

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schilling Kralik Schiller Iffland Sokrates
Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving
Petalozzi Platon Pückler Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka
Sachs Poe Liebermann Kock Korolenko
de Sade Praetorius Mistral Zetkin



The publishing house **tredition** has created the series **TREDITION CLASSICS**. It contains classical literature works from over two thousand years. Most of these titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades.

The book series is intended to preserve the cultural legacy and to promote the timeless works of classical literature. As a reader of a **TREDITION CLASSICS** book, the reader supports the mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion.

The symbol of **TREDITION CLASSICS** is Johannes Gutenberg (1400 – 1468), the inventor of movable type printing.

With the series, **tredition** intends to make thousands of international literature classics available in printed format again – worldwide.

All books are available at book retailers worldwide in paperback and in hardcover. For more information please visit: www.tredition.com



tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, **tredition** offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. **tredition** is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: www.tredition.com

Oak Openings

James Fenimore Cooper

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: James Fenimore Cooper
Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)
ISBN: 978-3-8491-6472-0

www.tredition.com
www.tredition.de

Copyright:
The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.

OAK OPENINGS

JAMES FENNIMORE COOPER

PREFACE.

It ought to be matter of surprise how men live in the midst of marvels, without taking heed of their existence. The slightest derangement of their accustomed walks in political or social life shall excite all their wonder, and furnish themes for their discussions, for months; while the prodigies that come from above are presented daily to their eyes, and are received without surprise, as things of course. In a certain sense, this may be well enough, inasmuch as all which comes directly from the hands of the Creator may be said so far to exceed the power of human comprehension, as to be beyond comment; but the truth would show us that the cause of this neglect is rather a propensity to dwell on such interests as those over which we have a fancied control, than on those which confessedly transcend our understanding. Thus is it ever with men. The wonders of creation meet them at every turn, without awakening reflection, while their minds labor on subjects that are not only ephemeral and illusory, but which never attain an elevation higher than that the most sordid interests can bestow.

For ourselves, we firmly believe that the finger of Providence is pointing the way to all races, and colors, and nations, along the path that is to lead the east and the west alike to the great goal of human wants. Demons infest that path, and numerous and unhappy are the wanderings of millions who stray from its course; sometimes in reluctance to proceed; sometimes in an indiscreet haste to move faster than their fellows, and always in a forgetfulness of the great rules of conduct that have been handed down from above. Nevertheless, the main course is onward; and the day, in the sense of time, is not distant, when the whole earth is to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, "as the waters cover the sea."

One of the great stumbling-blocks with a large class of well-meaning, but narrow-judging moralists, are the seeming wrongs that are permitted by Providence, in its control of human events. Such persons take a one-sided view of things, and reduce all principles to the level of their own understandings. If we could compre-

hend the relations which the Deity bears to us, as well as we can comprehend the relations we bear to him, there might be a little seeming reason in these doubts; but when one of the parties in this mighty scheme of action is a profound mystery to the other, it is worse than idle, it is profane, to attempt to explain those things which our minds are not yet sufficiently cleared from the dross of earth to understand. Look at Italy, at this very moment. The darkness and depression from which that glorious peninsula is about to emerge are the fruits of long-continued dissensions and an iron despotism, which is at length broken by the impulses left behind him by a ruthless conqueror, who, under the appearance and the phrases of Liberty, contended only for himself. A more concentrated egotism than that of Napoleon probably never existed; yet has it left behind it seeds of personal rights that have sprung up by the way-side, and which are likely to take root with a force that will bid defiance to eradication. Thus is it ever, with the progress of society. Good appears to arise out of evil, and the inscrutable ways of Providence are vindicated by general results, rather than by instances of particular care. We leave the application of these remarks to the intelligence of such of our readers as may have patience to peruse the work that will be found in the succeeding pages.

We have a few words of explanation to say, in connection with the machinery of our tale. In the first place, we would remark, that the spelling of "burr-oak," as given in this book, is less our own than an office spelling. We think it should be "bur-oak," and this for the simple reason, that the name is derived from the fact that the acorn borne by this tree is partially covered with a bur. Old Sam Johnson, however, says that "burr" means the lobe, or lap of the ear; and those who can fancy such a resemblance between this and the covering of our acorn, are at liberty to use the two final consonants. Having commenced stereotyping with this supernumerary, for the sake of uniformity that mode of spelling, wrong as we think it, has been continued through-out the book.

There is nothing imaginary in the fertility of the West. Personal observation has satisfied us that it much surpasses anything that exists in the Atlantic States, unless in exceptions, through the agency of great care and high manuring, or in instances of peculiar natural soil. In these times, men almost fly. We have passed over a thou-

sand miles of territory within the last few days, and have brought the pictures at the two extremes of this journey in close proximity in our mind's eye. Time may lessen that wonderful fertility, and bring the whole country more on a level; but there it now is, a glorious gift from God, which it is devoutly to be wished may be accepted with due gratitude and with a constant recollection of his unwavering rules of right and wrong, by those who have been selected to enjoy it.

June, 1848.

THE OAK OPENINGS.

CHAPTER I.

How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day,
From every opening flower.

WATTS' HYMNS FOR CHILDREN.

We have heard of those who fancied that they beheld a signal instance of the hand of the Creator in the celebrated cataract of Niagara. Such instances of the power of sensible and near objects to influence certain minds, only prove how much easier it is to impress the imaginations of the dull with images that are novel, than with those that are less apparent, though of infinitely greater magnitude. Thus it would seem to be strange indeed, that any human being should find more to wonder at in any one of the phenomena of the earth, than in the earth itself; or should especially stand astonished at the might of Him who created the world, when each night brings into view a firmament studded with other worlds, each equally the work of His hands!

Nevertheless, there is (at bottom) a motive for adoration, in the study of the lowest fruits of the wisdom and power of God. The leaf is as much beyond our comprehension of remote causes, as much a subject of intelligent admiration, as the tree which bears it: the single tree confounds our knowledge and researches the same as the entire forest; and, though a variety that appears to be endless pervades the world, the same admirable adaptation of means to ends, the same bountiful forethought, and the same benevolent wisdom, are to be found in the acorn, as in the gnarled branch on which it grew.

The American forest has so often been described, as to cause one to hesitate about reviving scenes that might possibly pall, and in

retouching pictures that have been so frequently painted as to be familiar to every mind. But God created the woods, and the themes bestowed by his bounty are inexhaustible. Even the ocean, with its boundless waste of water, has been found to be rich in its various beauties and marvels; and he who shall bury himself with us, once more, in the virgin forests of this widespread land, may possibly discover new subjects of admiration, new causes to adore the Being that has brought all into existence, from the universe to its most minute particle.

The precise period of our legend was in the year 1812, and the season of the year the pleasant month of July, which had now drawn near to its close. The sun was already approaching the western limits of a wooded view, when the actors in its opening scene must appear on a stage that is worthy of a more particular description.

The region was, in one sense, wild, though it offered a picture that was not without some of the strongest and most pleasing features of civilization. The country was what is termed "rolling," from some fancied resemblance to the surface of the ocean, when it is just undulating with a long "ground-swell."

Although wooded, it was not, as the American forest is wont to grow, with tall straight trees towering toward the light, but with intervals between the low oaks that were scattered profusely over the view, and with much of that air of negligence that one is apt to see in grounds where art is made to assume the character of nature. The trees, with very few exceptions, were what is called the "burr-oak," a small variety of a very extensive genus; and the spaces between them, always irregular, and often of singular beauty, have obtained the name of "openings"; the two terms combined giving their appellation to this particular species of native forest, under the name of "Oak Openings."

These woods, so peculiar to certain districts of country, are not altogether without some variety, though possessing a general character of sameness. The trees were of very uniform size, being little taller than pear-trees, which they resemble a good deal in form; and having trunks that rarely attain two feet in diameter. The variety is produced by their distribution. In places they stand with a regulari-

ty resembling that of an orchard; then, again, they are more scattered and less formal, while wide breadths of the land are occasionally seen in which they stand in copses, with vacant spaces, that bear no small affinity to artificial lawns, being covered with verdure. The grasses are supposed to be owing to the fires lighted periodically by the Indians in order to clear their hunting-grounds.

Toward one of these grassy glades, which was spread on an almost imperceptible acclivity, and which might have contained some fifty or sixty acres of land, the reader is now requested to turn his eyes. Far in the wilderness as was the spot, four men were there, and two of them had even some of the appliances of civilization about them. The woods around were the then unpeopled forest of Michigan; and the small winding reach of placid water that was just visible in the distance, was an elbow of the Kalamazoo, a beautiful little river that flows westward, emptying its tribute into the vast expanse of Lake Michigan. Now, this river has already become known, by its villages and farms, and railroads and mills; but then, not a dwelling of more pretension than the wigwam of the Indian, or an occasional shanty of some white adventurer, had ever been seen on its banks. In that day, the whole of that fine peninsula, with the exception of a narrow belt of country along the Detroit River, which was settled by the French as far back as near the close of the seventeenth century, was literally a wilderness. If a white man found his way into it, it was as an Indian trader, a hunter, or an adventurer in some other of the pursuits connected with border life and the habits of the savages.

Of this last character were two of the men on the open glade just mentioned, while their companions were of the race of the aborigines. What is much more remarkable, the four were absolutely strangers to each other's faces, having met for the first time in their lives, only an hour previously to the commencement of our tale. By saying that they were strangers to each other, we do not mean that the white men were acquaintances, and the Indians strangers, but that neither of the four had ever seen either of the party until they met on that grassy glade, though fame had made them somewhat acquainted through their reputations. At the moment when we desire to present this group to the imagination of the reader, three of its number were grave and silent observers of the movements of

the fourth. The fourth individual was of middle size, young, active, exceedingly well formed, and with a certain open and frank expression of countenance, that rendered him at least well-looking, though slightly marked with the small-pox. His real name was Benjamin Boden, though he was extensively known throughout the north-western territories by the sobriquet of Ben Buzz—extensively as to distances, if not as to people. By the voyageurs, and other French of that region, he was almost universally styled le Bourdon^ or the "Drone"; not, however, from his idleness or inactivity, but from the circumstances that he was notorious for laying his hands on the products of labor that proceeded from others. In a word, Ben Boden was a "bee-hunter," and as he was one of the first to exercise his craft in that portion of the country, so was he infinitely the most skilful and prosperous. The honey of le Bourdon was not only thought to be purer and of higher flavor than that of any other trader in the article, but it was much the most abundant. There were a score of respectable families on the two banks of the Detroit, who never purchased of any one else, but who patiently waited for the arrival of the capacious bark canoe of Buzz, in the autumn, to lay in their supplies of this savory nutriment for the approaching winter. The whole family of griddle cakes, including those of buckwheat, Indian rice, and wheaten flour, were more or less dependent on the safe arrival of le Bourdon, for their popularity and welcome. Honey was eaten with all; and wild honey had a reputation, rightfully or not obtained, that even rendered it more welcome than that which was formed by the labor and art of the domesticated bee.

The dress of le Bourdon was well adapted to his pursuits and life. He wore a hunting-shirt and trousers, made of thin stuff, which was dyed green, and trimmed with yellow fringe. This was the ordinary forest attire of the American rifleman; being of a character, as it was thought, to conceal the person in the woods, by blending its hues with those of the forest. On his head Ben wore a skin cap, somewhat smartly made, but without the fur; the weather being warm. His moccasins were a good deal wrought, but seemed to be fading under the exposure of many marches. His arms were excellent; but all his martial accoutrements, even to a keen long-bladed knife, were suspended from the rammer of his rifle; the weapon itself being allowed to lean, in careless confidence, against the trunk of the

nearest oak, as if their master felt there was no immediate use for them.

Not so with the other three. Not only was each man well armed, but each man kept his trusty rifle hugged to his person, in a sort of jealous watchfulness; while the other white man, from time to time, secretly, but with great minuteness, examined the flint and priming of his own piece.

This second pale-face was a very different person from him just described. He was still young, tall, sinewy, gaunt, yet springy and strong, stooping and round-shouldered, with a face that carried a very decided top-light in it, like that of the notorious Bardolph. In short, whiskey had dyed the countenance of Gershom Waring with a tell-tale hue, that did not less infallibly betray his destination than his speech denoted his origin, which was clearly from one of the States of New England. But Gershom had been so long at the Northwest as to have lost many of his peculiar habits and opinions, and to have obtained substitutes.

Of the Indians, one, an elderly, wary, experienced warrior, was a Pottawattamie, named Elksfoot, who was well known at all the trading-houses and "garrisons" of the northwestern territory, including Michigan as low down as Detroit itself. The other red man was a young Chippewa, or O-jeb-way, as the civilized natives of that nation now tell us the word should be spelled. His ordinary appellation among his own people was that of Pigeonswing; a name obtained from the rapidity and length of his flights. This young man, who was scarcely turned of five-and-twenty, had already obtained a high reputation among the numerous tribes of his nation, as a messenger, or "runner."

Accident had brought these four persons, each and all strangers to one another, in communication in the glade of the Oak Openings, which has already been mentioned, within half an hour of the scene we are about to present to the reader. Although the rencontre had been accompanied by the usual precautions of those who meet in a wilderness, it had been friendly so far; a circumstance that was in some measure owing to the interest they all took in the occupation of the bee-hunter. The three others, indeed, had come in on different trails, and surprised le Bourdon in the midst of one of the most

exciting exhibitions of his art—an exhibition that awoke so much and so common an interest in the spectators, as at once to place its continuance for the moment above all other considerations. After brief salutations, and wary examinations of the spot and its tenants, each individual had, in succession, given his grave attention to what was going on, and all had united in begging Ben Buzz to pursue his occupation, without regard to his visitors. The conversation that took place was partly in English, and partly in one of the Indian dialects, which luckily all the parties appeared to understand. As a matter of course, with a sole view to oblige the reader, we shall render what was said, freely, into the vernacular.

"Let's see, let's see, STRANger," cried Gershom, emphasizing the syllable we have put in italics, as if especially to betray his origin, "what you can do with your tools. I've heer'n tell of such doin's, but never see'd a bee lined in all my life, and have a despr'ate fancy for larnin' of all sorts, from 'rithmetic to preachin'."

"That comes from your Puritan blood," answered le Bourdon, with a quiet smile, using surprisingly pure English for one in his class of life. "They tell me you Puritans preach by instinct."

"I don't know how that is," answered Gershom, "though I can turn my hand to anything. I heer'n tell, across at Bob Ruly (Bois Brulk [Footnote: This unfortunate name, which it may be necessary to tell a portion of our readers means "burnt wood," seems condemned to all sorts of abuses among the linguists of the West. Among other pronunciations is that of "Bob Ruly"; while an island near Detroit, the proper name of which is "Bois Blanc," is familiarly known to the lake mariners by the name of "Bobolo."]) of sich doin's, and would give a week's keep at Whiskey Centre, to know how 'twas done."

"Whiskey Centre" was a sobriquet bestowed by the fresh-water sailors of that region, and the few other white adventurers of Saxon origin who found their way into that trackless region, firstly on Gershom himself, and secondly on his residence. These names were obtained from the intensity of their respective characters, in favor of the beverage named. L'eau de mort was the place termed by the voyagers, in a sort of pleasant travesty on the eau de vie of their distant, but still well-remembered manufactures on the banks of the

Garonne. Ben Boden, however, paid but little attention to the drawling remarks of Gershom Waring. This was not the first time he had heard of "Whiskey Centre," though the first time he had ever seen the man himself. His attention was on his own trade, or present occupation; and when it wandered at all, it was principally bestowed on the Indians; more especially on the runner. Of Elk's foot, or Elksfoot, as we prefer to spell it, he had some knowledge by means of rumor; and the little he knew rendered him somewhat more indifferent to his proceedings than he felt toward those of the Pigeonwing. Of this young redskin he had never heard; and, while he managed to suppress all exhibition of the feeling, a lively curiosity to learn the Chippewa's business was uppermost in his mind. As for Gershom, he had taken HIS measure at a glance, and had instantly set him down to be, what in truth he was, a wandering, drinking, reckless adventurer, who had a multitude of vices and bad qualities, mixed up with a few that, if not absolutely redeeming, served to diminish the disgust in which he might otherwise have been held by all decent people. In the meanwhile, the bee-hunting, in which all the spectators took so much interest, went on. As this is a process with which most of our readers are probably unacquainted, it may be necessary to explain the *modus operandi*, as well as the appliances used.

The tools of Ben Buzz, as Gershom had termed these implements of his trade, were neither very numerous nor very complex. They were all contained in a small covered wooden pail like those that artisans and laborers are accustomed to carry for the purpose of conveying their food from place to place. Uncovering this, le Bourdon had brought his implements to view, previously to the moment when he was first seen by the reader. There was a small covered cup of tin; a wooden box; a sort of plate, or platter, made also of wood; and a common tumbler, of a very inferior, greenish glass. In the year 1812, there was not a pane, nor a vessel, of clear, transparent glass, made in all America! Now, some of the most beautiful manufactures of that sort, known to civilization, are abundantly produced among us, in common with a thousand other articles that are used in domestic economy. The tumbler of Ben Buzz, however, was his countryman in more senses than one. It was not only American, but it came from the part of Pennsylvania of which he was

himself a native. Blurred, and of a greenish hue, the glass was the best that Pittsburg could then fabricate, and Ben had bought it only the year before, on the very spot where it had been made.

An oak, of more size than usual, had stood a little remote from its fellows, or more within the open ground of the glade than the rest of the "orchard." Lightning had struck this tree that very summer, twisting off its trunk at a height of about four feet from the ground. Several fragments of the body and branches lay near, and on these the spectators now took their seats, watching attentively the movements of the bee-hunter. Of the stump Ben had made a sort of table, first levelling its splinters with an axe, and on it he placed the several implements of his craft, as he had need of each in succession.

The wooden platter was first placed on this rude table. Then le Bourdon opened his small box, and took out of it a piece of honeycomb, that was circular in shape, and about an inch and a half in diameter. The little covered tin vessel was next brought into use. Some pure and beautifully clear honey was poured from its spout into the cells of the piece of comb, until each of them was about half filled. The tumbler was next taken in hand, carefully wiped, and examined, by holding it up before the eyes of the bee-hunter. Certainly, there was little to admire in it, but it was sufficiently transparent to answer his purposes. All he asked was to be able to look through the glass in order to see what was going on in its interior.

Having made these preliminary arrangements, Buzzing Ben—for the sobriquet was applied to him in this form quite as often as in the other—next turned his attention to the velvet-like covering of the grassy glade. Fire had run over the whole region late that spring, and the grass was now as fresh, and sweet and short, as if the place were pastured. The white clover, in particular, abounded, and was then just bursting forth into the blossom. Various other flowers had also appeared, and around them were buzzing thousands of bees. These industrious little animals were hard at work, loading themselves with sweets; little foreseeing the robbery contemplated by the craft of man. As le Bourdon moved stealthily among the flowers and their humming visitors, the eyes of the two red men followed his smallest movement, as the cat watches the mouse; but Gershom

was less attentive, thinking the whole curious enough, but preferring whiskey to all the honey on earth.

At length le Bourdon found a bee to his mind, and watching the moment when the animal was sipping sweets from a head of white clover, he cautiously placed his blurred and green-looking tumbler over it, and made it his prisoner. The moment the bee found itself encircled with the glass, it took wing and attempted to rise. This carried it to the upper part of its prison, when Ben carefully introduced the unoccupied hand beneath the glass, and returned to the stump. Here he set the tumbler down on the platter in a way to bring the piece of honeycomb within its circle.

So much done successfully, and with very little trouble, Buzzing Ben examined his captive for a moment, to make sure that all was right. Then he took off his cap and placed it over tumbler, platter, honeycomb, and bee. He now waited half a minute, when cautiously raising the cap again, it was seen that the bee, the moment a darkness like that of its hive came over it, had lighted on the comb, and commenced filling itself with the honey. When Ben took away the cap altogether, the head and half of the body of the bee was in one of the cells, its whole attention being bestowed on this unlooked-for hoard of treasure. As this was just what its captor wished, he considered that part of his work accomplished. It now became apparent why a glass was used to take the bee, instead of a vessel of wood or of bark. Transparency was necessary in order to watch the movements of the captive, as darkness was necessary in order to induce it to cease its efforts to escape, and to settle on the comb.

As the bee was now intently occupied in filling itself, Buzzing Ben, or le Bourdon, did not hesitate about removing the glass. He even ventured to look around him, and to make another captive, which he placed over the comb, and managed as he had done with the first. In a minute, the second bee was also buried in a cell, and the glass was again removed. Le Bourdon now signed for his companions to draw near.

"There they are, hard at work with the honey," he said, speaking in English, and pointing at the bees. "Little do they think, as they undermine that comb, how near they are to the undermining of

their own hive! But so it is with us all! When we think we are in the highest prosperity we may be nearest to a fall, and when we are poorest and hum-blest, we may be about to be exalted. I often think of these things, out here in the wilderness, when I'm alone, and my thoughts are acTYVE."

Ben used a very pure English, when his condition in life is remembered; but now and then, he encountered a word which pretty plainly proved he was not exactly a scholar. A false emphasis has sometimes an influence on a man's fortune, when one lives in the world; but it mattered little to one like Buzzing Ben, who seldom saw more than half a dozen human faces in the course of a whole summer's hunting. We remember an Englishman, however, who would never concede talents to Burr, because the latter said, a L'AmEricaine, EurOpean, instead of EuropEan.

"How hive in danger?" demanded Elksfoot, who was very much of a matter-of-fact person. "No see him, no hear him—else get some honey."

"Honey you can have for asking, for I've plenty of it already in my cabin, though it's somewhat 'arly in the season to begin to break in upon the store. In general, the bee-hunters keep back till August, for they think it better to commence work when the creatures"—this word Ben pronounced as accurately as if brought up at St. James's, making it neither "creatur'" nor "creatOOre"—"to commence work when the creatures have had time to fill up, after winter's feed. But I like the old stock, and, what is more, I feel satisfied this is not to be a common summer, and so I thought I would make an early start."

As Ben said this, he glanced his eyes at Pigeonswing, who returned the look in a way to prove there was already a secret intelligence between them, though neither had ever seen the other an hour before.

"Waal!" exclaimed Gershom, "this is cur'ous, I'll allow THAT; yes, it's cur'ous—but we've got an article at Whiskey Centre that'll put the sweetest honey bee ever suck'd, altogether out o' countenance!"

"An article of which you suck your share, I'll answer for it, judging by the sign you carry between the windows of your face," returned Ben, laughing; "but hush, men, hush. That first bee is filled,