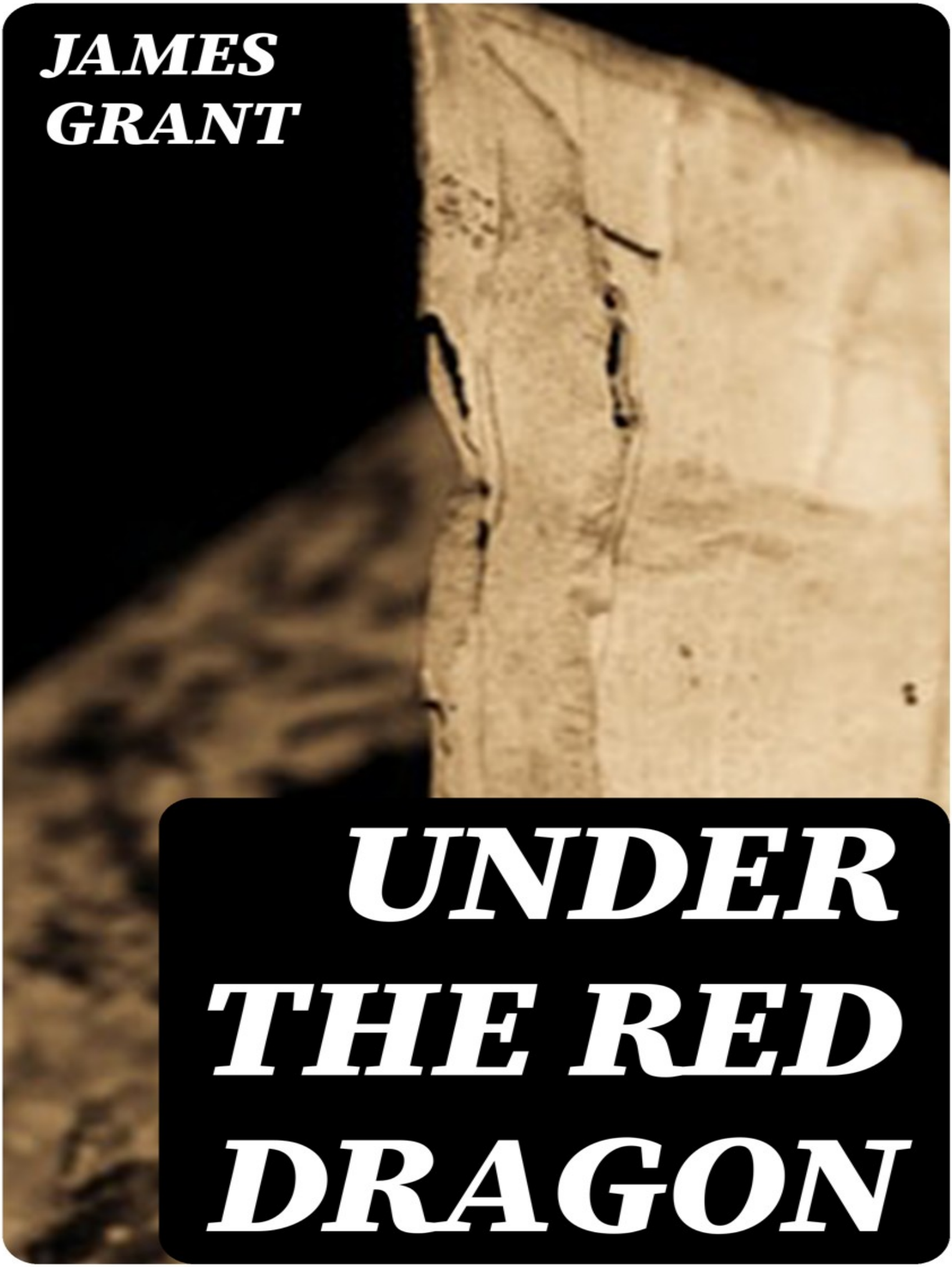
JAMES GRANT
UNDER THE RED DRAGON


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Under the Red Dragon

A Novel

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CHAPTER I.--THE INVITATION.

"And *she* is to be there--nay, is there already; so one more chance is given me to meet her. But for what?--to part again silently, and more helplessly bewitched than ever, perhaps. Ah, never will she learn to love me as I love her!" thought I, as I turned over my old friend's letter, not venturing, however, to give utterance to this aloud, as the quizzical eyes of Phil Caradoc were upon me.

"A penny for your thoughts, friend Harry?" said he, laughing; "try another cigar, and rouse yourself. What the deuce is in this letter, that it affects you so? Have you put a pot of money on the wrong horse?"

"Been jilted, had a bill returned, or what?" suggested Gwynne.

"Neither, fortunately," said I; "it is simply an invitation from Sir Madoc Lloyd, which rather perplexes me."

At this time our regiment was then in the East, awaiting with the rest of the army some movement to be made from Varna, either towards Bessarabia or the Crimea--men's minds were undecided as to which, while her Majesty's Ministers seemed to have no thought on the subject. Our depôt belonged to the provisional battalion at Winchester, where Caradoc, Gwynne, two other subalterns, and I, with some two hundred rank and file, expected ere long the fiat of the fates who reign at the Horse Guards to send us forth to win our laurels from the Russians, or, what seemed more probable, a grave where the pest was then decimating our hapless army, in the beautiful but perilous vale of Aladdyn,

on the coast of Bulgaria. We had just adjourned from mess, to have a quiet cheroot and glass of brandy-and-water in my quarters, when I received from my man, Owen Evans, the letter the contents of which awakened so many new hopes and tantalising wishes in my heart, and on which so much of my fate in the future might hinge.

The bare, half-empty, or but partially-furnished single room accorded by the barrack authorities to me as a subaltern, in that huge square edifice built of old by Charles II. for a royal residence, seemed by its aspect but little calculated to flatter the brilliant hopes in question. Though ample in size, it was far from regal in its appurtenances--the barrack furniture, a camp-bed, my baggage trunks piled in one corner, swords and a gun-case in another, books, empty bottles, cigar-boxes, and a few pairs of boots ostentatiously displayed in a row by Evans, making up its entire garniture, and by very contrast in its meagreness compelling me to smile sadly at myself for the ambitious ideas the letter of my old friend had suggested; and thus, for a minute or so ignoring, or rather oblivious of, the presence of my two companions, my eye wandered dreamily over the far-extended mass of old brick houses and the gray church towers of the city, all visible from the open window, and then steeped in the silver haze of the moonlight.

Sipping their brandy-and-water, each with a lighted cheroot between his fingers, their shell-jackets open, and their feet unceremoniously planted on a hard wooden chair, while they lounged back upon another, were Phil Caradoc and Charley Gwynne. The first a good specimen of a handsome, curly-haired, and heedless young Englishman,

who shot, fished, hunted, pulled a steady oar, and could keep his wicket against any man, while shining without effort in almost every manly sport, was moreover a finished gentleman and thorough good fellow. Less fashionable in appearance and less dashing in manner, though by no means less soldier-like, Gwynne was his senior by some ten years. He was more grave and thoughtful, for he had seen more of the service and more of the world. Already a gray hair or so had begun to mingle with the blackness of his heavy moustache, and the lines of thought were traceable on his forehead and about the corners of his keen dark-gray eyes; for he was a hard-working officer, who had been promoted from the ranks when the regiment lay at Barbadoes, and was every inch a soldier. And now they sat opposite me, waiting, with a half-comical expression, for farther information as to their queries; and though we were great friends, and usually had few secrets from each other, I began to find that I had *one* now, and that a little reticence was necessary.

"You know Sir Madoc's place in North Wales?" said I.

"Of course," replied Caradoc; "there are few of ours who don't. Half the regiment have been there as visitors at one time or other."

"Well, he wishes me to get leave between returns--for even longer if I can--and run down there for a few weeks. 'Come early, if possible,' he adds; 'the girls insist on having an outdoor fête, and a lot of nice folks are coming. Winny has arranged that we shall have a regimental band--the Yeomanry one too, probably; then we are to have a Welsh harper, of course, and an itinerant Merlin in the grotto, to

tell every one's fortune, and to predict your promotion and the C.B., if the seer remains sober. While I write, little Dora is drawing up a programme of the dances, and marking off, she says, those which she means to have with *you*.'"

Here I paused; but seeing they expected to hear more, for the writer was a friend of us all, I read on coolly, and with an air of as much unconsciousness as I could assume:

"Lady Estelle Cressingham is with us--by the way, she seems to know you, and would, I think, like to see more of you. She is a very fine girl, though not pure Welsh; but that she cannot help--it is her misfortune, not her fault. We have also a fellow here, though I don't quite know how he got introduced--Hawkesby Guilfoyle, who met her abroad at Ems, or Baden-Baden, or one of those places where one meets everybody, and he seems uncommonly attentive--so much so, that I wonder her mother permits it; but he seems to have some special power or influence over the old lady, though his name is not as yet, or ever likely to be, chronicled by Burke or Debrett. In lieu of the goat which your regiment lost in Barbadoes, Winifred has a beautiful pet one, a magnificent animal, which she means to present to the Welsh Fusileers. Tell them so. And now, for yourself, I will take no refusal, and Winny and Dora will take none either; so pack your traps, and come off so soon as you can get leave. You need not, unless you choose, bring horses; we have plenty of cavalry here. Hope you will be able to stay till the 12th, and have a shot at the grouse. Meanwhile, believe me, my dear Hardinge, yours, &c., Madoc Meredyth Lloyd.'"

"Kindly written, and so like the jolly style of the old Baronet," said Gwynne. "I have ridden with him once or twice in the hunting-field--on a borrowed mount, of course," added poor Charley; who had only his pay, and, being an enthusiast in his profession, was no lounger in the service.

"But what is there in all this that perplexes you?" asked Caradoc, who, I suppose, had been attentively observing me. As he spoke, I coloured visibly, feeling the while that I did so.

"The difficulty about leave, perhaps," I stammered.

"You'll go, of course," said Caradoc. "His place--Craigaderyn Court--is one of the finest in North Wales; his daughters are indeed charming; and you are certain to meet only people of the best style there."

"Yet he seems to doubt this--what is his name?--Guilfoyle, however," said I.

"What of that? One swallow--you know the adage. I should go, if I had the invitation. His eldest daughter has, I have heard, in her own right, no end of coal-mines somewhere, and many grassy acres of dairy farms in the happy hunting-grounds of the midland counties."

"By Jove," murmured Gwynne, as he lit a fresh cigar; "she should be the girl for me."

"But I have another inducement than even the fair Winny," said I.

"Oho! Lady--"

"Sir Madoc," said I hastily, "is an old friend of my family, and having known me from infancy, he almost views me as a son. Don't mistake me," I added, reddening with positive annoyance at the hearty laugh my admission elicited; "Miss

Lloyd and I are old friends too, and know each other a deuced deal too well to tempt the perils of matrimony together. We have no draughts ready for the East, nor will there be yet awhile; even our last recruits are not quite licked into shape."

"No," sighed Gwynne, who had a special charge of the said "licking into shape."

"And so, as the spring drills are over, I shall try my luck with old R----."

The person thus bluntly spoken of was the lieutenant-colonel of the depôt battalion--one who kept a pretty tight hand over us all in general, and the subalterns in particular.

"Stay," I exclaimed suddenly; "here is a postscript. 'Bring Caradoc of yours with you, and Gwynne, too, if you can. Winny has mastered the duet the former sent her, and is anxious to try it over with him."

"Caradoc will only be too happy, if the genius who presides over us in the orderly-room is propitious," said Phil, colouring and laughing.

"Thank Sir Madoc for me, old fellow," said Gwynne, half sadly. "Tell him that the Fates have made me musketry instructor, and that daily I have that

'Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,
To teach the young idea how to *shoot*'--

to set up Taffy and Giles Chawbacon in the Hythe position, and drill them to fire without closing both eyes and blazing in the air."

"'In the lawn,' adds Sir Madoc, 'we are to have everything--from waltzing to croquet (which, being an old fellow, and being above insteps and all that sort of thing, I

think the slowest game known), and from cliquot and sparkling hock to bottled stout and bitter beer--unlimited flirtation too, according to that wag, Dora.'"

"A tempting bill of fare, especially with two such hostesses," said Gwynne; "but for me to quit Winchester is impossible. Even the stale dodge of 'urgent private affairs' won't serve me. Such droll ideas of the service old Sir Madoc must have, to think that three of us could leave the depôt, and all at once too!"

"I shall try my luck, however."

"And I too," rejoined Caradoc. "I am entitled to leave. Price of ours will take my guards for me. Wales will be glorious in this hot month. I *did* all the dear old Principality last year--went over every foot of Snowdonia, leaving nothing undone, from singing 'Jenny Jones' to dancing a Welsh jig at a harvest-home."

"But you didn't go over Snowdonia with such a girl as Winifred Lloyd?"

"No, certainly," said he, laughing, and almost reddening again. "Nature, even in my native Wales, must be more charming under such bright auspices and happy influence. So Wales be it, if possible. London, of course, is empty just now, and all who can get out of it will be yachting at Cowes, shooting in Scotland, fishing in Norway, backing the red at Baden-Baden, climbing the Matterhorn, or, it may be, the Peter Botte; killing buffaloes in America, or voyaging up the Nile in canoes. Rotten-row will be a desert, the opera a place of silence and cobwebs; and the irresistible desire to go somewhere and be doing something, no matter what, which

inspires all young Britons about this time, renders Sir Madoc's invitation most tempting and acceptable."

"Till the route comes for the East," said I.

"Potting the Ruskies, and turning my musketry theory into practice, are likely to be my chief relaxations and excitement," said Gwynne, with a good-natured laugh, as he applied his hand to the brandy bottle. "At present I have other work in hand than flirting with countesses, or visiting heiresses. But I envy you both, and heartily wish you all pleasure," he added, as he shook hands and left us early, as he had several squads to put through that most monotonous of all drill (shot drill perhaps excepted)--a course of musketry--betimes in the morning.

We knew that Gwynne, who was a tall, thin, close-flanked, and square shouldered, but soldier-like fellow, had nothing but his pay; and having a mother to support, he was fain to slave as a musketry instructor, the five shillings extra daily being a great pecuniary object to him. He was very modest withal, and feared that, nathless his red coat and stalwart figure, his chances of an heiress, even in Cottonopolis, were somewhat slender.

CHAPTER II.--THE MOTH AND THE CANDLE.

Philip Caradoc, perceiving that I was somewhat dull and disposed to indulge in reverie, soon retired also, and we separated, intending to mature our plans after morning parade next day, as I knew that secretly Caradoc was very much attached to Winifred Lloyd, though that young lady by no means reciprocated his affection. But I, seized by an irresistible impulse, could not wait for our appointed time; so, the moment he was gone, I opened my desk, wrote my application for leave, and desiring Evans to take it to the orderly-room among his first duties on the morrow, threw open a second window to admit the soft breeze of the summer night, lit another cigar, and sat down to indulge in the train of thought Sir Madoc's unexpected letter had awakened within my breast.

Yet I was not much given to reflection--far from it, perhaps; and it is lucky for soldiers that they rarely indulge much in thought, or that the system of their life is apt to preclude time or opportunity for it. I had come home on a year's sick-leave from the West Indies, where the baleful night-dews, and a fever caught in the rainy season, had nearly finished my career while stationed at Up Park Camp; and now, through the friendly interest of Sir Madoc, I had been gazetted to the Welsh Fusileers, as I preferred the chances of the coming war and military service in any part of Europe to broiling uselessly in the land of the Maroons. Our army was in the East, I have said, encamped in the vale

of Aladdyn, between Varna and the sea. There camp-fever and the terrible cholera were filling fast with graves the grassy plain and all the Valley of the Plague, as the Bulgarians so aptly named it; and though I was not sorry to escape the perils encountered where no honour could be won, I was pretty weary of the daily round at Winchester, of barrack life, of in-lying pickets, guards, parades, and drill. I had been seven years in the service, and deemed myself somewhat of a veteran, though only five-and-twenty. I was weary too of belonging to a provisional battalion, wherein, beyond the narrow circle of one's own depôt, no two men have the slightest interest in each other, or seem to care if they ever meet again, the whole organisation being temporary, and where the duties of such a battalion--it being, in effect, a strict military school for training recruits--are harassing to the newly-fledged, and a dreadful bore to the fully-initiated, soldier. So, till the time came when the order would be, "Eastward, ho!" Sir Madoc had opportunely offered me a little relaxation and escape from all this; and though he knew it not, his letter might be perhaps the means of doing much more--of opening up a path to happiness and fortune, or leaving one closed for ever behind me in sorrow, mortification, and bitterness of heart.

Good old Sir Madoc (or, as he loved to call himself, Madoc ap Meredyth Lloyd) had in his youth been an unsuccessful lover of my mother, then the pretty Mary Vassal, a belle in her second season; and now, though she had long since passed away, he had a strong regard for me. For her sake he had a deep and kindly interest in my welfare; and as he had no son (no heir to his baronetcy, with

all its old traditional honours,) he quite regarded me in the light of one; and having two daughters, desired nothing more than that I should cut the service and become one in reality. So many an act of friendship and many a piece of stamped paper he had done for me, when in the first years of my career, I got into scrapes with rogues upon the turf, at billiards, and with those curses of all barracks, the children of Judea. Had I seen where my own good fortune really lay, I should have fallen readily into the snare so temptingly baited for me, a half-pennyless sub.; for Winifred Lloyd was a girl among a thousand, so far as brilliant attractions go, and, moreover, was not indisposed to view me favourably (at least, so my vanity taught me). But this world is full of cross purposes; people are too often blind to their profit and advantage, and, as Jaques has it, "thereby hangs a tale."

All the attractions of bright-eyed Winny Lloyd, personal and pecuniary, were at that time as nothing to me. I had casually, when idling in London, been introduced to, and had met at several places, this identical Lady Cressingham, whom my friend had mentioned so incidentally and in such an offhand way in his letter; and that sentence it was which brought the blood to my temples and quickened all the pulses of my heart.

She was very beautiful--as the reader will find when we meet her by-and-by--and I had soon learned to love her, but without quite venturing to say so; to love her as much as it was possible for one without hope of ultimate success, and so circumstanced as I was--a poor gentleman, with little more in the world save my sword and epaulettes. Doubtless she had seen and read the emotion with which she had

inspired me, for women have keen perceptions in such matters; and though it seems as if it was on her very smile that the mainspring of my existence turned, the whole affair might be but a source of quiet amusement, of curiosity, or gratified vanity to her. Yet, by every opportunity that the chances and artificial system of society in town afforded, I had evinced this passion, the boldness of which my secret heart confessed. Her portrait, a stately full-length, was in the Academy, and how often had I gazed at it, till in fancy the limner's work seemed to become instinct with life! Traced on the canvas by no unskilful hand, it seemed to express a somewhat haughty consciousness of her own brilliant beauty, and somehow I fancied a deuced deal more of her own exalted *position*, as the only daughter of a deceased but wealthy peer, and as if she rather disdained alike the criticism and the admiration of the crowd of middle-class folks who thronged the Academy halls.

Visions of her--as I had seen her in the Countess's curtained box at the opera, her rare and high-class beauty enhanced by all the accessories of fashion and costume, by brilliance of light and the subtle flash of many a gem amid her hair; when galloping along the Row on her beautiful satin-skinned bay; or while driving after in the Park, with all those appliances and surroundings that wealth and rank confer--came floating before me, with the memory of words half-uttered, and glances responded to when eye met eye, and told so much more than the tongue might venture to utter. Was it mere vanity, or reality, that made me think her smile *had* brightened when she met me, or that when I rode by her side she preferred me to the many others who daily

pressed forward to greet her amid that wonderful place, the Row? Her rank, and the fact that she was an heiress, had no real weight with me; nor did these fortuitous circumstances enhance her merit in my eyes, though they certainly added to the difficulty of winning her. Was it possible that the days of disinterested and romantic love, like those of chivalry, were indeed past--gone with the days when

"It was a clerk's son, of low degree,
Loved the king's daughter of Hongarie?"

With the love that struggled against humble fortune in my heart, I had that keenly sensitive pride which is based on proper self-respect. Hope I seemed to have none. What hope could I, Harry Hardinge, a mere subaltern, with little more than seven-and-sixpence per diem, have of obtaining such a wife as Lady Estelle Cressingham, and, more than all, of winning the good wishes of her over-awing mamma? Though "love will venture in when it daurna weel be seen," I could neither be hanged nor reduced to the ranks for my presumption, like the luckless Captain Ogilvie; who, according to the Scottish ballad, loved the Duke of Gordon's bonnie daughter Jean. Yet defeat and rejection might cover me with certain ridicule, leaving the stings of wounded self-esteem to rankle all the deeper, by thrusting the partial disparity of our relative positions in society more unpleasantly and humiliatingly before me and the world; for there is a snobbery in rank that is only equalled by the snobbery of wealth, and here I might have both to encounter. And so, as I brooded over these things, some very levelling and rather democratic, if not entirely Communal, ideas began to occur to me. And yet, for the

Countess and those who set store upon such empty facts, I could have proved my descent from Nicholas Hardinge, knight, of King's Newton, in Derbyshire; who in the time of Henry VII. held his lands by the homely and most sanitary tenure of furnishing clean straw for his Majesty's bed when he and his queen, Elizabeth of York, passed that way, together with fresh rushes from the margin of the Trent wherewith to strew the floor of the royal apartment. But this would seem as yesterday to the fair Estelle, who boasted of an ancestor, one Sir Hugh Cressingham, who, as history tells us, was defeated and *flayed* by the Scots after the battle of Stirling; while old Sir Madoc Lloyd, who doubtless traced himself up to Noah ap Lamech, would have laughed both pedigrees to scorn.

Leaving London, I had striven to stifle as simply absurd the passion that had grown within me, and had joined at Winchester in the honest and earnest hope that ere long the coming campaign would teach me to forget the fair face and witching eyes, and, more than all, the winning manner that haunted me; and now I was to be cast within their magic influence once more, and doubtless to be hopelessly lost. To have acted wisely, I should have declined the invitation and pleaded military duty; yet to see her once, to be with her once again, without that cordon of guardsmen and cavaliers who daily formed her mounted escort in Rotten-row, and with all the chances our quiet mutual residence in a sequestered country mansion, when backed by all the influence and friendship of Sir Madoc, must afford me, proved a temptation too strong for resistance or for my philosophy; so, like the poor moth, infatuated and self-

doomed, I resolved once more to rush at the light which dazzled me.

"She seems to know you, *and would like to see more of you*," ran the letter of Sir Madoc. I read that line over and over again, studying it minutely in every way. Were those dozen words simply the embodiment of his own ideas, or were they her personally expressed wish put literally into writing? Were they but the reflex of some casual remark? Even that conviction would bring me happiness. And so, after my friends left me, I sat pondering thus, blowing long rings of concentric smoke in the moonlight; and on those words of Sir Madoc raising not only a vast and aerial castle, but a "bower of bliss," as the pantomimes have it at Christmas time.

But how about this Mr. Hawkesby Guilfoyle? was my next thought. Could *his* attentions be tolerated by such a stately and watchful dowager as the Countess of Naseby? Could Sir Madoc actually hint that such as he might have a chance of success, when I had none? The idea was too ridiculous; for I had heard whispers of this man before, in London and about the clubs, where he was generally deemed to be a species of adventurer, the exact source of whose revenue no one knew. One fact was pretty certain: he was unpleasantly successful at billiards and on the turf. If he--to use his own phraseology--was daring enough to enter stakes for such a prize as Lord Cressingham's daughter, why should not I?

Thus, in reverie of a somewhat chequered kind, I lingered on, while the shadows of the cathedral, its lofty tower and choir, the spire of St. Lawrence, and many other bold features of the view began to deepen or become more

uncertain on the city roofs below, and from amid which their masses stood upward in a flood of silver sheen. Ere long the full-orbed moon--that seemed to float in beauty beneath its snow-white clouds, looking calmly down on Winchester, even as she had done ages ago, ere London was a capital, and when the white city was the seat of England's Saxon, Danish, and Norman dynasties, of Alfred's triumphs and Canute's glories--began at last to pale and wane; and the solemn silence of the morning--for dewy morning it was now--was broken only by the chime of the city bells and clocks, and by the tread of feet in the gravelled barrack-yard, as the reliefs went round, and the sentinels were changed.

The first red streak of dawn was beginning to steal across the east; the bugles were pealing reveilles, waking all the hitherto silent echoes of the square; and just about the time when worthy and unambitious Charley Gwynne would be parading his first squad for "aiming drill" at sundry bull's-eyes painted on the barrack-walls, I retired to dream over a possible future, and to hope that if the stars were propitious, at the altar of that somewhat dingy fane, St. George's, Hanover-square, I might yet become the son-in-law of the late Earl of Naseby, Baron Cressingham of Cotteswold, in the county of Northampton, and of Walcot Park in Hants, Lord-lieutenant, *custos rotulorum*, and so forth, as I had frequently and secretly read in the mess-room copy of Sir Bernard Burke's thick royal octavo; "the Englishman's Bible" according to Thackeray, and, as I greatly feared, the somewhat exclusive *libro d'oro* of Mamma Cressingham,

who was apt to reverence it pretty much as the Venetian nobles did the remarkable volume of that name.

CHAPTER III--By EXPRESS.

Leave granted, our acceptance of Sir Madoc's invitation duly telegraphed--"wired," as the phrase is now--our uniforms doffed and mufti substituted, the morning of the second day ensuing saw Caradoc and myself on the Birmingham railway *en route* for Chester; the exclusive occupants of a softly cushioned compartment, where, by the influence of a couple of florins slipped deftly and judiciously into the palm of an apparently unconscious and incorruptible official, we could lounge at our ease, and enjoy without intrusion the *Times*, *Punch*, or our own thoughts, and the inevitable cigar. Though in mufti we had uniform with us; we *believed* in it then, and in its influence; for certain German ideas of military tailoring subsequent to the Crimean war had not shorn us of our epaulettes, and otherwise reduced the character of our regimentals to something akin to the livery of a penny postman or a railway guard.

Somehow, I felt more hopeful of my prospects, when, with the bright sunshine of July around us, I found myself spinning at the rate of fifty miles per hour by the express train--the motion was almost as imperceptible as the speed was exhilarating--and swiftly passed the scenes on either side, the broad green fields of growing grain, the grassy paddocks, the village churches, the snug and picturesque homesteads of Warwick and Worcestershire. We glided past Rugby, where Caradoc had erewhile conned his tasks in that great Elizabethan pile which is built of white brick with stone

angles and cornices, and where in the playing fields he had gallantly learned to keep his wicket with that skill which made him our prime regimental bat and bowler too. Coventry next, where of course we laughed as we thought of "peeping Tom" and Earl Leofric's pretty countess, when we saw its beautiful and tapering spires rise over the dark and narrow streets below. Anon, we paused amid the busy but grimy world of Birmingham, which furnishes half the world with the implements of destruction; Stafford, with its ruined castle on a well-wooded eminence; and ere long we halted in quaint old Chester by the Dee, where the stately red stone tower of the cathedral rises darkly over its picturesque thoroughfares of the middle ages. There the rail went no farther then; but a carriage sent by Sir Madoc awaited us at the station, and we had before us the prospect of a delightful drive for nearly thirty miles amid the beautiful Welsh hills ere we reached his residence.

"This whiff of the country is indeed delightful!" exclaimed Caradoc, as we bowled along on a lovely July evening, the changing shadows of the rounded hills deepening as the sun verged westward; "it makes one half inclined to cut the service, and turn farmer or cattle-breeding squire--even to chuck ambition, glory, and oneself away upon a landed heiress, if such could be found ready to hand."

"Even upon Winifred Lloyd, with her dairy-farms in the midland counties, eh?"

Phil coloured a little, but laughed good-humouredly as he replied,

"Well, I must confess that she is somewhat more than my weakness--at present."

At Aber-something we found a relay of fresh horses, sent on by Sir Madoc, awaiting us, the Welsh roads not being quite so smooth as a billiard-table; and there certain hoarse gurgling expletives, uttered by ostlers and stable-boys, might have warned us that we were in the land of Owen and Hughes, Griffiths and Davies, and all the men of the Twelve Royal Tribes, even if there had not been the green mountains towering into the blue sky, and the pretty little ivy-covered inn, at the porch of which sat a white-haired harper (on the watch for patrons and customers), performing the invariable "Jenny Jones" or *Ar-hyd-y-nos* (the live-long night), and all the while keeping a sharp Celtic eye to the expected coin.

Everything around us indicated that we were drawing nearer to the abode of Sir Madoc, and that ere long--in an hour or so, perhaps--I should again see one who, by *name* as well as circumstance, was a star that I feared and hoped would greatly influence all my future. The Eastern war, and, more than all, the novelty of any war after forty years of European peace, occupied keenly the minds of all thinking people. My regiment was already gone, and I certainly should soon have to follow it. I knew that, individually and collectively, all bound for the seat of the coming strife had a romantic and even melancholy interest, in the hearts of women especially; and I was not without some hope that this sentiment might add to my chances of finding favour with the rather haughty Estelle Cressingham.

It was a glorious summer evening when our open barouche swept along the white dusty road that wound by the base of Mynedd Hiraethrog, that wild and bleak

mountain chain which rises between the Dee and its tributaries the Elwey and the Aled. Westward in the distance towered blue Snowdon, above the white floating clouds of mist, with all its subordinate peaks. In the immediate foreground were a series of beautiful hills that were glowing, and, to the eye, apparently vibrating, under a burning sunset. The Welsh woods were in all the wealth of their thickest foliage--the umbrageous growth of centuries; and where the boughs cast their deepest shadows, the dun deer and the fleet hare lurked among the fragrant fern, and the yellow sunlight fell in golden patches on the passing runnel, that leaped flashing from rock to rock, to mingle with the Alwen, or crept slowly and stealthily under the long rank grass towards Llyn-Aled.

That other accessories might not be wanting to remind us that we were in the land of the Cymri, we passed occasionally the *Carneddau*, or heaps of stones that mark the old places of battle or burial; and perched high on the hills the *Hafodtai* or summer farms, where enormous flocks of sheep--the boasted Welsh mutton--were pasturing. Then we heard at times the melancholy sound of the horn, by which inmates summon the shepherds to their meals, and the notes of which, when waking the echoes of the silent glen, have an effect so weird and mournful.

"By Jove, but we have a change here, Phil," said I, "a striking change, indeed, from the hot and dusty gravelled yard of Winchester barracks, the awkward squads at incessant drill with dumb-bell, club, or musket; the pipeclay, the pacing-stick, and the tap of the drum!"

Through a moss-grown gateway, the design of Inigo Jones, we turned down the long straight avenue of limes that leads to Craigaderyn; a fine old mansion situated in a species of valley, its broad lawn overlooked by the identical craig from which it takes its name, "the Rock of Birds," a lofty and insulated mass, the resort of innumerable hawks, wood-pigeons, and even of hoarse-croaking cormorants from the cliffs about Orme's Head and Llandulas. On its summit are the ruins of an ancient British fort, wherein Sir Jorwerth Goch (*i. e*. Red Edward) Lloyd of Craigaderyn had exterminated a band of Rumpers and Roundheads in the last year of Charles I., using as a war-cry the old Welsh shout of "Liberty, loyalty, and the long head of hair!" On either side of the way spread the lawn, closely shorn and carefully rolled, the turf being like velvet of emerald greenness, having broad winding carriage-ways laid with gravel, the bright red of which contrasted so strongly with the verdant hue of the grass. The foliage of the timber was heavy and leafy, and there, at times, could be seen the lively squirrel leaping from branch to branch of some ancient oak, in the hollow of which lay its winter store of nuts; the rabbit bounding across the path, from root to fern tuft; and the *bela-goed*, or yellow-breasted martin (still a denizen of the old Welsh woods), with rounded ears and sharp white claws, the terror of the poultry-yard, appeared occasionally, despite the gamekeeper's gun. In one place a herd of deer were browsing near the half-leafless ruins of a mighty oak--one so old, that Owen Glendower had once reconnoitred an English force from amid its branches.

We had barely turned into the avenue, when a gentleman and two ladies, all mounted, came galloping from a side path to meet us. He and one of his companions cleared the wire fence in excellent style by a flying leap; but the other, who was less pretentiously mounted, adroitly opened the iron gate with the handle of her riding switch, and came a few paces after them to meet us. They proved to be Sir Madoc and his two daughters, Winifred and Dora.

"True in the direction of time, 'by Shrewsbury clock'!" said he, cantering up; "welcome to Craigaderyn, gentlemen! We were just looking for you."

He was a fine hale-looking man, about sixty years old, with a ruddy complexion, and a keen, clear, dark eye; his hair, once of raven blackness, was white as silver now, though very curly or wavy still; his eyebrows were bushy and yet dark as when in youth. He was a Welsh gentleman, full of many local prejudices and sympathies; a man of the old school--for such a school has existed in all ages, and still exists even in ours of rapid progress, scientific marvels, and moneymaking. His manners were easy and polished, yet without anything either of style or fashion about them; for he was simple in all his tastes and ways, and was almost as plainly attired as one of his own farmers. His figure and costume, his rubicund face, round merry eyes, and series of chins, his amplitude of paunch and stunted figure, his bottle-green coat rather short in the skirts, his deep waistcoat and low-crowned hat, were all somewhat Pickwickian in their character and *tout-ensemble*, save that in lieu of the tights and gaiters of our old friend he wore white corded breeches, and orthodox dun-coloured top-

boots with silver spurs, and instead of green goggles had a gold eyeglass dangling at the end of a black-silk ribbon. Strong riding-gloves and a heavy hammer-headed whip completed his attire.

"Glad to see you, Harry, and you too, Mr. Caradoc," resumed Sir Madoc, who was fond of remembering that which Phil--more a man of the world--was apt to forget or to set little store on--that he was descended from Sir Matthew Caradoc, who in the days of Perkin Warbeck (an epoch but as yesterday in Sir Madoc's estimation) was chancellor of Glamorgan and steward of Gower and Helvie; for what true Welshman is without a pedigree? "Let me look at you again, Harry. God bless me! is it possible that you, a tall fellow with a black moustache, can be the curly fair-haired boy I have so often carried on my back and saddle-bow, and taught to make flies of red spinner and drakes' wings, when we trouted together at Llyn Cwellyn among the hills yonder?"

"I think, papa, you would be more surprised if you found him a curly-pated boy still," said Miss Lloyd.

"And it is seven years since he joined the service; what a fine fellow he has grown!"

"Papa, you are quite making Mr. Hardinge blush!" said Dora, laughing.

"Almost at the top of the lieutenants, too; there is luck for you!" he continued.

"More luck than merit, perhaps; more the Varna fever than either, Sir Madoc," said I, as he slowly relinquished my hand, which he had held for a few seconds in his, while looking kindly and earnestly into my face.

It was well browned by the sun and sea of the Windward Isles, tolerably well whiskered and moustached too; so I fear that if the good old gentleman was seeking for some resemblance to the sweet Mary Vassal of the past times, he sought in vain. Our horses were all walking now; Sir Madoc rode on one side of the barouche, and his two daughters on the other.

"You saw my girls last season in town," said he; "but when you were last here, Winifred was in her first long frock, and Dora little more than a baby."

"But Craigaderyn is all unchanged, though *we* may be," said Winifred, whose remark had some secret point in it so far as referred to me.

"And Wales is unchanged too," added Dora; "Mr. Hardinge will find the odious hat of the women still lingers in the more savage regions; the itinerant harper and the goat too are not out of fashion; and we still wear our leek on the first of March."

"And long may all this be so!" said her father; "for since those pestilent railways have come up by Shrewsbury and Chester, with their tides of tourists, greed, dissipation, and idleness are on the increase, and all our good old Welsh customs are going to Caerphilly and the devil! Without the wants of over-civilisation we were contented; but now--*Gwell y chydig gait rad, na llawr gan avrard*," he added with something like an angry sigh, quoting a Welsh proverb to the effect that a little with a blessing is better than much with prodigality.