

***AMELIA ANN  
BLANFORD  
EDWARDS***

***IN THE DAYS  
OF MY YOUTH***

**Amelia Ann Blanford Edwards**

# **In the Days of My Youth**

**A Novel**

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# CHAPTER I.

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## MY BIRTHPLACE AND PARENTAGE.

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Dolce sentier,  
Colle, che mi piacesti,  
Ov'ancor per usanza amor mi mena!

PETRARCH.

Sweet, secluded, shady Saxonholme! I doubt if our whole England contains another hamlet so quaint, so picturesquely irregular, so thoroughly national in all its rustic characteristics. It lies in a warm hollow environed by hills. Woods, parks and young plantations clothe every height and slope for miles around, whilst here and there, peeping down through green vistas, or towering above undulating seas of summer foliage, stands many a fine old country mansion, turreted and gabled, and built of that warm red brick that seems to hold the light of the sunset long after it has faded from the rest of the landscape. A silver thread of streamlet, swift but shallow, runs noisily through the meadows beside the town and loses itself in the Chad, about a mile and a half farther eastward. Many a picturesque old wooden bridge, many a foaming weir and ruinous water-mill with weedy wheel, may be found scattered up and down the wooded banks of this little river Chad; while to the brook,

which we call the Gipstream, attaches a vague tradition of trout.

The hamlet itself is clean and old-fashioned, consisting of one long, straggling street, and a few tributary lanes and passages. The houses some few years back were mostly long and low-fronted, with projecting upper stories, and diamond-paned bay-windows bowered in with myrtle and clematis; but modern improvements have done much of late to sweep away these antique tenements, and a fine new suburb of Italian and Gothic villas has sprung up, between the town and the railway station. Besides this, we have a new church in the mediæval style, rich in gilding and colors and thirteenth-century brass-work; and a new cemetery, laid out like a pleasure-garden; and a new school-house, where the children are taught upon a system with a foreign name; and a Mechanics' Institute, where London professors come down at long intervals to expound popular science, and where agriculturists meet to discuss popular grievances.

At the other extremity of the town, down by Girdlestone Grange, an old moated residence where the squire's family have resided these four centuries past, we are full fifty years behind our modern neighbors. Here stands our famous old "King's-head Inn," a well-known place of resort so early as the reign of Elizabeth. The great oak beside the porch is as old as the house itself; and on the windows of a little disused parlor overlooking the garden may still be seen the names of Sedley, Rochester and other wits of the Restoration. They scrawled those autographs after dinner, most likely, with their diamond rings, and went reeling

afterwards, arm-in-arm, along the village street, singing and swearing, and eager for adventures--as gentlemen were wont to be in those famous old times when they drank the king's health more freely than was good for their own.

Not far from the "King's Head," and almost hidden by the trees which divide it from the road, stands an ancient charitable institution called the College--quadrangular, mullion-windowed, many-gabled, and colonized by some twenty aged people of both sexes. At the back of the college, adjoining a space of waste ground and some ruined cloisters, lies the churchyard, in the midst of which, surrounded by solemn yews and mouldering tombs, stands the Priory Church. It is a rare old church, founded, according to the county history, in the reign of Edward the Confessor, and entered with a full description in Domesday Book. Its sculptured monuments and precious brasses, its Norman crypt, carved stalls and tattered banners drooping over faded scutcheons, tell all of generations long gone by, of noble families extinct, of gallant deeds forgotten, of knights and ladies remembered only by the names above their graves. Amongst these, some two or three modest tablets record the passing away of several generations of my own predecessors--obscure professional men for the most part, of whom some few became soldiers and died abroad.

In close proximity to the church stands the vicarage, once the Priory; a quaint old rambling building, surrounded by magnificent old trees. Here for long centuries, a tribe of rooks have held undisputed possession, filling the boughs with their nests and the air with their voices, and, like

genuine lords of the soil, descending at their own grave will and pleasure upon the adjacent lands.

Picturesque and mediæval as all these old buildings and old associations help to make us, we of Saxonholme pretend to something more. We claim to be, not only picturesque but historic. Nay, more than this--we are classical. WE WERE FOUNDED BY THE ROMANS. A great Roman road, well known to antiquaries, passed transversely through the old churchyard. Roman coins and relics, and fragments of tessellated pavement, have been found in and about the town. Roman camps may be traced on most of the heights around. Above all, we are said to be indebted to the Romans for that inestimable breed of poultry in right of which we have for years carried off the leading prizes at every poultry-show in the county, and have even been enabled to make head against the exaggerated pretensions of modern Cochin-China interlopers.

Such, briefly sketched, is my native Saxonholme. Born beneath the shade of its towering trees and overhanging eaves, brought up to reverence its antiquities, and educated in the love of its natural beauties, what wonder that I cling to it with every fibre of my heart, and even when affecting to smile at my own fond prejudice, continue to believe it the loveliest peacefulest nook in rural England?

My father's name was John Arbuthnot. Sprung from the Arbuthnots of Montrose, we claim to derive from a common ancestor with the celebrated author of "Martinus Scriblerus." Indeed, the first of our name who settled at Saxonholme was one James Arbuthnot, son to a certain nonjuring parson Arbuthnot, who lived and died abroad, and was own brother

to that famous wit, physician and courtier whose genius, my father was wont to say, conferred a higher distinction upon our branch of the family than did those Royal Letters-Patent whereby the elder stock was ennobled by His most Gracious Majesty King George the Fourth, on the occasion of his visit to Edinburgh in 1823. From this James Arbuthnot (who, being born and bred at St. Omer, and married, moreover, to a French wife, was himself half a Frenchman) we Saxonholme Arbuthnots were the direct descendants.

Our French ancestress, according to the family tradition, was of no very exalted origin, being in fact the only daughter and heiress of one Monsieur Tartine, Perruquier in chief at the Court of Versailles. But what this lady wanted in birth, she made up in fortune, and the modest estate which her husband purchased with her dowry came down to us unimpaired through five generations. In the substantial and somewhat foreign-looking red-brick house which he built (also, doubtless, with Madame's Louis d'ors) we, his successors, had lived and died ever since. His portrait, together with the portraits of his wife, son, and grandson, hung on the dining-room walls; and of the quaint old spindle-legged chairs and tables that had adorned our best rooms from time immemorial, some were supposed to date as far back as the first founding and furnishing of the house.

It is almost needless to say that the son of the non-juror and his immediate posterity were staunch Jacobites, one and all. I am not aware that they ever risked or suffered anything for the cause; but they were not therefore the less vehement. Many were the signs and tokens of that dead-and-gone political faith which these loyal Arbuthnots left

behind them. In the bed-rooms there hung prints of King James the Second at the Battle of the Boyne; of the Royal Martyr with his plumed hat, lace collar, and melancholy fatal face; of the Old and Young Pretenders; of the Princess Louisa Teresia, and of the Cardinal York. In the library were to be found all kinds of books relating to the career of that unhappy family: "Ye Tragicall History of ye Stuarts, 1697;" "Memoirs of King James II., writ by his own hand;" "La Stuartide," an unfinished epic in the French language by one Jean de Schelandre; "The Fate of Majesty exemplified in the barbarous and disloyal treatment (by traitorous and undutiful subjects) of the Kings and Queens of the Royal House of Stuart," genealogies of the Stuarts in English, French and Latin; a fine copy of "Eikon Basilike," bound in old red morocco, with the royal arms stamped upon the cover; and many other volumes on the same subject, the names of which (although as a boy I was wont to pore over their contents with profound awe and sympathy) I have now for the most part forgotten.

Most persons, I suppose, have observed how the example of a successful ancestor is apt to determine the pursuits of his descendants down to the third and fourth generations, inclining the lads of this house to the sea, and of that to the bar, according as the great man of the family achieved his honors on shipboard, or climbed his way to the woolsack. The Arbuthnots offered no exception to this very natural law of selection. They could not help remembering how the famous doctor had excelled in literature as in medicine; how he had been not only Physician in Ordinary to Queen Anne and Prince George of Denmark, but a satirist

and pamphleteer, a wit and the friend of wits--of such wits as Pope and Swift, Harley and Bolingbroke. Hence they took, as it were instinctively, to physic and the *belles lettres*, and were never without a doctor or an author in the family.

My father, however, like the great Martinus Scriblerus, was both doctor and author. And he was a John Arbuthnot. And to carry the resemblance still further, he was gifted with a vein of rough epigrammatic humor, in which it pleased his independence to indulge without much respect of persons, times, or places. His tongue, indeed, cost him some friends and gained him some enemies; but I am not sure that it diminished his popularity as a physician. People compared him to Abernethy, whereby he was secretly flattered. Some even went so far as to argue that only a very clever man could afford to be a bear; and I must say that he pushed this conclusion to its farthest limit, showing his temper alike to rich and poor upon no provocation whatever. He cared little, to be sure, for his connection. He loved the profession theoretically, and from a scientific point of view; but he disliked the drudgery of country practice, and stood in no need of its hardly-earned profits. Yet he was a man who so loved to indulge his humor, no matter at what cost, that I doubt whether he would have been more courteous had his bread depended on it. As it was, he practised and grumbled, snarled at his patients, quarrelled with the rich, bestowed his time and money liberally upon the poor, and amused his leisure by writing for a variety of scientific periodicals, both English and foreign.

Our home stood at the corner of a lane towards the eastern extremity of the town, commanding a view of the

Squire's Park, and a glimpse of the mill-pool and meadows in the valley beyond. This lane led up to Barnard's Green, a breezy space of high, uneven ground dedicated to fairs, cricket matches, and travelling circuses, whence the noisy music of brass bands, and the echoes of alternate laughter and applause, were wafted past our windows in the summer evenings. We had a large garden at the back, and a stable up the lane; and though the house was but one story in height, it covered a considerable space of ground, and contained more rooms than we ever had occasion to use. Thus it happened that since my mother's death, which took place when I was a very little boy, many doors on the upper floor were kept locked, to the undue development of my natural inquisitiveness by day, and my mortal terror when sent to bed at night. In one of these her portrait still hung above the mantelpiece, and her harp stood in its accustomed corner. In another, which was once her bedroom, everything was left as in her lifetime, her clothes yet hanging in the wardrobe, her dressing-case standing upon the toilet, her favorite book upon the table beside the bed. These things, told to me by the servants with much mystery, took a powerful hold upon my childish imagination. I trembled as I passed the closed doors at dusk, and listened fearfully outside when daylight gave me courage to linger near them. Something of my mother's presence, I fancied, must yet dwell within--something in her shape still wander from room to room in the dim moonlight, and echo back the sighing of the night winds. Alas! I could not remember her. Now and then, as if recalled by a dream, some broken and shadowy images of a pale face and a slender hand floated

vaguely through my mind; but faded even as I strove to realize them. Sometimes, too, when I was falling off to sleep in my little bed, or making out pictures in the fire on a winter evening, strange fragments of old rhymes seemed to come back upon me, mingled with the tones of a soft voice and the haunting of a long-forgotten melody. But these, after all, were yearnings more of the heart than the memory:--

"I felt a mother-want about the world.  
And still went seeking."

To return to my description of my early home:--the two rooms on either side of the hall, facing the road, were appropriated by my father for his surgery and consulting-room; while the two corresponding rooms at the back were fitted up as our general reception-room, and my father's bed-room. In the former of these, and in the weedy old garden upon which it opened, were passed all the days of my boyhood.

It was my father's good-will and pleasure to undertake the sole charge of my education. Fain would I have gone like other lads of my age to public school and college; but on this point, as on most others, he was inflexible. Himself an obscure physician in a remote country town, he brought me up with no other view than to be his own successor. The profession was not to my liking. Somewhat contemplative and nervous by nature, there were few pursuits for which I was less fitted. I knew this, but dared not oppose him. Loving study for its own sake, and trusting to the future for

some lucky turn of destiny, I yielded to that which seemed inevitable, and strove to make the best of it.

Thus it came to pass that I lived a quiet, hard-working home life, while other boys of my age were going through the joyous experience of school, and chose my companions from the dusty shelves of some three or four gigantic book-cases, instead of from the class and the playground. Not that I regret it. I believe, on the contrary, that a boy may have worse companions than books and busts, employments less healthy than the study of anatomy, and amusements more pernicious than Shakespeare and Horace. Thank Heaven! I escaped all such; and if, as I have been told, my boyhood was unboyish, and my youth prematurely cultivated, I am content to have been spared the dangers in exchange for the pleasures of a public school.

I do not, however, pretend to say that I did not sometimes pine for the recreations common to my age. Well do I remember the manifold attractions of Barnard's Green. What longing glances I used to steal towards the boisterous cricketers, when going gravely forth upon a botanical walk with my father! With what eager curiosity have I not lingered many a time before the entrance to a forbidden booth, and scanned the scenic advertisement of a travelling show! Alas! how the charms of study paled before those intervals of brief but bitter temptation! What, then, was pathology compared to the pig-faced lady, or the *Materia Medica* to Smith's Mexican Circus, patronized by all the sovereigns of Europe? But my father was inexorable. He held that such places were, to use his own words, "opened

by swindlers for the ruin of fools," and from one never-to-be-forgotten hour, when he caught me in the very act of taking out my penny-worth at a portable peep-show, he bound me over by a solemn promise (sealed by a whipping) never to repeat the offence under any provocation or pretext whatsoever. I was a tiny fellow in pinafores when this happened, but having once pledged my word, I kept it faithfully through all the studious years that lay between six and sixteen.

At sixteen an immense crisis occurred in my life. I fell in love. I had been in love several times before--chiefly with the elder pupils at the Miss Andrews' establishment; and once (but that was when I was very young indeed) with the cook. This, however, was a much more romantic and desperate affair. The lady was a Columbine by profession, and as beautiful as an angel. She came down to our neighborhood with a strolling company, and performed every evening, in a temporary theatre on the green, for nearly three weeks. I used to steal out after dinner when my father was taking his nap, and run the whole way, that I might be in time to see the object of my adoration walking up and down the platform outside the booth before the performances commenced. This incomparable creature wore a blue petticoat spangled with tinfoil, and a wreath of faded poppies. Her age might have been about forty. I thought her the loveliest of created beings. I wrote sonnets to her--dozens of them--intending to leave them at the theatre door, but never finding the courage to do it. I made up bouquets for her, over and over again, chosen from the best flowers in our neglected garden; but invariably with the

same result. I hated the harlequin who presumed to put his arm about her waist. I envied the clown, whom she condescended to address as Mr. Merriman. In short, I was so desperately in love that I even tried to lie awake at night and lose my appetite; but, I am ashamed to own, failed signally in both endeavors.

At length I wrote to her. I can even now recall passages out of that passionate epistle. I well remember how it took me a whole morning to write it; how I crammed it with quotations from Horace; and how I fondly compared her to most of the mythological divinities. I then copied it out on pale pink paper, folded it in the form of a heart, and directed it to Miss Angelina Lascelles, and left it, about dusk, with the money-taker at the pit door. I signed myself, if I remember rightly, Pyramus. What would I not have given that evening to pay my sixpence like the rest of the audience, and feast my eyes upon her from some obscure corner! What would I not have given to add my quota to the applause!

I could hardly sleep that night; I could hardly read or write, or eat my breakfast the next morning, for thinking of my letter and its probable effect. It never once occurred to me that my Angelina might possibly find it difficult to construe Horace. Towards evening, I escaped again, and flew to Barnard's Green. It wanted nearly an hour to the time of performance; but the tuning of a violin was audible from within, and the money-taker was already there with his pipe in his mouth and his hands in his pockets. I had no courage to address that functionary; but I lingered in his sight and sighed audibly, and wandered round and round

the canvas walls that hedged my divinity. Presently he took his pipe out of, his mouth and his hands out of his pockets; surveyed me deliberately from head to foot, and said:--

"Hollo there! aint you the party that brought a three-cornered letter here last evening!"

I owned it, falteringly.

He lifted a fold in the canvas, and gave me a gentle shove between the shoulders.

"Then you're to go in," said he, shortly. "She's there, somewhere. You're sure to find her."

The canvas dropped behind me, and I found myself inside. My heart beat so fast that I could scarcely breathe. The booth was almost dark; the curtain was down; and a gentleman with striped legs was lighting the footlamps. On the front pit bench next the orchestra, discussing a plate of bread and meat and the contents of a brown jug, sat a stout man in shirt-sleeves and a woman in a cotton gown. The woman rose as I made my appearance, and asked, civilly enough, whom I pleased to want.

I stammered the name of Miss Angelina Lascelles.

"Miss Lascelles!" she repeated. "I am Miss Lascelles," Then, looking at me more narrowly, "I suppose," she added, "you are the little boy that brought the letter?"

The little boy that brought the letter! Gracious heavens! And this middle-aged woman in a cotton gown--was she the Angelina of my dreams! The booth went round with me, and the lights danced before my eyes.

"If you have come for an answer," she continued, "you may just say to your Mr. Pyramid that I am a respectable married woman, and he ought to be ashamed of himself--

and, as for his letter, I never read such a heap of nonsense in my life! There, you can go out by the way you came in, and if you take my advice, you won't come back again!"

How I looked, what I said, how I made my exit, whether the doorkeeper spoke to me as I passed, I have no idea to this day. I only know that I flung myself on the dewy grass under a great tree in the first field I came to, and shed tears of such shame, disappointment, and wounded pride, as my eyes had never known before. She had called me a little boy, and my letter a heap of nonsense! She was elderly--she was ignorant--she was married! I had been a fool; but that knowledge came too late, and was not consolatory.

By-and-by, while I was yet sobbing and disconsolate, I heard the drumming and fifing which heralded the appearance of the *Corps Dramatique* on the outer platform. I resolved to see her for the last time. I pulled my hat over my eyes, went back to the Green, and mingled with the crowd outside the booth. It was growing dusk. I made my way to the foot of the ladder, and observed her narrowly. I saw that her ankles were thick, and her elbows red. The illusion was all over. The spangles had lost their lustre, and the poppies their glow. I no longer hated the harlequin, or envied the clown, or felt anything but mortification at my own folly.

"Miss Angelina Lascelles, indeed!" I said to myself, as I sauntered moodily home. "Pshaw! I shouldn't wonder if her name was Snooks!"

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## CHAPTER II.

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## THE LITTLE CHEVALIER.

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A mere anatomy, a mountebank,  
A threadbare juggler.

*Comedy of Errors.*

Nay, then, he is a conjuror.

*Henry VI.*

My adventure with Miss Lascelles did me good service, and cured me for some time, at least, of my leaning towards the tender passion. I consequently devoted myself more closely than ever to my studies--indulged in a passing mania for genealogy and heraldry--began a collection of local geological specimens, all of which I threw away at the end of the first fortnight--and took to rearing rabbits in an old tumble-down summer-house at the end of the garden. I believe that from somewhere about this time I may also date the commencement of a great epic poem in blank verse, and Heaven knows how many cantos, which was to be called the Columbiad. It began, I remember, with a description of the Court of Ferdinand and Isabella, and the departure of Columbus, and was intended to celebrate the discovery, colonization, and subsequent history of America. I never got beyond ten or a dozen pages of the first canto,

however, and that Transatlantic epic remains unfinished to this day.

The great event which I have recorded in the preceding chapter took place in the early summer. It must, therefore, have been towards the close of autumn in the same year when my next important adventure befell. This time the temptation assumed a different shape.

Coming briskly homewards one fine frosty morning after having left a note at the Vicarage, I saw a bill-sticker at work upon a line of dead wall which at that time reached from the Red Lion Inn to the corner of Pitcairn's Lane. His posters were printed in enormous type, and decorated with a florid bordering in which the signs of the zodiac conspicuously figured. Being somewhat idly disposed, I followed the example of other passers-by, and lingered to watch the process and read the advertisement. It ran as follows:----

MAGIC AND MYSTERY! MAGIC AND MYSTERY!

---

M. LE CHEVALIER ARMAND PROUDHINE, (of Paris)  
surnamed

THE WIZARD OF THE CAUCASUS,

Has the honor to announce to the Nobility and Gentry of Saxonholme and its vicinity, that he will, to-morrow evening (October--, 18--), hold his First

SOIREE FANTASTIQUE

IN

THE LARGE ROOM OF THE RED LION HOTEL.

---

ADMISSION 1s. RESERVED SEATS 2s. 6d.

*To commence at Seven.*

N.B.--*The performance will include a variety of new and surprising feats of Legerdemain never before exhibited.*

*A soirée fantastique!* what would I not give to be present at a *soirée fantastique!* I had read of the Rosicrucians, of Count Cagliostro, and of Doctor Dee. I had peeped into more than one curious treatise on Demonology, and I fancied there could be nothing in the world half so marvellous as that last surviving branch of the Black Art entitled the Science of Legerdemain.

What if, for this once, I were to ask leave to be present at the performance? Should I do so with even the remotest chance of success? It was easier to propound this momentous question than to answer it. My father, as I have already said, disapproved of public entertainments, and his prejudices were tolerably inveterate. But then, what could be more genteel than the programme, or more select than the prices? How different was an entertainment given in the large room of the Red Lion Hotel to a three-penny wax-work, or a strolling circus on Barnard's Green! I had made one of the audience in that very room over and over again when the Vicar read his celebrated "Discourses to Youth," or Dr. Dunks came down from Grinstead to deliver an explosive lecture on chemistry; and I had always seen the reserved seats filled by the best families in the neighborhood. Fully persuaded of the force of my own arguments, I made up my mind to prefer this tremendous request on the first favorable opportunity, and so hurried home, with my head full of quite other thoughts than usual.

My father was sitting at the table with a mountain of books and papers before him. He looked up sharply as I entered, jerked his chair round so as to get the light at his back, put on his spectacles, and ejaculated:--

"Well, sir!"

This was a bad sign, and one with which I was only too familiar. Nature had intended my father for a barrister. He was an adept in all the arts of intimidation, and would have conducted a cross-examination to perfection. As it was, he indulged in a good deal of amateur practice, and from the moment when he turned his back to the light and donned the inexorable spectacles, there was not a soul in the house, from myself down to the errand-boy, who was not perfectly aware of something unpleasant to follow.

"Well, sir!" he repeated, rapping impatiently upon the table with his knuckles.

Having nothing to reply to this greeting, I looked out of the window and remained silent; whereby, unfortunately, I irritated him still more.

"Confound you, sir!" he exclaimed, "have you nothing to say?"

"Nothing," I replied, doggedly.

"Stand there!" he said, pointing to a particular square in the pattern of the carpet. "Stand there!"

I obeyed.

"And now, perhaps, you will have the goodness to explain what you have been about this morning; and why it should have taken you just thirty-seven minutes by the clock to accomplish a journey which a tortoise--yes, sir, a tortoise,--might have done in less than ten?"

I gravely compared my watch with the clock before replying.

"Upon my word, sir," I said, "your tortoise would have the advantage of me."

"The advantage of you! What do you mean by the advantage of you, you affected puppy?"

"I had no idea," said I, provokingly, "that you were in unusual haste this morning."

"Haste!" shouted my father. "I never said I was in haste. I never choose to be in haste. I hate haste!"

"Then why..."

"Because you have been wasting your time and mine, sir," interrupted he. "Because I will not permit you to go idling and vagabondizing about the village."

My *sang froid* was gone directly.

"Idling and vagabondizing!" I repeated angrily. "I have done nothing of the kind. I defy you to prove it. When have you known me forget that I am a gentleman?"

"Humph!" growled my father, mollified but sarcastic; "a pretty gentleman--a gentleman of sixteen!"

"It is true," I continued, without heeding the interruption, "that I lingered for a moment to read a placard by the way; but if you will take the trouble, sir, to inquire at the Rectory, you will find that I waited a quarter of an hour before I could send up your letter."

My father grinned and rubbed his hands. If there was one thing in the world that aggravated him more than another, it was to find his fire opposed to ice. Let him, however, succeed in igniting his adversary, and he was in a good humor directly.

"Come, come, Basil," said he, taking off his spectacles, "I never said you were not a good lad. Go to your books, boy--go to your books; and this evening I will examine you in vegetable physiology."

Silently, but not sullenly, I drew a chair to the table, and resumed my work. We were both satisfied, because each in his heart considered himself the victor. My father was amused at having irritated me, whereas I was content because he had, in some sort, withdrawn the expressions that annoyed me. Hence we both became good-tempered, and, according to our own tacit fashion, continued during the rest of that morning to be rather more than usually sociable.

Hours passed thus--hours of quiet study, during which the quick travelling of a pen or the occasional turning of a page alone disturbed the silence. The warm sunlight which shone in so greenly through the vine leaves, stole, inch by inch, round the broken vases in the garden beyond, and touched their brown mosses with a golden bloom. The patient shadow on the antique sundial wound its way imperceptibly from left to right, and long slanting threads of light and shadow pierced in time between the branches of the poplars. Our mornings were long, for we rose early and dined late; and while my father paid professional visits, I devoted my hours to study. It rarely happened that he could thus spend a whole day among his books. Just as the clock struck four, however, there came a ring at the bell.

My father settled himself obstinately in his chair.

"If that's a gratis patient," said he, between his teeth, "I'll not stir. From eight to ten are their hours, confound them!"

"If you please, sir," said Mary, peeping in, "if you please, sir, it's a gentleman."

"A stranger?" asked my father.

Mary nodded, put her hand to her mouth, and burst into an irrepressible giggle.

"If you please, sir," she began--but could get no farther.

My father was in a towering passion directly.

"Is the girl mad?" he shouted. "What is the meaning of this buffoonery?"

"Oh, sir--if you please, sir," ejaculated Mary, struggling with terror and laughter together, "it's the gentleman, sir. He--he says, if you please, sir, that his name is Almond Pudding!"

"Your pardon, Mademoiselle," said a plaintive voice. "Armand Proudhine--le Chevalier Armand Proudhine, at your service."

Mary disappeared with her apron to her mouth, and subsided into distant peals of laughter, leaving the Chevalier standing in the doorway.

He was a very little man, with a pinched and melancholy countenance, and an eye as wistful as a dog's. His threadbare clothes, made in the fashion of a dozen years before, had been decently mended in many places. A paste pin in a faded cravat, and a jaunty cane with a pinchbeck top, betrayed that he was still somewhat of a beau. His scant gray hair was tied behind with a piece of black ribbon, and he carried his hat under his arm, after the fashion of Elliston and the Prince Regent, as one sees them in the colored prints of fifty years ago.

He advanced a step, bowed, and laid his card upon the table.

"I believe," he said in his plaintive voice, and imperfect English, "that I have the honor to introduce myself to Monsieur Arbuthnot."

"If you want me, sir," said my father, gruffly, "I am Doctor Arbuthnot."

"And I, Monsieur," said the little Frenchman, laying his hand upon his heart, and bowing again--"I am the Wizard of the Caucasus."

"The what?" exclaimed my father.

"The Wizard of the Caucasus," replied our visitor, impressively.

There was an awkward pause, during which my father looked at me and touched his forehead significantly with his forefinger; while the Chevalier, embarrassed between his natural timidity and his desire to appear of importance, glanced from one face to the other, and waited for a reply. I hastened to disentangle the situation.

"I think I can explain this gentleman's meaning," I said. "Monsieur le Chevalier will perform to-morrow evening in the large room of the Red Lion Hotel. He is a professor of legerdemain."

"Of the marvellous art of legerdemain, Monsieur Arbuthnot," interrupted the Chevalier eagerly. "Prestidigitateur to the Court of Sachsenhausen, and successor to Al Hakim, the wise. It is I, Monsieur, that have invent the famous *tour du pistolet*; it is I, that have originate the great and surprising deception of the bottle; it is I whom