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TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 1433.

UNCLE JOHN BY G. J. WHYTE MELVILLE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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UNCLE JOHN.

A NOVEL.

BY

G. J. WHYTE MELVILLE,

AUTHOR OF "THE GLADIATORS," "KATE COVENTRY," ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG  
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1874.

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# UNCLE JOHN.

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Me forthinketh, said King Pellinore, this shall betide, but God may well foredoe destiny.—*Morte d'Arthur*.

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## CHAPTER I.

### The Letter-Box.

OF all taxes levied on friendship few are so galling as the *corvée* that compels a guest to inspect and admire the house in which he is entertained. To follow your host, with wet feet, and hands in pockets, round the stables, the kennel, the farm, and, worse still, the kitchen-garden, may well create a doubt that you had better have stayed away; but this becomes a certainty when, in dismal attics and cheerless corridors, you stumble against a coal-box or are brought up with your head in a housemaid's closet. I will not ask my reader, therefore, to accompany me beyond the hall of a comfortable country-house in one of the midland counties; a hall well warmed and ventilated, where