

"What of that? You need not betray your fear. Courage is but a sublime hypocrisy. Bear yourself as a brave man, and you are the braver for being a coward at heart."

"I wish before God that I could!" "You can. Remember our name, the line of which you are. For what have our forefathers fought if not to build into their children's children the lesson of the fear of naught save fear? Let the thought that thousands of brave men have passed through the ordeal that you are passing through, and emerged triumphantly, nerve you to vindicate your honour now. Come, Simeon, brother, wear the body of a man if you have not the heart. Show a man's face to this fear. Stare it out of countenance."

"It is too late," said he. Granby is gone, and the words of my cowardice is gone with him to be spread over the world."

"It is not too late. He is my lover. I know his heart. He will wait and wait and hope against hope for a sign that shall redeem the friendship between you. He will not betray your cowardice to the world so long as concealment of it is possible. He is waiting now. Send a message after him. Tell him you are a man again, that you will fight." Her voice was low and earnest; it thrilled him as an inspiration. With her arms she was essaying to raise him up. "Go now and save our name, Simeon!"

He leaped to his feet. "I will!" He struck a vainglorious attitude. "I am a brave man now. She encouraged him with her eyes as he strode about the room." "Give me paper, a pen."

He sat down, a flush deepening in his cheeks, and wrote his cartel of defiance. An hour later Robert Granby, sitting in mute sorrow for a departed illusion, had his despair lightened by receipt of it.

Thus ran the cartel:—"I will afford Major Hardebecke the satisfaction he demands, and will meet you to-morrow at the eighth hour before noon, beyond The Bottle, Chalk Farm. I ask your earnest prayers for my successful emergence from this encounter and subscribe myself your friend,—Simeon Vale."

IV.

At the hour of assignation, Robert Granby loitered in the fields that lay over against the hills of Hampstead, awaiting his principle. A clammy mist hung low upon the rank grass, and bent against the rimy hedgerows in snaky whirls of cloud. The heights loomed impassable through the gloom edged with a line of red dawn. The trees upon the slopes were massed in a wavering similitude of smoke that seemed to pour down in a flood from the vanishing flame-touched summits. It was cold, but not the cold alone caused Granby's limbs to shiver beneath him. He had yet to regain faith in the new-found courage of his friend, and his mind was a-quiver with the pangs of apprehension. There was a rumble of wheels adown the road and a chaise drew near. He went to meet it. As he advanced he saw the figure of his friend approaching him, swollen and large in the shifting mists. They met, and he looked hard into the face of Sir Simeon, pearl-white and shadowy as a dream-face in the clinging dimness of the morning light.

The young baronet seemed to have attained to a new dignity. His eyes were steady and calm, his bearing stately.

"Good-morning to you, Vale," said Robert Granby.

"The other whispered a response to the salutation, and turned and walked with a firm step beside his friend.

"Major Hardebecke has not yet arrived," said Robert Granby. But even as he spoke the rumble of a second post-chaise came to them. The horses seemed to be driven very furiously. The chaise rocked up and passed them, then stopped with a rattle and clank and slither of boots on the stiff mud of the road. Two figures alighted.

"There is no reason for any delay, I sincerely trust," the ex-poet murmured hurriedly, as he came up bowing. "My principal has the ill-fortune to be chased by the Crown officer, and can spare no more than a few minutes to the encounter. If you will permit me to arrange preliminaries with you at once, Major Hardebecke will be everlastingly grateful to you for the favour. A few minutes should be sufficient. He will not need to fire twice."

Sir Simeon uttered a tiny gasp and swung back his cloak across his chin.

They moved along in a disjointed body to the field. Even as the seconds paced out the allotted distance that was to separate the principals a clamorously faint pad-pad of hoofs sounded far along the road.

"'Tis cursedly unfortunate," breathed Stepany Gore. "If they should interrupt us, Major Hardebecke will be consumed with spleen. 'Fore Gad, these hounds are all ears. They must have picked up knowledge of the affair from the clubs. But it is a favourite device of theirs to take a man at sport of this kind. They know it is an appointment not to be evaded by men of honour."

"If Sir Simeon Vale is ready—" breathed the major, throwing an anxious glance through the driving mist.

"Quite ready," said Robert Granby.

The principals moved to their stations. The seconds placed the pistols in their hands acock, and Robert Granby drew out his handkerchief. The sound of the officer's approach was now thunderous upon the adjacent highway.

Granby dropped his handkerchief, and the two shots rang out as one. Even as the report split the humid air some flimsy figures burst in upon the scene and seized on Major Hardebecke as he stood uninjured with his smoking pistol at his side.

Robert Granby turned to Sir Simeon, who had dropped limply to the ground, and knelt beside him on the hoar-laden grass. His hat had fallen off, and his face was now more plainly apparent. A gleam of sunshine rent the mist and touched the golden hair.

"O Robert!" sighed the sinking figure. "O Robert!"

Robert Granby drew a hissing breath. He stooped and raised up the broken figure, and kissed the white face passionately.

"Hush!" whispered Nancy Vale. "Do not let them guess." And she collapsed weakly in his arms.

Stepney Gore mined towards them.

"I trust," said he, "that Sir Simeon is not more than slightly injured. My principal regrets that by reason of the incivility of the Crown myrmidons he is

unable to express personally that solicitude for the condition of the unfortunate victim of his bullet which he so deeply feels, and the cause of which he so ardently deprecates."

Robert Granby, bending low over the stricken sister of the coward, made an unintelligible answer. He raised her senseless body up and bore it to the post-chaise.

V.

A word in conclusion to explain.

This story is one well known in county chronicles, and on them rests the burden of all its omissions and inconsistencies. The truth of it did not leak out until all chance was gone of spoiling Mistress Nancy's high-spirited scheme for saving the family honour. Which was well. Her impulse to impersonate her brother in the affair was consequent on her discovery, on the morning set apart for the duel, that he had fled abroad before a new gust of fear. In a shameful agony the inspiration had come to her. She acted upon it, as we have seen. And the result was the more satisfactory in that Mistress Nancy did not lose her life, but only a portion of her beautiful flesh above the waist. It is not to me remarkable that the deception was successful. Added to the fact that few of us observe our intimates very closely, it must be remembered that in those days most of the visible part of humanity was artificial as fashion could make it; hair, colouring, and figure were alike disguised. So, endowed with the family features and clad in her brother's clothes, the imposture was easy enough to Mistress Nancy. And to those young ladies reading this story who are inclined to believe that their lovers would recognise them through any disguise, I would suggest the test of an eighteenth century costume of the powdered hair and patches period. Or, failing that, a little burst of anger—after marriage.

do solemnly and sincerely declare that this is my Testimonial to you on behalf of my cure. I have been a sufferer with Cancer in the mouth for the past six years. I went to the hospital, and the first thing they did was to take the tongue right out. In two months' time, after the operation, the Cancer grew again; it got larger than before. The doctors said that nothing could be done, and so I went home and was put to bed. I asked my wife to get me a bottle of VITADATIO. I took half a bottle that night, and in three days I was able to take oatmeal and sugar, and have had no other medicine but VITADATIO within my mouth. I can solemnly declare that the world does not know the power of VITADATIO. I am the only one living out of 45 cases of Cancer treated last year, and I can solemnly swear that only for VITADATIO I would not be here now, so I think you can guarantee a cure for Cancer, as mine was a very bad case; there being no hope, the doctors said, and now I can take any kind of food, the same as before the operation. And I make this solemn declaration, conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by virtue of an Act of Parliament of Victoria rendering persons making a false declaration punishable for wilful and corrupt perjury.

F. PARKS.

Declared before me at Bendigo, in the State aforesaid, this 14th day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and one.

J. M. DAVIES, J.P.

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