CHARLES READE

HARD CASH

HISTORICAL THRILLER

Charles Reade

Hard Cash (Historical Thriller)

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PREFACE

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“Hard Cash,” like “The Cloister and the Hearth,” is a matter-of-fact Romance—that is, a fiction built on truths; and these truths have been gathered by long, severe, systematic labour, from a multitude of volumes, pamphlets, journals, reports, blue-books, manuscript narratives, letters, and living people, whom I have sought out, examined, and cross-examined, to get at the truth on each main topic I have striven to handle.

The madhouse scenes have been picked out by certain disinterested gentlemen, who keep private asylums, and periodicals to puff them; and have been met with bold denials of public facts, and with timid personalities, and a little easy cant about Sensation* Novelists; but in reality those passages have been written on the same system as the nautical, legal, and other scenes: the best evidence has been ransacked; and a large portion of this evidence I shall be happy to show at my house to any brother writer who is disinterested, and really cares enough for truth and humanity to walk or ride a mile in pursuit of them.

CHARLES READE.
6 BOLTON ROW, MAYFAIR,
December 5, 1868.

* This slang term is not quite accurate as applied to me. Without sensation there can be no interest: but my plan is to mix a little character and a little philosophy with the sensational element.

PROLOGUE

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In a snowy villa, with a sloping lawn, just outside the great commercial seaport, Barkington, there lived a few years ago a happy family. A lady, middle-aged, but still charming; two young friends of hers; and a periodical visitor.

The lady was Mrs. Dodd; her occasional visitor was her husband; her friends were her son Edward, aged twenty, and her daughter Julia, nineteen, the fruit of a misalliance.

Mrs. Dodd was originally Miss Fountain, a young lady well born, high bred, and a denizen of the fashionable world. Under a strange concurrence of circumstances she coolly married the captain of an East Indiaman. The deed done, and with her eyes open, for she was not, to say, in love with him, she took a judicious line—and kept it: no hankering after Mayfair, no talking about “Lord this” and “Lady that,” to commercial gentlewomen; no amphibiousness. She accepted her place in society, reserving the right to embellish it with the graces she had gathered in a higher sphere. In her home, and in her person, she was little less elegant than a countess; yet nothing more than a merchant-captain's wife; and she reared that commander's children in a suburban villa, with the manners which adorn a palace. When they happen to be there. She had a bugbear; Slang. Could not endure the smart technicalities current; their multitude did not overpower her distaste; she called them “jargon”—“slang” was too coarse a word for her to apply to slang: she excluded many a good “racy idiom” along with

the real offenders; and monosyllables in general ran some risk of' having to show their passports. If this was pedantry, it went no further; she was open, free, and youthful with her young pupils; and had the art to put herself on their level: often, when they were quite young, she would feign infantine ignorance, in order to hunt trite truth in couples with them, and detect, by joint experiment, that rainbows cannot, or else will not, be walked into, nor Jack-o'-lantern be gathered like a cowslip; and that, dissect we the vocal dog—whose hair is so like a lamb's—never so skilfully, no fragment of palpable bark, no sediment of tangible squeak, remains inside him to bless the inquisitive little operator, &c., &c. When they advanced from these elementary branches to Languages, History, Tapestry, and “What Not,” she managed still to keep by their side learning with them, not just hearing them lessons down from the top of a high tower of maternity. She never checked their curiosity, but made herself share it; never gave them, as so many parents do, a white-lying answer; wooed their affections with subtle though innocent art, thawed their reserve, obtained their love, and retained their respect. Briefly, a female Chesterfield; her husband's lover after marriage, though not before; and the mild monitress the elder sister, the favourite companion and bosom friend of both her children.

They were remarkably dissimilar; and perhaps I may be allowed to preface the narrative of their adventures by a delineation; as in country churches an individual pipes the keynote, and the tune comes raging after.

Edward, then, had a great calm eye, that was always looking folk full in the face, mildly; his countenance comely

and manly, but no more; too square for Apollo; but sufficed for John Bull. His figure it was that charmed the curious observer of male beauty. He was five feet ten; had square shoulders, a deep chest, masculine flank, small foot, high instep. To crown all this, a head, overflowed by ripples of dark brown hair, sat with heroic grace upon his solid white throat, like some glossy falcon new lighted on a Parian column.

This young gentleman had decided qualities, positive and negative. He could walk up to a five-barred gate and clear it, alighting on the other side like a fallen feather; could row all day, and then dance all night; could fling a cricket ball a hundred and six yards; had a lathe and a tool-box, and would make you in a trice a chair, a table, a doll, a nutcracker, or any other moveable, useful, or the very reverse. And could not learn his lessons, to save his life.

His sister Julia was not so easy to describe. Her figure was tall, lithe, and serpentine; her hair the colour of a horse-chestnut fresh from its pod; her ears tiny and shell-like, her eyelashes long and silky; her mouth small when grave, large when smiling; her eyes pure hazel by day, and tinged with a little violet by night. But in jotting down these details, true as they are, I seem to myself to be painting fire, with a little snow and saffron mixed on a marble pallet. There is a beauty too spiritual to be chained in a string of items; and Julia's fair features were but the china vessel that brimmed over with the higher loveliness of her soul. Her essential charm was, what shall I say? Transparence.

“You would have said her very body thought.”

Modesty, Intelligence, and, above all, Enthusiasm, shone through her, and out of her, and made her an airy, fiery, household joy. Briefly, an incarnate sunbeam.

This one could learn her lessons with unreasonable rapidity, and until Edward went to Eton, would insist upon learning his into the bargain, partly with the fond notion of coaxing him on, as the company of a swift horse incites a slow one; partly because she was determined to share his every trouble, if she could not remove it. A little choleric, and indeed downright prone to that more generous indignation which fires at the wrongs of others. When heated with emotion, or sentiment, she lowered her voice, instead of raising it like the rest of us. She called her mother “Lady Placid,” and her brother “Sir Imperturbable.” And so much for outlines.

Mrs. Dodd laid aside her personal ambition with her maiden name; but she looked high for her children. Perhaps she was all the more ambitious for them, that they had no rival aspirant in Mrs. Dodd. She educated Julia herself from first to last: but with true feminine distrust of her power to mould a lordling of creation, she sent Edward to Eton, at nine. This was slackening her tortoise; for at Eton is no female master, to coax dry knowledge into a slow head. However, he made good progress in two branches—aquatics and cricket.

After Eton came the choice of a profession. His mother recognised but four; and these her discreet ambition speedily sifted down to two. For military heroes are shot now and then, however pacific the century; and naval ones drowned. She would never expose her Edward to this class

of accidents. Glory by all means; glory by the pail; but safe glory, please; or she would none of it. Remained the church and the bar: and, within these reasonable limits, she left her dear boy free as air; and not even hurried—there was plenty of time to choose: he must pass through the university to either. This last essential had been settled about a twelvemonth, and the very day for his going to Oxford was at hand, when one morning Mr. Edward formally cleared his throat: it was an unusual act, and drew the ladies' eyes upon him. He followed the solemnity up by delivering calmly and ponderously a connected discourse, which astonished them by its length and purport. “Mamma, dear, let us look the thing in the face.” (This was his favourite expression, as well as habit.) “I have been thinking it quietly over for the last six months. Why send me to the university? I shall be out of place there. It will cost you a lot of money, and no good. Now, you take a fool's advice; don't you waste your money and papa's, sending a dull fellow like me to Oxford. I did bad enough at *Eton.* Make me an engineer, or something. If you were not so fond of me, and I of you, I'd say send me to Canada, with a pickaxe; you know I have got no headpiece.”

Mrs. Dodd had sat aghast, casting Edward deprecating looks at the close of each ponderous sentence, but too polite to interrupt a soul, even a son talking nonsense. She now assured him she could afford very well to send him to Oxford, and begged leave to remind him that he was too good and too sensible to run up bills there, like the young men who did not really love their parents. “Then, as for learning, why, we must be reasonable in our turn. Do the

best you can, love. We know you have no great turn for the classics; we do not expect you to take high honours like young Mr. Hardie; besides, that might make your head ache: he has sad headaches, his sister told Julia. But, my dear, an university education is indispensable Do but see how the signs of it follow a gentleman through life, to say nothing of the valuable acquaintances and lasting friendships he makes there: even those few distinguished persons who have risen in the would without it, have openly regretted the want, and have sent their children: and *that* says volumes to me."

"Why, Edward, it is the hall-mark of a gentleman," said Julia eagerly. Mrs. Dodd caught a flash of her daughter: "And my silver shall never be without it," said she warmly. She added presently, in her usual placid tone, "I beg your pardon, my dears, I ought to have said my gold." With this she kissed Edward tenderly on the brow, and drew an embrace and a little grunt of resignation from him. "Take the dear boy and show him our purchases, love!" said Mrs. Dodd, with a little gentle accent of half reproach, scarce perceptible to a male ear.

"Oh, yes," and Julia rose and tripped to the door. There she stood a moment, half turned, with arching neck, colouring with innocent pleasure. "Come, darling. Oh, you good-for-nothing thing."

The pair found a little room hard by, paved with china, crockery, glass, baths, kettles, &c.

"There, sir. Look them in the face; and us, if you can."

"Well, you know, I had no idea you had been and bought a cart-load of things for Oxford." His eye brightened; he

whipped out a two-foot rule, and began to calculate the cubic contents. “I'll turn to and make the cases, Ju.”

The ladies had their way; the cases were made and despatched; and one morning the Bus came for Edward, and stopped at the gate of Albion Villa. At this sight mother and daughter both turned their heads quickly away by one independent impulse, and set a bad example. Apparently neither of them had calculated on this paltry little detail; they were game for theoretical departures; to impalpable universities: and “an air-drawn Bus, a Bus of the mind,” would not have dejected for a moment their lofty Spartan souls on glory bent; safe glory. But here was a Bus of wood, and Edward going bodily away inside it. The victim kissed them, threw up his portmanteau and bag, and departed serene as Italian skies; the victors watched the pitiless Bus quite out of sight; then went up to his bedroom, all disordered by packing, and, on the very face of it, vacant; and sat down on his little bed intertwining and weeping.

Edward was received at Exeter College, as young gentlemen are received at college; and nowhere else, I hope, for the credit of Christendom. They showed him a hole in the roof, and called it an “Attic;” grim pleasantry! being a puncture in the modern Athens. They inserted him; told him what hour at the top of the morning he must be in chapel; and left him to find out his other ills. His cases were welcomed like Christians, by the whole staircase. These undergraduates abused one another's crockery as their own: the joint stock of breakables had just dwindled very low, and Mrs. Dodd's bountiful contribution was a godsend.

The new comer soon found that his views of a learned university had been narrow. Out of place in it? why, he could not have taken his wares to a better market; the modern Athens, like the ancient, cultivates muscle as well as mind. The captain of the university eleven saw a cricket-ball thrown all across the ground; he instantly sent a professional bowler to find out who that was; through the same ambassador the thrower was invited to play on club days; and proving himself an infallible catch and long-stop, a mighty thrower, a swift runner, and a steady, though not very brilliant bat, he was, after one or two repulses, actually adopted into the university eleven. He communicated this ray of glory by letter to his mother and sister with genuine delight, coldly and clumsily expressed; they replied with feigned and fluent rapture. Advancing steadily in that line of academic study towards which his genius lay, he won a hurdle race, and sent home a little silver hurdle; and soon after brought a pewter pot, with a Latin inscription recording the victory at “Fives” of Edward Dodd: but not too arrogantly; for in the centre of the pot was this device, “The Lord Is My Illumination.” The Curate of Sandford, who pulled number six in the Exeter boat, left Sandford for Witney: on this he felt he could no longer do his college justice by water, and his parish by land, nor escape the charge of pluralism, preaching at Witney and rowing at Oxford. He fluctuated, sighed, kept his Witney, and laid down his oar. Then Edward was solemnly weighed in his jersey and flannel trousers, and proving only eleven stone eight, whereas he had been ungenerously suspected of twelve stone,* was elected to the vacant oar by acclamation. He was a picture

in a boat; and, “Oh!!! well pulled, six!!” was a hearty ejaculation constantly hurled at him from the bank by many men of other colleges, and even by the more genial among the cads, as the Exeter glided at ease down the river, or shot up it in a race.

*There was at this time a prejudice against weight, which has yielded to experience

He was now as much talked of in the university as any man of his college, except one. Singularly enough that one was his townsman; but no friend of his; he was much Edward's senior in standing, though not in age; and this is a barrier the junior must not step over—without direct encouragement—at Oxford. Moreover, the college was a large one, and some of “the sets” very exclusive: young Hardie was Doge of a studious clique; and careful to make it understood that he was a reading man who boated and cricketed, to avoid the fatigue of lounging; not a boatman or cricketer who strayed into Aristotle in the intervals of Perspiration.

His public running since he left Harrow was as follows: the prize poem in his fourth term; the sculls in his sixth; the Ireland scholarship in his eighth (he pulled second for it the year before); Stroke of the Exeter in his tenth; and reckoned sure of a first class to consummate his twofold career.

To this young Apollo, crowned with variegated laurel, Edward looked up from a distance. The brilliant creature never bestowed a word on him by land; and by water only such observations as the following: “Time, Six!” “Well pulled, Six!” “Very well pulled, Six!” Except, by-the-bye, one

race; when he swore at him like a trooper for not being quicker at starting. The excitement of nearly being bumped by Brasenose in the first hundred yards was an excuse. However, Hardie apologised as they were dressing in the barge after the race; but the apology was so stiff, it did not pave the way to an acquaintance.

Young Hardie, rising twenty-one, thought nothing human worthy of reverence, but Intellect. Invited to dinner, on the same day, with the Emperor of Russia, and with Voltaire, and with meek St. John, he would certainly have told the coachman to put him down at Voltaire.

His quick eye detected Edward's character; but was not attracted by it: says he to one of his adherents, “What a good-natured spoon that Dodd is; Phoebus, what a name!” Edward, on the other hand, praised this brilliant in all his letters, and recorded his triumphs and such of his witty sayings as leaked through his own set, to reinvigorate mankind. This roused Julia's ire. It smouldered through three letters; but burst out when there was no letter; but Mrs. Dodd, meaning, Heaven knows, no harm, happened to say meekly, *a propos* of Edward, “You know, love, we cannot all be young Hardies.” “No, and thank Heaven,” said Julia defiantly. “Yes, mamma,” she continued, in answer to Mrs. Dodd's eyebrow, which had curved; “your mild glance reads my soul; I detest that boy.” Mrs. Dodd smiled: “Are you sure you know what the word 'detest' means? And what has young Mr. Hardie done, that you should bestow so violent a sentiment on him?”

“Mamma, I am Edward's sister,” was the tragic reply; then, kicking off the buskin pretty nimbly, “There! he beats

our boy at everything, and ours sits quietly down and admires him for it: oh! how can a man let anybody or anything beat him! I wouldn't; without a desperate struggle.” She clenched her white teeth and imagined the struggle. To be sure, she owned she had never seen this Mr. Hardie; but after all it was only Jane Hardie's brother, as Edward was hers; “And would I sit down and let Jane beat me at Things? Never! never! never! I couldn't.”

“Your friend to the death, dear; was not that your expression?”

“Oh, that was a slip of the tongue, dear mamma; I was off my guard. I generally am, by the way. But now I am on it, and propose an amendment. Now I second it. Now I carry it.”

“And now let me hear it.”

“She is my friend till death—or Eclipse; and that means until she eclipses me, of course.” But she added softly, and with sudden gravity: “Ah! Jane Hardie has a fault which will always prevent her from eclipsing your humble servant in this wicked world.”

“What is that?”

“She is too good. Much.”

“Par exemple?”

“Too religious.”

“Oh, that is another matter.”

“For shame, mamma! I am glad to hear it: for I scorn a life of frivolity; but then, again, I should not like to give up everything, you know.” Mrs. Dodd looked a little staggered, too, at so vast a scheme of capitulation. But “everything” was soon explained to mean balls, concerts, dinner-parties

in general, tea-parties without exposition of Scripture, races, and operas, cards, charades, and whatever else amuses society without perceptibly sanctifying it. All these, by Julia's account, Miss Hardie had renounced, and was now denouncing (with the young the latter verb treads on the very heels of the former). “And, you know, she is a district visitor.”

This climax delivered, Julia stopped short, and awaited the result.

Mrs. Dodd heard it all with quiet disapproval and cool incredulity. She had seen so many young ladies healed of many young enthusiasms by a wedding ring. But, while she was searching diligently in her mine of ladylike English—mine with plenty of water in it, begging her pardon—for expressions to convey inoffensively, and roundabout, her conviction that Miss Hardie was a little, furious simpleton, the post came and swept the subject away in a moment.

Two letters; one from Calcutta, one from Oxford.

They came quietly in upon one salver, and were opened and read with pleasurable interest, but without surprise, or misgiving; and without the slightest foretaste of their grave amid singular consequences.

Rivers deep and broad start from such little springs.

David's letter was of unusual length for him. The main topics were, first, the date and manner of his return home. His ship, a very old one, had been condemned in port: and he was to sail a fine new teak-built vessel, the *Agra,* as far as the Cape; where her captain, just recovered from a severe illness, would come on board, and convey her and

him to England. In future, Dodd was to command one of the Company's large steamers to Alexandria and back.

“It is rather a come-down for a sailor, to go straight ahead like a wheelbarrow in all weathers with a steam-pot and a crew of coalheavers. But then I shall not be parted from my sweetheart such long dreary spells as I have been thus twenty years, my dear love: so is it for me to complain?”

The second topic was pecuniary; the transfer of their savings from India, where interest was higher than at home, but the capital not so secure.

And the third was ardent and tender expressions of affection for the wife and children he adored. These effusions of the heart had no separate place, except in my somewhat arbitrary analysis of the honest sailor's letter; they were the under current. Mrs. Dodd read part of it out to Julia; in fact all but the money matter: that concerned the heads of the family more immediately; and Cash was a topic her daughter did not understand, nor care about. And when Mrs. Dodd had read it with glistening eyes, she kissed it tenderly, and read it all over again to herself, and then put it into her bosom as naively as a milkmaid in love.

Edward's letter was short enough, and Mrs. Dodd allowed Julia to read it to her, which she did with panting breath, and glowing cheeks, and a running fire of comments.

“'Dear Mamma, I hope you and Ju are quite well——'”

“Ju,” murmured Mrs. Dodd plaintively.

“'And that there is good news about papa coming home. As for me, I have plenty on my hands just now; all this term

I have been ('training' scratched out, and another word put in: C — R — oh, I know) 'cramming.'”

“'Cramming,' love?”

“Yes, that is the Oxfordish for studying.”

“'—For smalls.'”

Mrs. Dodd contrived to sigh interrogatively. Julia, who understood her every accent, reminded her that “smalls” was the new word for “little go.”

“'—Cramming for smalls; and now I am in two races at Henley, and that rather puts the snaffie on reading and gooseberry pie' (Goodness me), 'and adds to my chance of being ploughed for smalls.'”

“What does it all mean?” inquired mamma, “'gooseberry pie'? and 'the snaffle'? and 'ploughed'?”

“Well, the gooseberry pie is really too deep for me: but 'ploughed' is the new Oxfordish for 'plucked.' O mamma, have you forgotten that? 'Plucked' was vulgar, so now they are 'ploughed.' 'For smalls; but I hope I shall not be, to vex you and Puss.'”

“Heaven forbid he should be so disgraced! But what has the cat to do with it?”

“Nothing on earth. Puss? that is me. How dare he? Did I not forbid all these nicknames and all this Oxfordish, by proclamation, last Long.”

“Last Long?”

“Hem! last protracted vacation.”

“'—Dear mamma, sometimes I cannot help being down in the mouth,' (why, it is a string of pearls) 'to think you have not got a son like Hardie.'” At this unfortunate reflection it was Julia's turn to suffer. She deposited the letter in her lap,

and fired up. “Now, have not I cause to hate, and scorn, and despise le petit Hardie?”

“Julia!”

“I mean to dislike with propriety, and gently to abominate—Mr. Hardie, junior.”

“'—Dear mamma, do come to Henley on the tenth, you and Ju. The university eights will not be there, but the head boats of the Oxford and Cambridge river will; and the Oxford head boat is Exeter, you know; and I pull Six.'”

“Then I am truly sorry to hear it; my poor boy will overtask his strength; and how unfair of the other young gentlemen; it seems ungenerous; unreasonable; my poor child against so many.”

“'—And I am entered for the sculls as well, and if you and “the Impetuosity”' (Vengeance!) 'were looking on from the bank, I do think I should be lucky this time. Henley is a long way from Barkington, but it is a pretty place; all the ladies admire it, and like to see both the universities out and a stunning race.' Oh, well, there *is* an epithet. One would think thunder was going to race lightning, instead of Oxford Cambridge.”

“'—If you can come, please write, and I will get you nice lodgings; I will not let you go to a noisy inn. Love to Julia and no end of kisses to my pretty mamma. —From your affectionate Son,

“'EDWARD DODD.'”

They wrote off a cordial assent, and reached Henley in time to see the dullest town in Europe; and also to see it turn one of the gayest in an hour or two; so impetuously

came both the universities pouring into it—in all known vehicles that could go *their* pace—by land and water.

CHAPTER I

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It was a bright hot day in June. Mrs. Dodd and Julia sat half reclining, with their parasols up, in an open carriage, by the brink of the Thames at one of its loveliest bends.

About a furlong up stream a silvery stone bridge, just mellowed by time, spanned the river with many fair arches. Through these the coming river peeped sparkling a long way above, then came meandering and shining down; loitered cool and sombre under the dark vaults, then glistened on again crookedly to the spot where sat its two fairest visitors that day; but at that very point flung off its serpentine habits, and shot straight away in a broad stream of scintillating water a mile long, down to an island in mid-stream: a little fairy island with old trees, and a white temple. To curl round this fairy isle the broad current parted, and both silver streams turned purple in the shade of the grove; then winded and melted from the sight.

This noble and rare passage of the silvery Thames was the Henley racecourse. The starting-place was down at the island, and the goal was up at a point in the river below the bridge, but above the bend where Mrs. Dodd and Julia sat, unruffled by the racing, and enjoying luxuriously the glorious stream, the mellow bridge crowded with carriages—whose fair occupants stretched a broad band of bright colour above the dark figures clustering on the battlements—and the green meadows opposite with the motley crowd streaming up and down.

Nor was that sense, which seems especially keen and delicate in women, left unregaled in the general bounty of the time. The green meadows on the opposite bank, and the gardens at the back of our fair friends, flung their sweet fresh odours at their liquid benefactor gliding by; and the sun himself seemed to burn perfumes, and the air to scatter them, over the motley merry crowd, that bright, hot, smiling, airy day in June.

Thus tuned to gentle enjoyment, the fair mother and her lovely daughter leaned back in a delicious languor proper to their sex, and eyed with unflagging though demure interest, and furtive curiosity, the wealth of youth, beauty, stature, agility, gaiety, and good temper, the two great universities had poured out upon those obscure banks; all dressed in neat but easy-fitting clothes, cut in the height of' the fashion; or else in jerseys white or striped, and flannel trousers, and straw hats, or cloth caps of bright and various hues; betting, strolling, laughing, chaffing, larking, and whirling stunted bludgeons at Aunt Sally.

But as for the sport itself they were there to see, the center of all these bright accessories, “The Racing,” my ladies did not understand it, nor try, nor care a hook-and-eye about it. But this mild dignified indifference to the main event received a shock at 2 p. m.: for then the first heat for the cup came on, and Edward was in it. So then Racing became all in a moment a most interesting pastime—an appendage to Loving. He left to join his crew. And, soon after, the Exeter glided down the river before their eyes, with the beloved one rowing quietly in it: his jersey revealed not only the working power of his arms, as sunburnt below

the elbow as a gipsy's, and as corded above as a blacksmith's, but also the play of the great muscles across his broad and deeply indented chest: his oar entered the water smoothly, gripped it severely, then came out clean, and feathered clear and tunably on the ringing rowlock: the boat jumped and then glided, at each neat, easy, powerful stroke. “Oh, how beautiful and strong he is!” cried Julia. “I had no idea.”

Presently the competitor for this heat came down: the Cambridge boat, rowed by a fine crew in broad-striped jerseys. “Oh, dear” said Julia, “they are odious and strong in this boat too. I wish I was in it—with a gimlet; he *should* win, poor boy.”

Which corkscrew staircase to Honour being inaccessible, the race had to be decided by two unfeminine trifles called “Speed” and “Bottom.”

Few things in this vale of tears are more worthy a pen of fire than an English boat-race is, as seen by the runners; of whom I have often been one. But this race I am bound to indicate, not describe; I mean, to show how it appeared to two ladies seated on the Henley side of the Thames, nearly opposite the winning-post. These fair novices then looked all down the river, and could just discern two whitish streaks on the water, one on each side the little fairy isle, and a great black patch on the Berkshire bank. The threatening streaks were the two racing boats: the black patch was about a hundred Cambridge and Oxford men, ready to run and hallo with the boats all the way, or at least till the last puff of wind should be run plus halloed out of their young bodies. Others less fleet and enduring, but equally clamorous, stood

in knots at various distances, ripe for a shorter yell and run when the boats should come up to them. Of the natives and country visitors, those who were not nailed down by bounteous Fate ebbed and flowed up and down the bank, with no settled idea but of getting in the way as much as possible, and of getting knocked into the Thames as little as might be.

There was a long uneasy suspense.

At last a puff of smoke issued from a pistol down at the island; two oars seemed to splash into the water from each white streak; and the black patch was moving; so were the threatening streaks. Presently was heard a faint, continuous, distant murmur, and the streaks began to get larger, and larger, and larger; and the eight splashing oars looked four instead of two.

Every head was now turned down the river. Groups hung craning over it like nodding bulrushes.

Next the runners were swelled by the stragglers they picked up; so were their voices; and on came the splashing oars and roaring lungs.

Now the colours of the racing jerseys peeped distinct. The oarsmen's heads and bodies came swinging back like one, and the oars seemed to lash the water savagely, like a connected row of swords, and the spray squirted at each vicious stroke. The boats leaped and darted side by side, and, looking at them in front, Julia could not say which was ahead. On they came nearer and nearer, with hundreds of voices vociferating “Go it, Cambridge” “Well pulled, Oxford!” “You are gaining, hurrah!” “Well pulled Trinity!” “Hurrah!” “Oxford!” “Cambridge!” “Now is your time, Hardie; pick her

up!” “Oh, well pulled, Six!” “Well pulled, Stroke!” “Up, up! lift her a bit!” “Cambridge!” “Oxford!” “Hurrah!”

At this Julia turned red and pale by turns. “O mamma!” said she, clasping her hands and colouring high, “would it be very wrong if I was to *pray* for Oxford to win?”

Mrs. Dodd had a monitory finger; it was on her left hand; she raised it; and that moment, as if she had given a signal, the boats, fore-shortened no longer, shot out to treble the length they had looked hitherto, and came broadside past our palpitating fair, the elastic rowers stretched like greyhounds in a chase, darting forward at each stroke so boldly they seemed flying out of the boats, and surging back as superbly, an eightfold human wave: their nostrils all open, the lips of some pale and glutinous, their white teeth all clenched grimly, their young eyes all glowing, their supple bodies swelling, the muscles writhing beneath their jerseys, and the sinews starting on each bare brown arm; their little shrill coxswains shouting imperiously at the young giants, and working to and fro with them, like jockeys at a finish; nine souls and bodies flung whole into each magnificent effort; water foaming and flying, rowlocks ringing, crowd running, tumbling, and howling like mad; and Cambridge a boat's nose ahead.

They had scarcely passed our two spectators, when Oxford put on a furious spurt, and got fully even with the leading boat. There was a louder roar than ever from the bank. Cambridge spurted desperately in turn, and stole those few feet back; and so they went fighting every inch of water. Bang! A cannon on the bank sent its smoke over both competitors; it dispersed in a moment, and the boats were

seen pulling slowly towards the bridge—Cambridge with four oars, Oxford with six, as if that gum had winged them both.

The race was over.

But who had won our party could not see, and must wait to learn.

A youth, adorned with a blue and yellow rosette, cried out, in the hearing of Mrs. Dodd, “I say, they are properly pumped, both crews are:” then, jumping on to a spoke of her carriage-wheel, with a slight apology, he announced that two or three were shut up in the Exeter.

The exact meaning of these two verbs passive was not clear to Mrs. Dodd; but their intensity was. She fluttered, and wanted to go to her boy and nurse him, and turned two most imploring eyes on Julia, and Julia straightway kissed her with gentle vehemence, and offered to ruin and see.

“What, amongst all those young gentlemen, love? I fear that would not be proper. See, all the ladies remain apart.” So they kept quiet and miserable, after the manner of females.

Meantime the Cantab's quick eye had not deceived him; in each racing boat were two young gentlemen leaning collapsed over their oars; and two more, who were in a cloud, and not at all clear whether they were in this world still, or in their zeal had pulled into a better. But their malady was not a rare one in racing boats, and the remedy always at hand: it combined the rival systems; Thames was sprinkled in their faces—Homoeopathy: and brandy in a teaspoon trickled down their throats—Allopathy: youth and spirits soon did the rest; and, the moment their eyes

opened, their mouths opened; and, the moment their mouths opened, they fell a chaffing.

Mrs. Dodd's anxiety and Julia's were relieved by the appearance of Mr. Edward, in a tweed shooting-jacket sauntering down to them, hands in his pockets, and a cigar in his mouth, placidly unconscious of their solicitude on his account. He was received with a little guttural cry of delight; the misery they had been in about him was duly concealed from him by both, and Julia asked him warmly who had won.

“Oh, Cambridge.”

“Cambridge! Why, then you are beaten?”

“Rather.” (Puff.)

“And you can come here with that horrible calm, and cigar, owning defeat, and puffing tranquillity, with the same mouth. Mamma, we are beaten. Beaten! actually.”

“Never mind,” said Edward kindly; “you have seen a capital race, the closest ever known on this river; and one side or other must lose.”

“And if they did not quite win, they very nearly did,” observed Mrs. Dodd composedly; then, with heartfelt content, “He is not hurt, and that is the main thing.”

“Well, my Lady Placid, and Mr. Imperturbable, I am glad neither of your equanimities is disturbed; but defeat is a Bitter Pill to me.”

Julia said this in her earnest voice, and drawing her scarf suddenly round her, so as almost to make it speak, digested her Bitter Pill in silence. During which process several Exeter men caught sight of Edward, and came round him, and an animated discussion took place. They began with asking him how it had happened, and, as he never spoke in a hurry,

supplied him with the answers. A stretcher had broken in the Exeter? No, but the Cambridge was a much better built boat, and her bottom cleaner. The bow oar of the Exeter was ill, and not fit for work. Each of these solutions was advanced and combated in turn, and then all together. At last the Babel lulled, and Edward was once more appealed to.

“Well, I will tell you the real truth,” said he, “how it happened.” (Puff.)

There was a pause of expectation, for the young man's tone was that of conviction, knowledge, and authority.

“The Cambridge men pulled faster than we did.” (Puff.)

The hearers stared and then laughed.

“Come, old fellows,” said Edward, “never win a boat-race on dry land! That is such a *plain* thing to do; gives the other side the laugh as well as the race. I have heard a stretcher or two told, but I saw none broken. (Puff.) Their boat is the worst I ever saw; it dips every stroke. (Puff.) Their strength lies in the crew. It was a good race and a fair one. Cambridge got a lead and kept it. (Puff.) They beat us a yard or two at rowing; but hang it all, don't let them beat us at telling the truth, not by an inch.” (Puff.)

“All right, old fellow!” was now the cry. One observed, however, that Stroke did not take the matter so coolly as Six; for he had shed a tear getting out of the boat.

“Shed a fiddlestick!” squeaked a little sceptic.

“No” said another, “he didn't quite shed it; his pride wouldn't let him.”

“So he decanted it, and put it by for supper, suggested Edward, and puffed.

“None of your chaff, Six. He had a gulp or two, and swallowed the rest by main force.”

“Don't you talk: you can swallow anything, it seems.” (Puff.)

“Well, I believe it,” said one of Hardie's own set. “Dodd doesn't know him as we do. Taff Hardie can't bear to be beat.”

When they were gone, Mrs. Dodd observed, “Dear me! what if the young gentleman did cry a little, it was very excusable; after such great exertions it *was* disappointing, mortifying. I pity him for one, and wish he had his mother alive and here, to dry them.” *

*Oh where, *and* oh where, *was* her Lindley Murray gone?

“Mamma, it is you for reading us,” cried Edward, slapping his thigh. “Well, then, since you can feel for a fellow, Hardie *was* a good deal cut up. You know the university was in a manner beaten, and he took the blame. He never cried; that was a cracker of those fellows. But he did give one great sob, that was all, and hung his head on one side a moment. But then he fought out of it directly, like a man; and there was an end of it, or ought to have been. Hang chatterboxes!”

“And what did you say to console him, Edward?” inquired Julia warmly.

“What—me? Console my senior, and my Stroke? No, thank you.”

At this thunderbolt of etiquette both ladies kept their countenances this was *their* muscular feat that day—and