

tion of seeing that our pursuers, after lingering for a little while on the spot on which we had left them, turned homewards, fairly cowed, and pursued us no more. But, alas! on reaching our secret chamber, we ascertained, by marks all too unequivocal, that it was to be secret no longer. Some rude hand had torn down the wooden lining, and cut two of the posts half through with a hatchet; and on returning disconsolately to the town, we ascertained that Johnstone, the forester, had just been there before us, declaring that some atrociously wicked persons—for whose apprehension a proclamation was to be instantly issued—had contrived a diabolical trap, which he had just discovered, for maiming the cattle of the gentleman, his employer, who farmed the Hill. Johnstone was an old Forty-Second man, who had followed Wellington over the larger part of the Peninsula; but though he had witnessed the storming and sack of St. Sebastian, and a great many other bad things, nothing had he ever seen on the Peninsula, or anywhere else, he said, half so mischievous as the cattle-trap. We, of course, kept our own secret; and as we all returned under the cloud of night, and with heavy hearts filled up our excavation level with the soil, the threatened proclamation was never issued. Johnstone, however, who had been watching my motions for a considerable time before, and whom, as he was a formidable fellow, very unlike any of the other foresters, I had been sedulously watching in turn,—had no hesitation in declaring that I, and I only, could be the designer of the cattle-trap. I had acquainted myself in books, he said, with the mode of entrapping by pitfalls wild beasts in the forests abroad; and my trap for the Colonel's cattle was, he was certain, a result of my book-acquired knowledge.

I was one day lounging in front of my mother's dwelling, when up came Johnstone to address me. As the evidence regarding the excavation had totally broken down, I was aware of no special offence at the time that could have secured for me such a piece of attention, and inferred that the old soldier was laboring under some mistake; but Johnstone's address soon evinced that he was not in the least mistaken.