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**Rambles Beyond Railways**

**or,**

**Notes in Cornwall taken A-Foot.**

**By**

**Wilkie Collins**

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DEDICATED TO

THE COMPANION OF MY WALK THROUGH CORNWALL,

HENRY C. BRANDLING.

## **I - A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION.**

DEAR READER,

When any friend of yours or mine, in whose fortunes we take an interest, is about to start on his travels, we smooth his way for him as well as we can, by giving him a letter of introduction to such connexions of ours as he may find on his line of route. We bespeak their favourable consideration for him by setting forth his good qualities in the best light possible; and then leave him to make his own way by his own merit--satisfied that we have done enough in procuring him a welcome under our friend's roof, and giving him at the outset a claim to our friend's estimation.

Will you allow me, reader (if our previous acquaintance authorizes me to take such a liberty), to follow the custom to which I have just adverted; and to introduce to your notice this Book, as a friend of mine setting forth on his travels, in whose well-being I feel a very lively interest. He is neither so bulky nor so distinguished a person as some of the predecessors of his race, who may have sought your attention in years gone by, under the name of "Quarto," and in magnificent clothing of Morocco and Gold. All that I can say for his outside is, that I have made it as neat as I can--having had him properly thumped into wearing his present coat of decent cloth, by the most competent book-tailor I could find. As for his intrinsic claims to your kindness, he has only two that I shall venture to advocate. In the first place he is able to tell you something about a part of your own country which is still too rarely visited and too little known. He will speak to you of one of the remotest and most interesting corners of our old English soil. He will tell you of the grand and varied scenery; the mighty Druid relics; the quaint legends; the deep, dark mines; the venerable remains of early Christianity; and the pleasant primitive population of the county of CORNWALL. You will inquire, can we believe him in all that he says? This brings me at once to his second qualification--he invariably speaks the truth. If he describes scenery to you, it is scenery that he saw and noted on the spot; and if he adds some little sketches of character, I answer for him, on my own responsibility, that they are sketches drawn from the life.

Have I said enough about my friend to interest you in his fortunes, when you meet him wandering hither and thither over the great domain of the Republic of Letters--or, must I plead more warmly in his behalf? I can only urge on you that he does not present himself as fit for the top seats at the library table,--as aspiring to the company of those above him,--of classical,

statistical, political, philosophical, historical, or antiquarian high dignitaries of his class, of whom he is at best but the poor relation. Treat him not, as you treat such illustrious guests as these! Toss him about anywhere, from hand to hand, as good-naturedly as you can; stuff him into your pocket when you get into the railway; take him to bed with you, and poke him under the pillow; present him to the rising generation, to try if he can amuse them; give him to the young ladies, who are always predisposed to the kind side, and may make something of him; introduce him to "my young masters" when they are idling away a dull morning over their cigars. Nay, advance him if you will, to the notice of the elders themselves; but take care to ascertain first that they are people who only travel to gratify a hearty admiration of the wonderful works of Nature, and to learn to love their neighbour better by seeking him at his own home--regarding it, at the same time, as a peculiar privilege, to derive their satisfaction and gain their improvement from experiences on English ground. Take care of this; and who knows into what high society you may not be able to introduce the bearer of the present letter! In spite of his habit of rambling from subject to subject in his talk, much as he rambled from place to place in his travels, he may actually find himself, one day, basking on Folio Classics beneath the genial approval of a Doctor of Divinity, or trembling among Statutes and Reports under the learned scrutiny of a Sergeant at Law!

W. C.

HARLEY STREET, LONDON,

March, 1861.