

road, and almost hidden from sight by immensely high fences. Ye gods! thought I; and am I supposed to have jumped over these? I wonder who the fellow was! what a rider he must be, to be sure! I then approached the fences, and separating the interlacing branches scanned the inclosure. I didn't look long, for I perceived a young lady walking near, in any thing but that mood which Shakspeare describes as

"Maiden meditation, fancy free."

I no sooner caught sight of her than I cautiously withdrew, fearing that if she were to perceive me she might raise an alarm, and really place me in the predicament which every body supposed me to have been in on the previous evening. As I turned round, to my intense disconcertion and confusion I saw two ladies issue from the park gate, whom I immediately recognized as Annie and Aunt Julia. Now I had a wholesome dread of Aunt Julia; conscious of an uninterrupted rectitude of conduct during her whole life, she had not the slightest leniency for the errors of others, and though my presence there was innocent enough in fact, to their minds it must have been suspicious. I determined now to tell the truth, the whole truth, etc., etc.

"Why," said Annie, stopping short, "what are you doing here *again!*"

"Studying the locality."

"Upon my word you take this remarkably coolly; you first of all commit a gross outrage upon propriety, leaving me out of the question the want of respect shown to me, and then follow it up by deliberately insulting me. 'Studying the locality,' indeed! and pray, if I may ask, with what object?"

"Yes, Sir," said my aunt, in her turn taking up the cudgels; "has not your extremely eccentric and extraordinary breach of all laws, human and divine" (good Lord! how some people will exaggerate!), "satisfied you—have you not dragged the name which you bear, stainless until now, sufficiently in the mud? Has not—"

"Really, my dear aunt, I do *not* think your violent reproaches are justified by the facts. As to breaking all laws, human and divine, even were I guilty of the slight misdemeanors attributed to me—"

"Which are 'attributed' to you!" broke in Annie. "Did you ride out here or not? Did you confess to have jumped Trelawney's hedge, Heaven knows for what purpose, except, perhaps" (here she began to sob), "perhaps—"

"To make love to his daughter," added my aunt, sternly. "I can not doubt it, let us leave him, my dear; he is beneath your contempt."

"Stay, Annie; my dear aunt, one word. This story of the ride—this trespass on Trelawney's ground—I give you my word that as far as it implicates me there is not one word of truth in it.

I never rode out here. I never was on horseback in my life, I do assure you."

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Charlton," said Annie, "that you were not speaking the truth, when you spoke of this excursion only this morning?"

"I confess to my shame that, for the first time in my life, I descended to falsehood."

"With what motive?"

"Merely to prove to you that telling fibs was easy, and that the merit you attached to the faculty was fictitious; but I yield the point now; in fact, I am inclined to agree with you."

"But if this be true—the stable-boy's description—your coat too—and then here again, 'studying the locality'—what for? what is the locality to you? No, no; I must be on my guard. If you spoke falsely then, you may be doing so now; and if you spoke the truth then, you *must* now be deceiving me. I have a right to demand clear and ample proof that what you now state is true; and until then it is, perhaps, as well that we should not meet. Good-evening. Come, aunt."

Aunt Julia examined me through her eye-glass, as though I were some peculiar animal unknown to her zoology, and passed on, leaving me, as may be imagined, in a nice, comfortable, I may say, elysian state of mind. As soon as they were out of sight I strolled back into the town, reflecting upon what had taken place.

Now the thing was becoming serious. I must take some action in the matter. So thinking as I went, I resolved upon seeking out Charley, making to him a full confession, and enlisting his services to discover the real culprit.

I found Master Charley in my house-keeper's room, indulging in a *tele-a-tele* with the worthy old dame's granddaughter, learning crochet, seated on a stool.

"Halloa, my friend!" said he, on perceiving me, "here I am installed, you see, the charming Rose teaching me to read love in her eyes!"

"Lor, Mr. Charles! How can you such things? I was teaching him crochet, sir," she said. "I must either stay with him or be kissed before I went, and so—"

"You staid!" said Charley, laughing; "and now that you are going, here's the kiss."

But the young lady was too sharp for him, and all he got for his motion was the door in his face.

"Charley," said I, "can you be serious a moment?"

"Well I'll try, if it is to oblige you, old fellow. What's up?"

"What's up? Nothing is up! Every thing is down; my hopes are down; my spirits are down."

"Then send for some wine, and when that is down I shall be grave as a judge."

"Yes, but not as sober. So just 'lend

me your ears' a minute." It is needless to recapitulate all that the reader already knows. I told him every thing—how I had determined to try the experiment of lying; that I had left the subject until the last moment; that some extraordinary coincidence had by the aid of my falsehood, identified me with the trespasser in Trelawney's grounds, etc., etc.

Charley's astonishment knew no bounds, and found vent in such exclamations as, "Lord bless me!" "You don't say so!" "Extraordinary, indeed!" "Wonderful!" "I never heard the like!" and at last bursting into a fit of uncontrollable laughter, he threw himself into an easy chair and rolled with emotion. I bore it patiently for some time. At last, however, I exclaimed, "Really, Charley, I see nothing to laugh at: your sister is very angry, and, as to my aunt, I fear I have lost her good-will forever, though that is of less consequence; and I think, instead of rolling about there in that idiotic way you might suggest some plan of tracing out the abominable villain who has taken so much pains to cast a slur upon my name."

At this he only laughed the more. Seeing, however, that I was becoming very angry, he gasped out:

"One moment—one moment—I shall recover. Ha! ha?" (Another burst of laughter.)

I turned to leave the room, disgusted, but he caught hold of me, saying:

"Stay, my dear Frank. This rascal, this villain, this 'abominable' villain, who has so terribly misused you, was—"

"Who?"

"I—I—myself! Ha! ha!" *ad libitum.*

"You?" said I, in amazement.

"Never a soul else. Just listen. On the memorable evening I came here to ask the loan of your coat, as the weather was chilly, and I wanted particularly to see Fanny Trelawney. I could find you nowhere. I suppose you had hidden yourself to meditate on your lie that was to be. I therefore took your coat, hired Gardiner's mare, and was the real trespasser on Trelawney's premises. When, on the ensuing day, you said you had been for a ride, I knew you were fibbing, for I was perfectly aware you had a wholesome horror of mounting a horse. I led you on, till I managed to implicate you in the affair of the evening before, and then stole out and replaced your coat. Really, you behaved most handsomely about those damages. Ha! ha!"

"Oh, laugh away, confound you!

But then, that idiot of a stable-boy—"

"Idiot? On the contrary, a deuced clever fellow. I knew there would be trouble about my escapade; so on my return I tipped him handsomely to put any questioners on a false scent, and I think he succeeded admirably."

"This may be a joke to you, Charley,