus made vacant, waited disconsolately till Hazlehurst should have finished a letter, which, with unwontedly grave brow he was perusing.

Having continued his occupation till his friend's small stock of patience was becoming well-nigh exhausted, Hazlehurst closed the epistle, muttering to himself—"Well! they know best, I suppose—but I don't admire the scheme, all the same—" then, turning towards his companion, he continued aloud—"I beg your pardon, my dear fellow! but the governor's letter contains a budget of family politics, which is, of course, more or less interesting to me, especially as, in the event of certain contingencies, he talks of increasing my allowance, but you're looking sentimental—what's the matter?"

"Oh! nothing," was the reply, "only that fellow Markum has been boring about the rabbits; he says we've worked them quite enough, and that the foxes will be pitching into the pheasants if they can't get plenty of rabbits to eat, and that so much shooting will make the birds wild before the 1st.—I know it all as well as he does—there ought not to be another gun fired on the property till the 1st of September, but then what is a fellow to do with himself? I might go to Paris—but I've been there and done it all—besides I hate their dissipation, it bores me to death; London is empty, and if it wasn't, it's worse than Paris—more smoke and less fun. I'd start to America, and do Niagara, and all the other picturesque dodges, only, if the wind were to turn restive, or anything go wrong in the boiler-bursting line, I might be delayed and miss the first day of partridge shooting, so it would not do to risk it."

"By no means," rejoined Hazlehurst, shaking his head with an air of mock solemnity—"but luckily I've a better plan to propose; I must make my way home at once—you shall come with me, and stay till we are all mutually tired of each other."

"But your father and mother?" urged Coverdale.

"Are more anxious than I am on the subject. Read that, you unbelieving Jew!" So saying, Hazlehurst turned down a portion of his letter, and handed it to Coverdale; it ran thus —"Mind you bring your friend with you; independently of our desire to become acquainted with one who has shown you such unvarying kindness, Mr. Coverdale is just the person to make up the party."

"Yes, they're very kind," began Coverdale, returning the letter, "very kind, but—"

"But what, man," rejoined Hazlehurst quickly, "we want you to come to us; you have not only no other engagement,

but actually don't know what to do with yourself, and yet you hesitate. However, to come to the point at once, I ask you plainly, and expect a plain answer—where's the hitch?"

"Well done, most learned counsel, that is the way to browbeat a witness, and no mistake," replied Coverdale, laughing at his friend's vehemence; "however, I won't provoke any farther display of your forensic talents by attempting to prevaricate. The fact is, I know you've a bevy of sisters, she cousins, and what not, very charming girls, I dare say; but you see I'm not fit for women's society, and that's the truth of it—I've chosen my line—I know what suits me best—and I dare say I shall live and die a bachelor, as the old Admiral did before me. I know what women are, and what they expect of one; if a fellow happens to be a little bit rough and ready, they call him a bear, and vow he's got no soul; 'gad, that's what the Turks say of them, by-the-bye!—Poetical justice; eh?"

"My dear boy, you'll excuse my saying so, but you really are talking great nonsense," interrupted Hazlehurst; "You're a thorough gentleman in mind, manners, and appearance, if I know the meaning of the term, and neither my sisters, nor my cousin (there is but one), have such bad taste as to prefer a finical fop to a fine manly fellow like yourself—no, they're more likely to fall into the other extreme."

"And that would be the worst of the two by long odds," exclaimed Harry aghast; "only fancy me with a wife in the shooting-season—bothering me to stay at home with her, or to drive her out in a four-wheeled arm-chair with a pair of little hopping rats of ponies, that the best whip in the three kingdoms could not screw above six miles an hour out of, if