

OVER THE BORDER.

By WALTER BESANT.

CHAPTER III.

HOW RALPH SOUGHT FORTUNE.

A young man's walk from Warkworth all the way to London cannot but be full of interest and adventure.

There were waggoners to talk with, friendly hawkers whom the people call "trugglers" and fairs, or trickers who are too often robbers and pilferers also; but these their wives and daughters with drivers, carriers, honest sailors who would scorn to rob upon the highway on their way to join ship, and pleasant little country towns every eight or ten miles, where one could rest and talk and drink a tankard of good small beer. Then as it was early summer, when there are fair-going on in many places, the roads in some parts were full of the caravans and the show people, whom Ralph found not only a curious and interesting folk, but also friendly and inclined to conversation with a stranger who was not a rival who was ready to offer a tankard who admired without stint or envy the precious things they had to show and who watched with delight unbounded and belief profound, the curious tricks, arts, artifices and accomplishments by which they secured a precarious livelihood. Ralph walked with them along the road and heard their stories. He also learned some of the strange language in which they talk to each other when minded not to be understood by the bystanders.

When they came to their destination, and set up their canvas booths he stayed too and enjoyed the fun of the fair. There were lotteries also you could put in and draw everywhere all day long there were prizes of suspense and prizes of £10 he put in sometimes he won but oftener he lost, which is generally the way with sportsmen and those who wait upon the Goddess of Chance. At this Capua or Paradise of Pleasures which was then, and is still called Grantham, Ralph had well nigh taken a step which would have made his story much less interesting to us, though perhaps truer of incident. For he made acquaintance—being a youth of innocent heart, and apt to believe in the honesty and virtue of every body—with the company of players. Now it happened first, that the troop was sadly in want of a young actor, if only to play up to the manager's daughter, and secondly that this young lady who was as beautiful as the day and as graceful as Mrs. Bracegirdle (she afterward became a most famous London actress, and married an aged earl, cast eyes of favor on the handsome lad, longed very much for him to play Romeo to her Juliet, or Othello to her Desdemona, or any other part in which the beauty of a handsome woman is set off by the beauty of a handsome fellow, a thing which very few actresses can understand, they think which is a great mistake, that it is better for them to be the only well favored creature on the stage. Wherefore the manager took Ralph aside privately and offered him refreshment either ale or rum, or Barbadoes water with tobacco if he chose, and had serious conversation with him providing all his victuals and those as attendant as the treasury would allow and a salary—say five shillings a week, to begin in a few months as soon as he had learned to act, and to teach him the rudiments, and the honor and glory of playing principal parts and his own daughter to play up to and a possible prospect of appearing at Drury Lane.

It was a tempting offer, the stage—even the stage of a barn—seemed splendid to the lad, the voice and manner of the manager were seductive, more seductive still was the case of his daughter. When she lifted her great eyes and met his trembled and could not say her nay. When she laid her pretty hand upon his and begged him to stay with them and be her Romeo, what could he reply? Yet he remembered in time that he was on his way to seek his fortune, that the troupe were obviously out at elbows, all horribly poor, and apparently badly fed, that to fall in love with an actress was not the beginning he had contemplated, and that Drury, for her part, would certainly not consider a struggling actor a life as the most honorable in the world. He took a resolution: he would think no more upon those impudently, he hardened his heart, he would fly. He did fly, but not before the young actress, who was already beyond his own age and ought to have known better, had laid her arms around his neck and kissed farewell, with many tears to her first love, who would not let her go in return. But her father was not displeased, and said, speaking more from a business point of view than out of paternal tenderness, that she would act the better for the little disappointment, and that it does them good, when they are young, to feel something of what they are always pretending. Said it put backbone into their attitudes and rent tears in their eyes. Nothing on the stage so difficult as real tears, except a blush, which cannot be had for love or money.

Thus it happened that it was four or five weeks before Ralph got to London. He arrived by way of Highgate. He reached the top of Highgate Hill at 4 in the afternoon. Here he sat down to rest, and to look upon the city he had come so far to see. He saw in the distance the towers and steeples of London, his long journey was done, the distance he came to seek was—where was it? All the long way from Warkworth it seemed to him that which he reached London he would

immediately find that thing which was in some visible and tangible form, waiting to be seized by his strong young hands. Yet now that he saw before him the City of the Golden Pavement it seemed as if perhaps—it was a chilling thought—he might not know or recognize or be able to seize this fortune when he actually saw it. What is it like—Good Fortune! In other words he began for the first time to experience the coldness of doubt which sometimes falls upon the stoutest of us. His cheek was by this time burned a deeper brown, his hands were dyed and tanned by the June sun, his coat and waistcoat were stained with travel and with rain, his shoes were worn through the soles, in his pocket jingled the last two of his eleven guineas. When they were gone, he reflected with dismay, what would have to be done? But it was not a time to sit and think. Every fortune must have its beginning, every young adventurer must make a start, every Dick Whittington must enter the city of London. He rose, seized his bundle, and set off down the hill, singing to keep up his spirits, with as much alacrity as if he were only just starting on his way from Warkworth, and as if his heart was still warmed by the recollection of his cousin's brunes.

The way from Highgate to London lies along a pleasant road between tall hedges. On either side are fields and woods, and here and there a gentleman's seat or the country box of a successful citizen. Presently the boy reached Highbury, where the road bends south, and he passed Islington, with its old church and its narrow, shady lanes thick with trees. On his right he saw a great crowd in a garden, and there was music. This was Sadler's Wells. Soon after this he arrived at Clerkenwell Green, and so by a maze of streets, not knowing whether he went, to Smithfield, where he found himself in the midst of the crowd which fills all the streets of the city from dawn till night.

It was 7 o'clock when he found himself at the place whither he was bound. He had been wandering for an hour and a half looking about him, and at last ventured to ask the way of a servant girl, who seemed astonished that he should not know so simple a thing as the most expeditious road to Cheapside, seeing that it was only the other side of Paul's. But she told him, and he presently found himself in the broad and wealthy street called Cheapside.

The Leg and Star was on the south side, between Broad Street and Bow Church. It was a glover's shop, and because it was growing late, the boxes of gloves were now taken from the window, and the apprentices were putting all away. Ralph stopped and looked at the sign, then at the letter—which was not a little crumpled and soiled—and again at the sign. It was a must be the house, the sign of the Leg and Star, in Cheapside.

At the door of the shop stood a tall and portly man, between 50 and 60 years of age, with large red cheeks and double chin. He was dressed in plain broad cloth and the way, but he wore ruffles and neckcloth of fine white linen laced, as became a substantial citizen. Ralph knew it could be none other than Mr. Hetherington, wherefore he took off his hat and bowed low.

"What is thy business, young man?" asked the master glover.

"Sir, I bear a letter from your honor's daughter, now staying at Warkworth, in Northumberland."

"My daughter! Then, prithee, boy, who are you?"

"My name is Ralph Embleton, and"—

"Thou art the son then, of my old friend Jack Embleton? Come in, lad, come in." He seized the boy by the arm and dragged him into the house and across the shop to the sitting room at the back. "Wife! wife!" he cried. "Here is a messenger from Drusy with a letter. Give me the letter, boy. And this is young Ralph Embleton, son of my old friend and gossip Jack Embleton, with whom I have had many a fight in the old days. Poor Jack! poor Jack! Well, we live. Let us be thankful. Make the boy welcome, give him supper. Make him a bed somewhere. What art thou doing in this great place, lad? So the letter—ay! the letter."

He read the superscription, and slowly opened it, and began to read.

"DEAR AND HON'D PARENTS: The bearer of this is Rafe, who has run away from cruel treatment, and wants to make his fortune in London. He will tell you that I am well, and that I pray for your health, and that you will be kind to Rafe. Your loving and dutiful son, DRUSILLA."

"So," went on the merchant, "what treatment. Who hath cruelly ill treated thee, boy?"

"I have run away, sir," he said, "from my cousin Mathew Humble, because he seeks every opportunity to do me a mischief. And since he is my guardian there is no remedy but to endure or to run away."

"Ah, Mathew Humble, who bought my farm. Sam Embleton married his father's sister. Did your Uncle Sam leave Morwick Mill to Mathew?"

"No, sir, he left it to me."

"And Mathew is your guardian? Yet the mill is your own, and you have run away from your own property? Morwick Mill is a pretty estate. It likes me not. Yet you would fain seek your fortune in London. That is well. Fortune, my lad, is only to be made by men of resolute hearts, like me. He expanded as he spoke, and seemed to grow two feet higher and broad in proportion. "And strong arms, like mine," he hammered his chest as if it had been an anvil—"and keen eyes, like mine. Weak men fall and get trampled on in London. Cowardly men get set on one side, while the strong and the brave march on, I shall be, without doubt,

next year, a common councilman. Strong men, clever men, brave men, boy march, I say, from honor to greater honor. I shall become alderman in two or three years, if providence so disposes. There is no limit to the exalted ambitions of the London citizen. You would climb like me. You would be, some day, my lord mayor. It is well. It does you credit. It is a noble ambition."

Meanwhile a maid had been spreading the table with supper, and to say the truth, the eyes of the boy were turned upon the cold meats with so visible a longing that the merchant could not choose but observe his hunger. So he bade him sit and eat. Now, while Ralph devoured his supper, being at the moment one of the hungriest lads in all England, the honest glover went to talking to grand if not boastful language about himself and his great doings. Yet, inexperienced as he was, Ralph could not but wonder, because, although the merchant was certainly past 50 years of age, the great things were all in the future. He would become one of the richest merchants in London, he would be lord mayor, he would make his daughter a great heiress, he designed that she should marry a lord at least. At this announcement Ralph blushed and his heart sank. One of the reasons, said the merchant, why he kept her still in Northumberland was that he did not wish her to return home till they were removed to a certain great house which he had in his mind, but had not yet purchased. She should go in silk and satin, he would give such great entertainments that even the king should hear of them, London was ever the city for noble feasting. And so he talked until the lad's brain reeled for thinking of all these splendors, and he grew sad in thinking how far off Drusilla would be, one by one, all these grandeur became achieved.

Another thing he observed, that while the husband talked in his confident and braggart way, the wife, who was a thin woman, sat silent and sometimes sighed. Why did she sigh? Did she want to live on in obscurity? Had she no ambition?

Then the merchant had filled and lit a pipe of tobacco, and proceeded to tell Ralph how he would have to begin upon this ambitious career in search of a fortune. First, he would have to be an apprentice. "I was myself," said Mr. Hetherington, "an apprentice, though you would think it now? As an apprentice he would sweep and clean out the shop, open it in the morning, and shut it at night; wait upon the customers all day, run errands, obey dutifully his master, learn the business, watch his master's interests, behave with respect to his betters, show zeal in the dispatch of work, get no holidays in playtime, never see the green fields except on Good Fridays, take for meals what might be given him, which would certainly not be slices off the sirlon, and sleep under the counter at night. In short, the shop would be his workroom, his parlor, his eating room, and his bedroom."

The boy listened to his instructions with dismay. Was this the road to fortune? Was he to become a slave for some years? But—after? His apprenticeship finished, it appeared that he might, if he could find money, open a shop and become a master. But most young men, he learned, found it necessary to remain in the employment of their masters for some years, and in some cases for the whole term of their natural lives.

He did not consider that he had already such a fortune as would, if laid out with judgment, enable him to open a shop or to buy a partnership. He forgot at the time that he was the owner of Morwick Mill. It seemed to him, being so young and inexperienced, that he had run away from his inheritance, and abandoned it to Mathew de, too, might therefore have to remain in a master's employment. This was fine fortune, truly, to be a servant all your days. And the boy began already even to regret his cousin Mathew's blows and Barbara's cruel tongue.

His pipe finished, the merchant remembered that at 8 his club would meet, and therefore left the lad with his wife.

"Boy," she leaned over the table and whispered eagerly as soon as her husband was gone, "have you come up to London without money to become a merchant?"

"Indeed, madame," he replied, "I know not what I may become."

"Then fly," she said, "go home again. Follow the plow, become a tinker, a tailor, a cobbler—anything that is honest. Trade is uncertain. For one who succeeds a dozen are broke, you know not, any moment but that you also may break. Your fortune hangs upon a hundred chances. Alas! if one of these fall, there is the Fleet, or may be Newgate, or Marshalsea, or Whitecross Street, or the King's Bench or the Clinck—there are plenty of places for the bestowal of poor debtors—for yourself, and for your wife and innocent children ruin and starvation."

"Yes," said Ralph, "Mr. Hetherington is not anxious."

"He leaves anxiety," she replied bitterly, "to his wife."

Then she became silent, and spoke no more to the boy, but sat with her lips working as one who conversed with herself. And from time to time she sighed as if her heart was breaking.

In the morning the merchant was up betimes and began again upon the glories of the city.

"Art still of the same mind?" he asked.

"Wilt thou be like Whittington and Gresham and me, also one of those who climb the tree?"

Then Ralph confessed with a blush—which mattered nothing, so deep was the ruddy brown upon his cheek—that he found city honors dearly bought at the price of so much labor and suffering.

ly tones, "what will you do?"

Ralph asked if there was nothing that a young man may do besides work at a trade or sit in a shop.

"Why truly yes," Mr. Hetherington replied with severity, "he may become a highwayman, and rob upon the road, taking their money from honest tradesmen and poor farmers—a gallant life indeed, and so he will presently hang in chains or be anatomized and set up in Surgeon's Hall. There is the end of your fresh air for you."

"But, with respect, sir," Ralph persisted, "I mean, in an honest way."

"If he is rich enough he may be a scholar of Cambridge and so take orders or he may become a physician, or a lawyer, or a schoolmaster, or a surgeon, and go to sea in his majesty's ships and lead a dog's life or a soldier and go a fighting."

"Let me be a soldier," cried the boy.

"Why why? But you must first get his majesty's commission, and to get this you must first beg for letters to my Lord. This and my Lord That, and dangle about great houses, praying for their influence, and bribe the lackeys, and then perhaps you'll never get your commission after all."

This was discouraging. "Rolling stones, lad," said the great merchant, "gather no moss. Better stand quiet behind the counter, sweep out the shop, serve customers and keep accounts, and perhaps some day be partner and grow rich."

But Ralph hung his head.

"Then how can I help thee, foolish boy? Yet, because I knew thy father, and for Drusy's sake—Stay, would you go to India?"

To India! Little, indeed, of the great doings in India reached the town of Warkworth. Yet Ralph had heard the vicar talking with Mr. Carnaby of Col Clive and the famous battle of Plassey. To India! His eyes flashed.

"Yes, sir, I would willingly go to India."

"My worthy friend, Mr. Nathaniel Silvertop, is in the service of the company. Come, let us seek his counsel."

They walked, the boy being much astonished at the crowd, the noise, and the never ceasing business of the streets, down Cheapside, through the Poultry, past the new Mansion house and the Royal Exchange into Cornhill, where stands the honorable East India company's house, a plain, solid building, adorned with pillars of the dorie order. Mr. Hetherington led the way into a great hall, where was already assembled a crowd of men who had fared to ask of the directors, and finding a servant he sent his name to Mr. Silvertop.

Presently, for nothing was done in undignified haste in this house, Mr. Silvertop himself—a gentleman of three score and of grave appearance—descended the stairs. To him Mr. Hetherington unfolded his business.

Here, he said, was a young fellow from Northumberland, heir to a small and pretty estate, but incumbered for three or four years to come with a guardian, whose affection he appeared to have unfortunately lost, so that it would be well for both to remain apart, but he was a young gentleman of rising tastes, who would fain see a little of the world, and—but this he whispered—a brave and bold fellow.

Mr. Silvertop regarded the lad attentively.

"Our writers," he said solemnly, "go out on small salaries. They seldom rise above £400 or £500 a year at the most. Yet—mark this young gentleman—so great are their chances in India that they sometimes come home at 40, or even less, with £100,000—ay, £200,000. Think upon that, boy! So great a thing it is to serve this honorable company."

The boy's eyes showed no emotion. A dull dog, indeed, he seemed to Mr. Silvertop, not to tremble at the mere mention of so vast a sum.

"Leave him here, my good friend," said Mr. Silvertop. "I have business, but I will return and speak with him again. He can walk in the hall and wait."

Mr. Hetherington went his way and Ralph waited.

After an hour or so he saw Mr. Silvertop coming down the stairs again. He was escorted, or leading to the door, or in some way behaving in respectful and deferential fashion to a tall and splendid gentleman, brave in scarlet, wearing a sash and a sword and a gold laced hat. At the foot of the stairs, Mr. Silvertop bowed low to this gentleman, who joined a little group of gentlemen, some of them also in scarlet. He seemed to be the chief among them for they all behaved to him with the greatest respect. Then Mr. Silvertop looked about in the crowd, and spying Ralph, beckoned him to draw near and speak with him.

"So," said Mr. Silvertop, "you are the lad. Yes, I remember. Ralph thought it strange that he should not remember seeing that it was but an hour or two since Mr. Silvertop had spoken last with him."

"You are recommended by my friend Mr. Hetherington. Well, I know not—we are pestered with applications for our writships, every runaway—Ralph blushed—every out at elbows younger son—the great gentleman in scarlet, who was close at hand, here turned his head and looked at the lad with a little interest. "Here, poor curate's brat who can read and cipher wants to be sent to India."

"You cannot, sir," said the gentleman in scarlet, "lead too many Englishmen to India. I would too the whole country was ruled by Englishmen—yet not by quill drivers."

He added the last words in a lower voice, yet Ralph heard them.

Mr. Silvertop bowed low, and turned

again to the boy.

"A writship," he continued, "is the greatest gift that can be bestowed upon

a deserving lad. Remember that, and if—but I cannot promise I would oblige my friend if I could—but I will not undertake anything. With my influence—yet I do not say for certain, a writship is a greater matter than you seem to think—I might bring thy case before the directors. Is thy handwriting fair, and thy knowledge of figures absolute?"

Ralph blushed, because his handwriting was short of the clerical standard.

"I thank you, sir," he said, "but I love not writing. I would rather carry a sword than a pen."

"Ta ta ta," replied Mr. Silvertop, whose influence lay wholly in the mercantile department of the company. "We waste our time. A sword! I know naught of swords. Go thy ways, boy—go thy ways in London city, think you, a place for the carriage of swords! Go, take the king's shilling, and join a marching regiment. I warrant you enough of swords and bayonets."

Ralph bowed and turned away sadly. The gentleman in scarlet, who had appar-



Ralph bowed and turned away sadly.

ently been listening to the conversation, followed him to the doors with thoughtful eyes.

"A lad who would rather handle a sword than a pen," he said. "Are there many such lads in this city of trade and greed?"

They looked at the Leg and Star that day for the return of the young Northumbrian in time for dinner. But he came not, nor did he come at night, nor did he ever come. No one knew whether he had gone or what had become of him, and when Mr. Hetherington learned that in this wicked town he had been enticed by some designing wretch to his destruction.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

At the close of the war the state of West Virginia made a demand on old Virginia for the surrender of C. T. O'Ferral, an ex-Confederate colonel. West Virginia wanted him to answer for destruction of property in a cavalry raid during the war. The property had been destroyed in the neighborhood where O'Ferral was born and reared. His old neighbors formed a plot to take him from the custody of the officers and hang him to a tree close by his mother's house in case the requisition was honored. But it was not, and O'Ferral escaped hanging. Time went on. The ex-Confederate studied law and went to congress from old Virginia. He became Representative O'Ferral. Not many years ago his old friends who were going to hang him invited him to visit them and deliver a Fourth of July oration. Mr. O'Ferral did so and was warmly welcomed. So times have changed.

Changing the Label.

"It turns out," remarked the telegraph editor, "that the bank robbery in Greenupville was a smaller affair than at first reported. Instead of \$6,500 the fellow got away with only \$65."

"Grimes," hawled the night editor of the Morning Paralyzer through the speaking tube to the foreman, "take that heading 'Bold and Successful Operation of a Daring Financier' off the account of that Greenupville affair and put in its place 'A Rascal makes a Sneak on a Bank.'"—Chicago Tribune.

Legal Technicalities.—The miserable prisoner was on trial for embezzlement. He leaned over to his lawyer and whispered: "As the evidence is so strong, I don't mind confessing that I took \$250 of the stolen money." The lawyer shook his head. "Won't do. You'd get six years." "The fact is," pursued the prisoner, "I took in all about \$50,000." "In that case own up. You can't get more than eighteen months."—Society.

"Every association of men requires for its maintenance the spiritual principle of self-renouncing love, and requires it the more, the more solid and intense its life becomes."—Fremantle.

—Jones—"I hear that your cousin Emily, who is such a beautiful young girl, is engaged to an ugly old man, who is not very rich." Smith—"Well, in one respect he has a decided advantage over Emily." "In what respect is that?" "He has a great deal better taste than she has."—Texas Siftings.

—Customer—"I'll have some more of that brown sugar I bought last week." Grocer—"You like it then?" "Yes, and so does the canary." "Why, the bird doesn't eat sugar, does he?" "Oh, no! I use the sugar to spread in the bottom of the cage. Beach sand is a little too sharp, you know."