



CH XV ~ THE DAY-BOOK OF JOHN BERTHIER HEATHERSTONE

*Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*

Thull Valley, Oct. 1, 1841.—The Fifth Bengal and Thirty-third Queen's passed through this morning on their way to the Front. Had tiffin with the Bengalese. Latest news from home that two attempts had been made on the Queen's life by semi-maniacs named Francis and Bean.

It promises to be a hard winter. The snow-line has descended a thousand feet upon the peaks, but the passes will be open for weeks to come, and, even if they were blocked, we have established so many depots in the country that Pollock and Nott will have no difficulty in holding their own. They shall not meet with the fate of Elphinstone's army. One such tragedy is enough for a century.

Elliott of the Artillery, and I, are answerable for the safety of the communications for a distance of twenty miles or more, from the mouth of the valley to this side of the wooden bridge over the Lotar. Goodenough, of the Rifles, is responsible on the other side, and Lieutenant-Colonel Sidney Herbert of the Engineers, has a general supervision over both sections.

Our force is not strong enough for the work which has to be done. I have a company and a half of our own regiment, and a squadron of Sowars, who are of no use at all among the rocks. Elliott has three guns, but several of his men are down with cholera, and I doubt if he has enough to serve more than two.

On the other hand, each convoy is usually provided with some guard of its own, though it is often absurdly inefficient. These valleys and ravines which branch out of the main pass are alive with Afri-dis and Pathans, who are keen robbers as well as religious fanatics. I wonder they don't swoop down on some of our caravans. They could plunder them and get back to their mountain fastnesses before we could interfere or overtake them. Nothing but fear will restrain them.

If I had my way I would hang one at the mouth of every ravine as a warning to the gang. They are personifications of the devil to look at, hawk-nosed, full-lipped, with a mane of tangled hair, and most Satanic sneer. No news today from the Front.

October 2.—I must really ask Herbert for another company at the very least. I am convinced that the communications would be cut off if any serious attack were made upon us.

Now, this morning two urgent messages were sent me from two different points more than sixteen miles apart, to say that there were signs of a descent of the tribes.

Elliott, with one gun and the Sowars, went to the farther ravine, while I, with the infantry, hurried to the other, but we found it was a false alarm. I saw no signs of the Hillmen, and though we were greeted by a splutter of jezail bullets we were unable to capture any of the rascals.

Woe betide them if they fall into my hands. I would give them as short a shrift as ever a Highland cateran got from a Glasgow judge. These continued alarms may mean nothing or they may be an indication that the Hillmen are assembling and have some plan in view.

We have had no news from the Front for some time, but to-day a convoy of wounded came through with the intelligence that Nott had taken Ghuznee. I hope he warmed up any of the black rascals that fell into his hands.

No word of Pollock.

An elephant battery came up from the Punjab, looking in very good condition. There were several convalescents with it going up to rejoin their regiments. Knew none of them except Mostyn of the Hussars and young Blakesley, who was my fag at Charterhouse, and whom I have never seen since.

Punch and cigars al fresco up to eleven o'clock.

Letters to-day from Wills & Co. about their little bill forwarded on from Delhi. Thought a campaign freed a man from these annoyances. Wills says in his note that, since his written applications have been in vain, he must call upon me in person. If he calls upon me now he will assuredly be the boldest and most persevering of tailors.

A line from Calcutta Daisy and another from Hobhouse to say that Matilda comes in for all the money under the will. I am glad of it.

October 3.—Glorious news from the Front today. Barclay, of the Madras Cavalry, galloped through with dispatches. Pollock entered Cabul triumphantly on the 16th of last month, and, better still, Lady Sale has been rescued by Shakespear, and brought safe into the British camp, together with the other hostages. *Te Deum laudamus!*

This should end the whole wretched business—this and the sack of the city. I hope Pollock won't be squeamish, or truckle to the hysterical party at home. The towns should be laid in ashes and the fields sown with salt. Above all, the Residency and the Palace must come down. So shall Burnes, McNaghten, and many another gallant fellow know that his countrymen could avenge if they could not save him!

It is hard when others are gaining glory and experience to be stuck in this miserable valley. I have been out of it completely, bar a few petty skirmishes. However, we may see some service yet.

A jemidar of ours brought in a Hillman today, who says that the tribes are massing in the Terada ravine, ten miles to the north of us, and intend attacking the next convoy. We can't rely on information of this sort, but there may prove to be some truth in it. Proposed to shoot our informant, so as to prevent his playing the double traitor and reporting our proceedings. Elliott demurred.

If you are making war you should throw no chance away. I hate half-and-half measures. The Children of Israel seem to have been the only people who ever carried war to its logical conclusion—except Cromwell in Ireland. Made a compromise at last by which the man is to be detained as a prisoner and executed if his information prove to be false. I only hope we get a fair chance of showing what we can do.

No doubt these fellows at the Front will have C.B.'s and knighthoods showering upon them thick and fast, while we poor devils, who have had most of the responsibility and anxiety, will be passed over completely. Elliott has a whitlow.

The last convoy left us a large packet of sauces, but as they forgot to leave anything to eat with them, we have handed them over to the Sowars, who drink them out of their pannikins as if they were liqueurs. We hear that another large convoy may be expected from the plains in the course of a day or two. Took nine to four on Cleopatra for the Calcutta Cup.

October 4.—The Hillmen really mean business this time, I think. We have had two of our spies come in this morning with the same account about the gathering in the Terada quarter. That old rascal Zemaun is at the head of it, and I had recommended the Government to present him with a telescope in return for his neutrality! There will be no Zemaun to present it to if I can but lay hands upon him.

We expect the convoy tomorrow morning, and need anticipate no attack until it comes up, for these fellows fight for plunder, not for glory, though, to do them justice, they have plenty of pluck when they get started. I have devised an excellent plan, and it has Elliott's hearty support. By Jove! if we can only manage it, it will be as pretty a ruse as ever I heard of.

Our intention is to give out that we are going down the valley to meet the convoy and to block the mouth of a pass from which we profess to expect an attack. Very good. We shall make a night-march to-night and reach their camp. Once there I shall conceal my two hundred men in the wagons and travel up with the convoy again.

Our friends the enemy, having heard that we intended to go south, and seeing the caravan going north without us, will naturally swoop down upon it under the impression that we are twenty miles away. We shall teach them such a lesson that they would as soon think of stopping a thunderbolt as of interfering again with one of Her Britannic Majesty's provision trains. I am all on thorns to be off.

Elliott has rigged up two of his guns so ingeniously that they look more like costermongers' barrows than anything else. To see artillery ready for action in the convoy might arouse suspicion. The artillerymen will be in the waggons next the guns, all ready to unlimber and open fire. Infantry in front and rear. Have told our confidential and discreet Sepoy servants the plan which we do not intend to adopt. N.B.—If you wish a thing to be noised over a whole province always whisper it under a vow of secrecy to your confidential native servant.

8.45 P.M.—Just starting for the convoy. May luck go with us!

October 5.—Seven o'clock in the evening. Io triumphe! Crown us with laurel—Elliott and myself! Who can compare with us as vermin killers?

I have only just got back, tired and weary, stained with blood and dust, but I have sat down before either washing or changing to have the satisfaction of seeing our deeds set forth in black and white—if only in my private log for no eye but my own. I shall describe it all fully as a preparation for an official account, which must be drawn up when Elliott gets back. Billy Dawson used to say that there were three degrees of comparison—a prevarication, a lie, and an official account. We at least cannot exaggerate our success, for it would be impossible to add anything to it.

We set out, then, as per programme, and came upon the camp near the head of the valley. They had two weak companies of the 54th with them who might no doubt have held their own with warning, but an unexpected rush of wild Hillmen is a very difficult thing to stand against. With our reinforcements, however, and on our guard, we might defy the rascals.

Chamberlain was in command—a fine young fellow. We soon made him understand the situation, and were all ready for a start by daybreak though his wagons were so full that we were compelled to leave several tons of fodder behind in order to make room for my Sepoys and for the artillery.

About five o'clock we inspanned, to use an Africanism, and by six we were well on our way, with our escort as straggling and unconcerned as possible—as helpless-looking a caravan as ever invited attack.

I could soon see that it was to be no false alarm this time, and that the tribes really meant business.

From my post of observation, under the canvas screens of one of the wagons, I could make out turbaned heads popping up to have a look at us from among the rocks, and an occasional scout hurrying northward with the news of our approach.

It was not, however, until we came abreast of the Terada Pass, a gloomy defile bounded by gigantic cliffs, that the Afridis began to show in force, though they had ambushed themselves so cleverly that, had we not been keenly on the look-out for them, we might have walked right into the trap. As it was, the convoy halted, upon which the Hillmen, seeing that they were observed, opened a heavy but ill-directed fire upon us.

I had asked Chamberlain to throw out his men in skirmishing order, and to give them directions to retreat slowly upon the wagons so as to draw the Afridis on. The ruse succeeded to perfection.

As the redcoats steadily retired, keeping behind cover as much as possible, the enemy followed them up with yells of exultation, springing from rock to rock, waving their jezails in the air, and howling like a pack of demons.

With their black, contorted, mocking faces, their fierce gestures, and their fluttering garments, they would have made a study for any painter who wished to portray Milton's conception of the army of the damned.

From every side they pressed in until, seeing, as they thought, nothing between them and victory, they left the shelter of the rocks and came rushing down, a furious, howling throng, with the green banner of the Prophet in their van.

Now was our chance, and gloriously we utilized it.

From every cranny and slit of the wagons came a blaze of fire, every shot of which told among the close-packed mob. Two or three score rolled over like rabbits and the rest reeled for a moment, and then, with their chiefs at their head, came on again in a magnificent rush.

It was useless, however, for undisciplined men to attempt to face such a well-directed fire. The leaders were bowled over, and the others, after hesitating for a few moments, turned and made for the rocks.

It was our turn now to assume the offensive. The guns were unlimbered and grape poured into them, while our little infantry force advanced at the double, shooting and stabbing all whom they overtook.

Never had I known the tide of battle turn so rapidly and so decisively. The sullen retreat became a flight, and the flight a panic-stricken rout, until there was nothing left of the tribesmen except a scattered, demoralised rabble flying wildly to their native fastnesses for shelter and protection.

I was by no means inclined to let them off cheaply now that I had them in my power. On the contrary, I determined to teach them such a lesson that the sight of a single scarlet uniform would in future be a passport in itself.

We followed hard upon the track of the fugitives and entered the Terada defile at their very heels. Having detached Chamberlain and Elliott with a company on either side to protect my wings, I pushed on with my Sepoys and a handful of artillerymen, giving the enemy no time to rally or to recover themselves. We were so handicapped, however, by our stiff European uniforms and by our want of practice in climbing, that we should have been unable to overtake any of the mountaineers had it not been for a fortunate accident.

There is a smaller ravine which opens into the main pass, and in their hurry and confusion some of the fugitives rushed down this. I saw sixty or seventy of them turn down, but I should have passed them by and continued in pursuit of the main body had not one of my scouts come rustling up to inform me that the smaller ravine was a cul-de-sac, and that the Afridis who had gone up it had no possible means of getting out again except by cutting their way through our ranks.

Here was an opportunity of striking terror into the tribes. Leaving Chamberlain and Elliott to continue the pursuit of the main body, I wheeled my Sepoys into the narrow path and proceeded slowly down it in extended order, covering the whole ground from cliff to cliff. Not a jackal could have passed us unseen. The rebels were caught like rats in a trap.

The defile in which we found ourselves was the most gloomy and majestic that I have ever seen. On either side naked precipices rose sheer up for a thousand feet or more, converging upon each other so as to leave a very narrow slit of daylight above us, which was further reduced by the feathery fringe of palm trees and aloes which hung over each lip of the chasm.

The cliffs were not more than a couple of hundred yards apart at the entrance, but as we advanced they grew nearer and nearer, until a half company in close order could hardly march abreast.

A sort of twilight reigned in this strange valley, and the dim, uncertain light made the great, basalt rocks loom up vague and fantastic. There was no path, and the ground was most uneven, but I pushed on briskly, cautioning my fellows to have their fingers on their triggers, for I could see that we were nearing the point where the two cliffs would form an acute angle with each other.

At last we came in sight of the place. A great pile of boulders was heaped up at the very end of the pass, and among these our fugitives were skulking, entirely demoralized apparently, and incapable of resistance. They were useless as prisoners, and it was out of the question to let them go, so there was no choice but to polish them off.

Waving my sword, I was leading my men on, when we had a most dramatic interruption of a sort which I have seen once or twice on the boards of Drury Lane, but never in real life.

In the side of the cliff, close to the pile of stones where the Hillmen were making their last stand, there was a cave which looked more like the lair of some wild beast than a human habitation.

Out of this dark archway there suddenly emerged an old man—such a very, very old man that all the other veterans whom I have seen were as chickens compared with him. His hair and beard were both as white as snow, and each reached more than half-way to his waist. His face was wrinkled and brown and ebony, a cross between a monkey and a mummy, and so thin and emaciated were his shriveled limbs that you would hardly have given him credit for having any vitality left, were it not for his eyes, which glittered and sparkled with excitement, like two diamonds in a setting of mahogany.

This apparition came rushing out of the cave, and, throwing himself between the fugitives and our fellows, motioned us back with as imperious a sweep of the hand as ever an emperor used to his slaves.

“Men of blood,” he cried, in a voice of thunder, speaking excellent English, too— “this is a place for prayer and meditation, not for murder. Desist, lest the wrath of the gods fall upon you.”

“Stand aside, old man,” I shouted. “You will meet with a hurt if you don’t get out of the way.”

I could see that the Hillmen were taking heart, and that some of my Sepoys were flinching, as if they did not relish this new enemy. Clearly, I must act promptly if I wished to complete our success.

I dashed forward at the head of the white artillerymen who had stuck to me. The old fellow rushed at us with his arms out as if to stop us, but it was not time to stick at trifles, so I passed my sword through his body at the same moment that one of the gunners brought his carbine down upon his head. He dropped instantly, and the Hillmen, at the sight of his fall, set up the most unearthly howl of horror and consternation.



The Sepoys, who had been inclined to hang back, came on again the moment he was disposed of, and it did not take us long to consummate our victory. Hardly a man of the enemy got out of the defile alive.

What could Hannibal or Caesar have done more? Our own loss in the whole affair has been insignificant—three killed and about fifteen wounded. Got their banner, a green wisp of a thing with a sentence of the Koran engraved upon it.

I looked, after the action, for the old chap, but his body had disappeared, though how or whither I have no conception. His blood be upon his own head! He would be alive now if he had not interfered, as the constables say at home, “with an officer in the execution of his duty.”

The scouts tell me that his name was Ghoolab Shah, and that he was one of the highest and holiest of the Buddhists. He had great fame in the district as a prophet and worker of miracles—hence the hubbub when he was cut down. They tell me that he was living in this very cave when Tamerlane passed this way in 1399, with a lot more bosh of that sort.

I went into the cave, and how any man could live in it a week is a mystery to me, for it was little more than four feet high, and as damp and dismal a grotto as ever was seen. A wooden settle and a rough table were the sole furniture, with a lot of parchment scrolls with hieroglyphics.

Well, he has gone where he will learn that the gospel of peace and good will is superior to all his Pagan lore. Peace go with him.

Elliott and Chamberlain never caught the main body—I knew they wouldn't—so the honours of the day rest with me. I ought to get a step for it, anyhow, and perhaps, who knows? some mention in the Gazette. What a lucky chance! I think Zemaun deserves his telescope after all for giving it to me. Shall have something to eat now, for I am half starved. Glory is an excellent thing, but you cannot live upon it.

October 6, 11 A.M.—Let me try to set down as calmly and as accurately as I can all that occurred last night. I have never been a dreamer or a visionary, so I can rely upon my own senses, though I am bound to say that if any other fellow had told me the same thing I should have doubted him. I might even have suspected that I was deceived at the time had I not heard the bell since. However, I must narrate what happened.

Elliott was in my tent with me having a quiet cheroot until about ten o'clock. I then walked the rounds with my jemidar, and having seen that all was right I turned in a little before eleven.

I was just dropping off to sleep, for I was dog-tired after the day's work, when I was aroused by some slight noise, and, looking round, I saw a man dressed in Asiatic costume standing at the entrance of my tent. He was motionless when I saw him, and he had his eyes fixed upon me with a solemn and stern expression.

My first thought was that the fellow was some Ghazi or Afghan fanatic who had stolen in with the intention of stabbing me, and with this idea in my mind I had all the will to spring from my couch and defend myself, but the power was unaccountably lacking.

An overpowering languor and want of energy possessed me. Had I seen the dagger descending upon my breast I could not have made an effort to avert it. I suppose a bird when it is under the influence of a snake feels very much as I did in the presence of this gloomy-faced stranger. My mind was clear enough, but my body was as torpid as though I were still asleep.

I shut my eyes once or twice and tried to persuade myself that the whole thing was a delusion, but every time that I opened them there was the man still regarding me with the same stony, menacing stare.

The silence became unendurable. I felt that I must overcome my languor so far as to address him. I am not a nervous man, and I never knew before what Virgil meant when he wrote "adhoesit faucibus ora." At last I managed to stammer out a few words, asking the intruder who he was and what he wanted.

"Lieutenant Heatherstone," he answered, speaking slowly and gravely, "you have committed this day the foulest sacrilege and the greatest crime which it is possible for man to do. You have slain one of the thrice blessed and reverend ones, an arch adept of the first degree, an elder brother who has trod the higher path for more years than you have numbered months. You have cut him off at a time when his labours promised to reach a climax and when he was about to attain a height of occult knowledge which would have brought man one step nearer to his Creator. All this you have done without excuse, without provocation, at a time when he was pleading the cause of the helpless and distressed. Listen now to me, John Heatherstone.

“When first the occult sciences were pursued many thousands of years ago, it was found by the learned that the short tenure of human existence was too limited to allow a man to attain the loftiest heights of inner life. The inquirers of those days directed their energies in the first place, therefore, to the lengthening of their own days in order that they might have more scope for improvement.

“By their knowledge of the secret laws of Nature they were enabled to fortify their bodies against disease and old age. It only remained to protect themselves against the assaults of wicked and violent men who are ever ready to destroy what is wiser and nobler than themselves. There was no direct means by which this protection could be effected, but it was in some measure attained by arranging the occult forces in such a way that a terrible and unavoidable retribution should await the offender.

“It was irrevocably ordained by laws which cannot be reversed that any one who should shed the blood of a brother who had attained a certain degree of sanctity should be a doomed man. Those laws are extant to this day, John Heatherstone, and you have placed yourself in their power. King or emperor would be helpless before the forces which you have called into play. What hope, then, is there for you?

“In former days these laws acted so instantaneously that the slayer perished with his victim. It was judged afterwards that this prompt retribution prevented the offender from having time to realize the enormity of his offence.

“It was therefore ordained that in all such cases the retribution should be left in the hands of the chelas, or immediate disciples of the holy man, with power to extend or shorten it at their will, exacting it either at the time or at any future anniversary of the day when the crime was committed.

“Why punishment should come on those days only it does not concern you to know. Suffice it that you are the murderer of Ghoolab Shah, the thrice blessed, and that I am the senior of his three chelas commissioned to avenge his death.

“It is no personal matter between us. Amid our studies we have no leisure or inclination for personal matters. It is an immutable law, and it is as impossible for us to relax it as it is for you to escape from it. Sooner or later we shall come to you and claim your life in atonement for the one which you have taken.

“The same fate shall be meted out to the wretched soldier, Smith, who, though less guilty than yourself, has incurred the same penalty by raising his sacrilegious hand against the chosen of Buddha. If your life is prolonged, it is merely that you may have time to repent of your misdeed and to feel the full force of your punishment.

“And lest you should be tempted to cast it out of your mind and to forget it, our bell—our astral bell, the use of which is one of our occult secrets—shall ever remind you of what have been and what is to be. You shall hear it by day and you shall hear it by night, and it will be a sign to you that do what you may and go where you will, you can never shake yourself clear of the chelas of Ghoolab Shah.

“You will never see me more, accursed one, until the day when we come for you. Live in fear, and in that anticipation which is worse than death.”

With a menacing wave of the hand the figure turned and swept out of my tent into the darkness. The instant that the fellow disappeared from my sight I recovered from my lethargy which had fallen upon me. Springing to my feet, I rushed to the opening and looked out. A Sepoy sentry was standing leaning upon his musket, a few paces off.

“You dog,” I said in Hindustani. “What do you mean by letting people disturb me in this way?”

The man stared at me in amazement. “Has any one disturbed the sahib?” he asked.

“This instant—this moment. You must have seen him pass out of my tent.”

“Surely the Burra Sahib is mistaken,” the man answered, respectfully but firmly. “I have been here for an hour, and no one has passed from the tent.”

Puzzled and disconcerted, I was sitting by the side of my couch wondering whether the whole thing were a delusion, brought on by the nervous excitement of our skirmish, when a new marvel overtook me. From over my head there suddenly sounded a sharp, tinkling sound, like that produced by an empty glass when flipped by the nail, only louder and more intense.

I looked up, but nothing was to be seen. I examined the whole interior of the tent carefully, but without discovering any cause for the strange sound. At last, worn out with fatigue, I gave the mystery up, and throwing myself on the couch was soon fast asleep.

When I awoke this morning I was inclined to put the whole of my yesternight's experiences down to imagination, but I was soon disabused of the idea, for I had hardly risen before the same strange sound was repeated in my very ear as loudly, and to all appearance as causelessly, as before. What it is or where it comes from I cannot conceive. I have not heard it since.

Can the fellow's threats have something in them and this be the warning bell of which he spoke? Surely it is impossible. Yet his manner was indescribably impressive.

I have tried to set down what he said as accurately as I can, but I fear I have omitted a good deal. What is to be the end of this strange affair? I must go in for a course of religion and holy water. Not a word to Chamberlain or Elliott. They tell me I am looking like a ghost this morning.

Evening.—Have managed to compare notes with Gunner Rufus Smith of the Artillery, who knocked the old fellow over with the butt of his gun. His experience has been the same as mine. He has heard the sound, too. What is the meaning of it all? My brain is in a whirl.

Oct. 10 (four days later).—God help us!

This last laconic entry terminated the journal. It seemed to me that, coming as it did after four days' complete silence, it told a clearer tale of shaken nerve and a broken spirit than could any more elaborate narrative. Pinned on to the journal was a supplementary statement which had evidently been recently added by the general.

"From that day to this," it said, "I have had no night or day free from the intrusion of that dreadful sound with its accompanying train of thought. Time and custom have brought me no relief, but on the contrary, as the years pass over my head my physical strength decreases and my nerves become less able to bear up against the continual strain.

"I am a broken man in mind and body. I live in a state of tension, always straining my ears for the hated sound, afraid to converse with my fellows for fear of exposing my dreadful condition to them, with no comfort or hope of comfort on this side of the grave. I should be willing. Heaven knows, to

die, and yet as each 5th of October comes round, I am prostrated with fear because I do not know what strange and terrible experience may be in store for me.

“Forty years have passed since I slew Ghoolab Shah, and forty times I have gone through all the horrors of death, without attaining the blessed peace which lies beyond.

“I have no means of knowing in what shape my fate will come upon me. I have immured myself in this lonely country, and surrounded myself with barriers, because in my weaker moments my instincts urge me to take some steps for self-protection, but I know well in my heart how futile it all is. They must come quickly now, for I grow old, and Nature will forestall them unless they make haste.

“I take credit to myself that I have kept my hands off the prussic-acid or opium bottle. It has always been in my power to checkmate my occult persecutors in that way, but I have ever held that a man in this world cannot desert his post until he has been relieved in due course by the authorities. I have had no scruples, however, about exposing myself to danger, and, during the Sikh and Sepoy wars, I did all that a man could do to court Death. He passed me by, however, and picked out many a young fellow to whom life was only opening and who had everything to live for, while I survived to win crosses and honours which had lost all relish for me.

“Well, well, these things cannot depend upon chance, and there is no doubt some deep reason for it all.

“One compensation Providence has made me in the shape of a true and faithful wife, to whom I told my dreadful secret before the wedding, and who nobly consented to share my lot. She has lifted half the burden from my shoulders, but with the effect, poor soul, of crushing her own life beneath its weight!

“My children, too, have been a comfort to me. Mordaunt knows all, or nearly all. Gabriel we have endeavoured to keep in the dark, though we cannot prevent her from knowing that there is something amiss.

“I should like this statement to be shown to Dr. John Easterling, of Stranraer. He heard on one occasion this haunting sound. My sad experience may show him that I spoke truth when I said that there was much knowledge in the world which has never found its way to England.

“J. B. HEATHERSTONE.”

It was going on for dawn by the time that I had finished this extraordinary narrative, to which my sister and Mordaunt Heatherstone listened with the most absorbed attention. Already we could see through the window that the stars had begun to fade and a grey light to appear in the east. The crofter who owned the lurcher dog lived a couple of miles off, so it was time for us to be on foot. Leaving Esther to tell my father the story in such fashion as she might, we thrust some food in our pockets and set off upon our solemn and eventful errand.