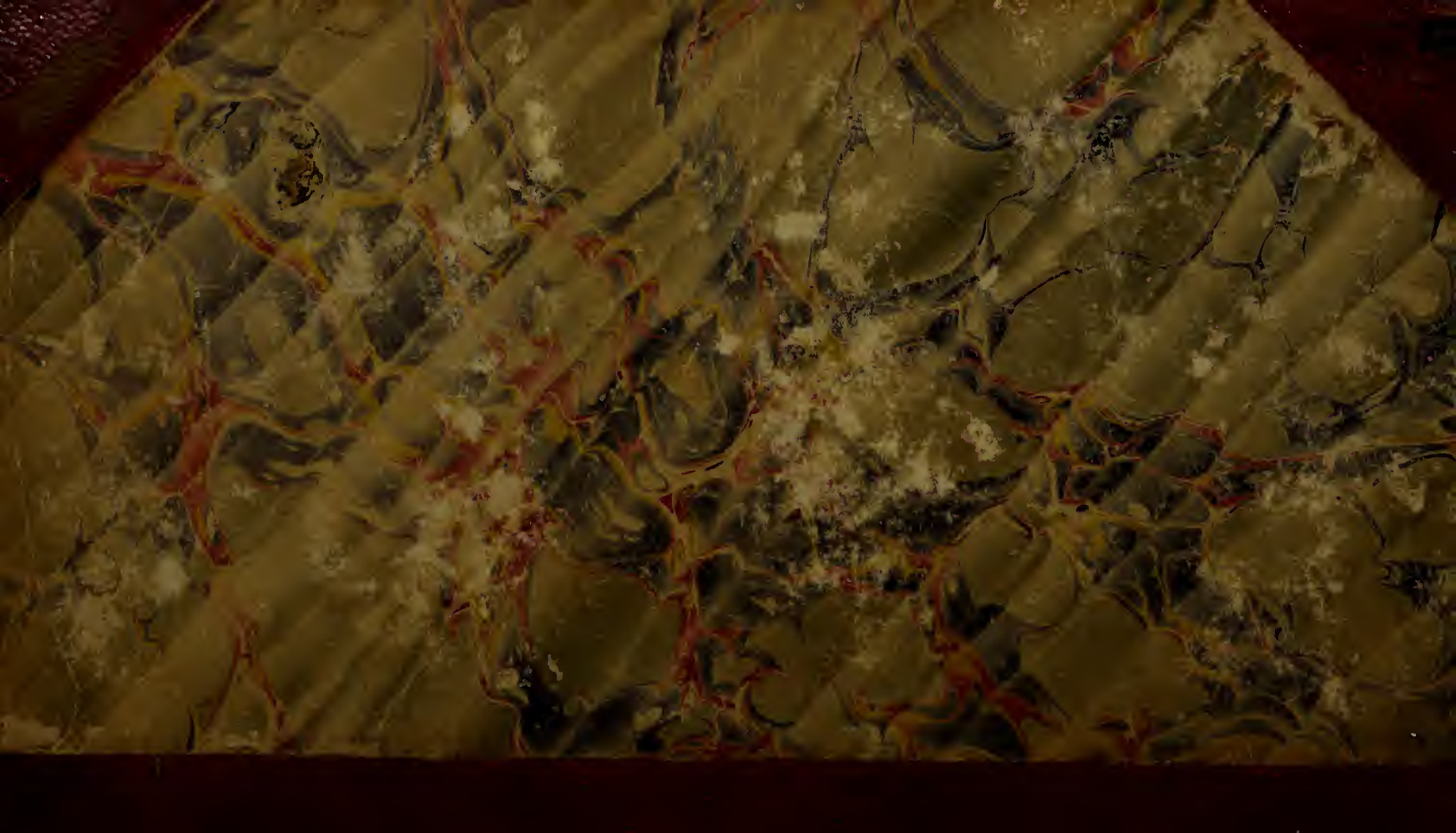

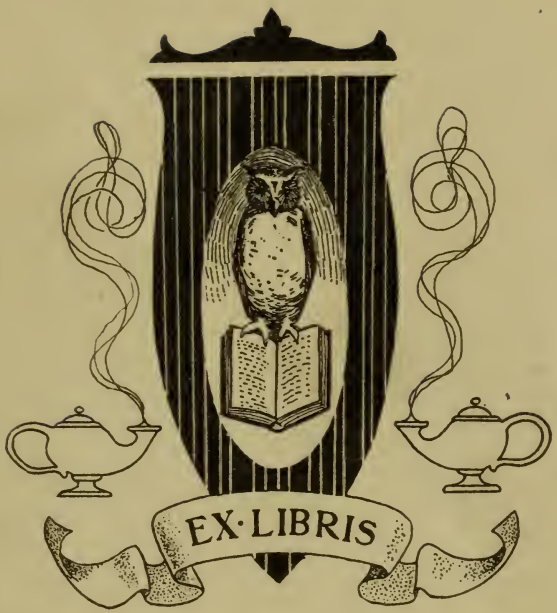

THE BONDMAN.

A STORY OF

THE TIMES OF WAT TYLER.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE idea of the following Tale was suggested on reading the first volume of Robertson's Charles the Fifth, on the Feudal Policy of Germany; and the picture of moral and political debasement presented in those pages, whether as regards the oppressor or the oppressed. Those revolting distinctions have, however, passed away — *villein* is but a thing that was. But if the old chronicles are to be credited, the monk, whom the author has endeavoured to portray in the course of this tale, was the first who whispered in the ear of an English serf, that slavery was not his birthright.

It may, perhaps, be superfluous to add, that all the legal information scattered through the volume, is strictly correct; and every historical event as nearly so as the machinery of the tale permitted. The critical reader, whose indulgence the writer solicits, will immediately perceive from whence the information has been derived.

THE BONDMAN.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

About a quarter of a mile south of Winchcombe, on the summit of a gentle elevation, are still the remains of a castle, which, as Fuller says, "was of subjects' castles the most handsome habitation, and of subjects' habitations the strongest castle."

In the month of August, in the year thirteen hundred and seventy-four, this distinguished place, called Sudley Castle, presented an interesting scene —the then owner, in consequence of his father's death, holding his first court for receiving the homage and fealty of his vassals.

The court-yards were thronged with the retainers of the baron, beguiling the hour until the ceremony called them into the hall. This apartment, which corresponded in magnificence and beauty with the outward appearance of the noble pile, was of an oblong shape. Carved representations of battles adorned the lofty oaken ceiling, and suspended were banners and quarterings of the Sudley and De Boteler families. Ancestral statues of oak, clad in complete armour, stood in niches formed in the thick walls. The heavy linked mail of the Normans, with the close helmet, or skull-cap, fastened under the chin, and leaving the face exposed, encased those who represented the early barons of Sudley; while those of a later period were clad in the more convenient and more beautiful armour of the fourteenth century. The walls were covered with arms, adapted to the different descriptions of soldiers of the period, and arranged so as each might provide himself with his proper weapons, without delay or confusion.

The hall had a tesselated pavement, on which the arms of the united families of Sudley and De Boteler (the latter having inherited by marriage, in consequence of a failure of male issue in the former) were depicted with singular accuracy and beauty. About midway from the entrance, two broad steps of white marble led to the part of the hall exclusively appropriated to the owner of the castle. The mosaic work of this privileged space was concealed on the present occasion by a covering of fine crimson cloth. A large arm-chair, covered with crimson velvet, with the De Boteler arms richly emblazoned on the high back, over which hung a velvet canopy fringed with gold, was placed in the centre of the elevation; and several other chairs with similar coverings and emblazonings, but wanting canopies, were disposed around for the accommodation of the guests.

The steward at length appeared, and descended the steps to classify the

people for the intended homage, and to satisfy himself that none had disobeyed the summons.

The tenantry were arranged in the following order: —

First — the steward and esquire stood on either side next the steps.

Then followed the vassals who held lands for watching and warding the castle. These were considered superior to the other vassals, from the peculiar nature of their tenure, as the life-guards, as it were, of their lord.

Then those who held lands in chivalry, namely, by performing stated military services, the perfection of whose tenures was homage.

The next were those who held lands by agricultural or rent service, and who performed fealty as a memorial of their attachment and dependence.

The bondmen, or legally speaking, the villeins, concluded the array. These were either attached to the soil or to the person. The former were designated *villeins appendant*, because following the transfer of the ground, like fixtures of a freehold, their persons, lands, and goods being the property of the lord; they might be chastised, but not maimed. They paid a fine on the marriage of females; who obtained their freedom on marriage with a free man, but returned again to bondage on surviving their husband. The latter class were called *villeins in gross*, and differed nothing from the others except in name; the term signifying that they were severed from the soil, and followed the person of the lord. Neither of the classes were permitted to leave the lands of their owner; and on flight or settlement in towns or cities, might be pursued and reclaimed. An action for damages lay against those who harboured them, or who refused to deliver them up, — the law also provided a certain form of writ by which the sheriff was commanded to seize, or obtain them by force. There was one mode, however, of nullifying the right of capture. If the runaway resided on lands of the king, for a year and a day, without claim, he could not be molested for the future; although he was still liable, if caught beyond the precincts of the royal boundary, to be retaken.

The classification had just finished, when a door at the upper end of the hall was thrown open, and the Baron of Sudley entered, attended by his guests, and followed by a page.

Roland de Boteler was a man about six-and-twenty, of a tall, well-proportioned figure, with an open, handsome countenance: but there was a certain boldness or freedom in the laughing glance of his large black eyes, and in the full parted lips, blended with an expression, which, though not perhaps exactly haughty or cruel, yet told distinctly enough that he was perfectly regardless of the feelings of his dependants, and considered them merely as conducive to his amusement, or to the display of military power. A doublet of crimson cloth, embroidered with gold, was well chosen to give advantage to his dark complexion. His tunic, composed of baudykin, or cloth of gold, was confined round the waist by a girdle, below which it hung in full plaits, nearly to the knee, — thus allowing little of his trunk hose, of rich velvet, corresponding in colour with the doublet, to be seen. Over his dress he wore a surcoat or mantle of fine violet-coloured cloth, fastened across the breast, with a gold clasp, and lined with minever. His hair, according to the fashion introduced by the Black Prince, when he brought over his royal captive, John of France, fell in thick short curls below a cap in colour and material resembling his mantle, and edged with minever; and the lip and chin wore neither mustachio nor beard.

His eye fell proudly for a moment on the assembled yeomen, as he took his seat for the first time as Lord of Sudley; but speedily the ceremony commenced.

The individual first summoned from among the group, was a tall athletic young man of about twenty-five, with a complexion fair but reddened through exposure to the seasons. His hair was light-brown, thick, and

curly, and there was a good-humoured expression in the clear gray eyes, and in the full, broad, well-marked countenance, that would give one the idea of a gay, thoughtless spirit — had it not been for the bold and firm step, and the sudden change of feature from gay to grave as he advanced to the platform, and met unabashed the baron's scrutiny, at once indicating that the man possessed courage and decision when occasion required these qualities to be called into action.

Stephen Holgrave ascended the marble steps, and proceeded on till he stood at the baron's feet. He then unclasped the belt of his waist, and having his head uncovered, knelt down, holding up both his hands. De Boteler took them within his own, and the yeoman said, in a loud, distinct voice —

"Lord Roland de Boteler, I become your man from this day forward, of life and limb and earthly worship, and unto you shall be true and faithful, and bear to you faith, for the lands that I claim to hold of you, saving the faith that I owe unto our sovereign lord the king."

The baron then bent his head forward and kissed the young man's forehead; and unloosing his hands, Holgrave arose, and bending his head, stood to hear what De Boteler might say.

"You have spoken well, Holgrave," said De Boteler, looking good-humouredly upon the yeoman, "and, truly, if the life of Roland de Boteler is worth any thing, you have earned your reward; and, here, in the presence of this good company, I covenant for myself and my heirs, that you and your heirs, shall hold the land for ever, in chivalry, presenting, every feast of the Holy Baptist, a pair of gloves."

"Calverley," said the baron, as Holgrave retired, and while addressing his esquire his features assumed a peculiar expression: "What a pity it is that a yeoman should reap the reward of a service that *should* have been performed by you had your health permitted!"

The sarcastic smile that accompanied these words, called up a glow even deeper than envy had done; yet, in a calm voice, Calverley replied, "The land, my lord, though the gift be fair, is of little account in comparison with the honour of the deed; but I may humbly say, that if Thomas Calverley had witnessed his master's peril, he would have been found as valiant in his defence as the yeoman, whose better fortune it was to be present."

"Aye, aye, my good squire," said the baron, still in a laughing tone, "your illness, I am told, gave you a most outrageous appetite — doubtless your feeble constitution needed strengthening! Come, come, man, it is but a joke — never look so blank; yet, if *we* laugh, there is no reason why those knaves should stand grinning there from ear to ear. But the senior vassal advance."

The vassals who were to perform homage then prepared to go through the customary form; and an old gray-headed man advanced first from the group to do fealty, and, standing before the baron, pronounced after him the following oath, holding his right hand on the gospels:—

"I, John Hartwell, will be to you, my Lord Roland de Boteler, true and faithful, and bear to you fealty and faith for the lands and tenements which I hold of you; and I will truly do and perform the customs and services that I ought to do to you, so help me God!" The old man then kissed the book, and retired to give place to the next; and so on till all who owed fealty had gone through the ceremony.

Lastly advanced from among the bondmen, or villeins, the oldest servitor, and, holding his right hand over the book, pronounced after De Boteler —

"Hear you, my Lord de Boteler, that I, William Marson, from this day forth unto you shall be true and faithful, and shall owe you fealty for the land which I may hold of you in villeinage, and shall be justified by you

both in body and goods, so help me God and all the saints." After kissing the book he withdrew; and the bondmen successively renewed their servile compact.

While the vassals were retiring from the hall, the Lord de Boteler turned to the gentleman near him —

"Sir Robert," said he, "you saw that vassal who first did homage? — to that base-born churl I owe my life. I had engaged hand to hand with a French knight, when my opponent's esquire treacherously attacked me from behind. This was observed by my faithful follower, who struck down the coward with his axe, and, in a moment more, rid me of the knight by a blow that cleft his helmet and entered his brain. He also, by rare chance, I know not how, slew the bearer of that banner yonder, and, when the battle was over, laid it at my feet."

"You have made him a freeman since then?" inquired Sir Robert.

"No; he received his freedom from my father, when a boy, for some juvenile service — I hardly remember what. Yet I shall never forget the look of the varlet — as if it mattered to such as he whether they were free or not! He stared for an instant at my father — the tears trembling in his eyes, and all the blood in his body, I verily believe, reddening his face, and he looked as if he would have said something; but my father and I did not care to listen, and we turned away. As for the land he has now received, I promised it him on the fieldof battle, and I could not retract my word."

"No, baron," said Sir Robert; "the man earned it by his bravery; and surely the life of the Lord de Boteler is worth more than a piece of dirty land."

De Boteler, not caring to continue so uninteresting a subject, discoursed upon other matters; and the business of the morning having concluded, he retired with his guests from the hall.

It was about a fortnight after this court-day that the fortunate yeoman one morning led his mother, Edith Holgrave, to the cottage he had built on the land that was now his own.

Edith entered the cottage, her hand resting for support upon the shoulder of her son — for she was feeble, though not so much from age as from a weak constitution. As she stepped over the threshold she devoutly crossed herself; and when they stood upon the earthen floor, she withdrew her left hand from the arm that supported her, and, sinking upon her knees, and raising up her eyes, exclaimed —

"May He, in whose hands are the ends of the earth, preserve thee, my son, from evil. And oh! may He bless this house!"

While she spoke, her eyes brightened, and her pale face for a short time glowed with the fervour of her soul.

"Stephen, my son," she continued (as with his aid she arose and seated herself upon a wooden stool,) "many days of sorrow have I seen, but this proud day is an atonement for all. *My* father was a freeman, but *thy* father was a serf; -- but all are alike in *His* eyes, who oftentimes gives the soul of a churl to him who dwelleth in castles, and quickens the body of the base of birth with a spirit that might honour the wearer of crimson and gold. My husband was a villein, but his soul spurned the bondage; and oftentimes, my son, when you have been an infant in my arms, thy father wished that the free-born breast which nourished you could infuse freedom into your veins. *He* did not live to see it; but oh! what a proud day was that for me, when my son no longer bore the name of slave! I had prayed — I had yearned for that day; and it at length repaid me for all the taunts of our neighbours, who reviled me because my spirit was not such as theirs!"

"Come, come, mother," interrupted Holgrave, "do n't agitate yourself; there is time to talk of all this by-and-by."

"And so there is, child — but I am old; and the aged, as well as the young, love to be talking. Stephen, you must bear with your mother."

"Aye, that I will, mother," replied Holgrave, kissing her cheek, which had assumed its accustomed paleness; "and ill befall the son that will not!"

Leaving his mother to attend to the visiters, who crowded in to drink success to the new proprietor in a cup of ale, Stephen Holgrave stole unobserved out of the cottage towards nightfall.

Passing through Winchcombe, he arrived at a small neat dwelling, in a little sequestered valley, about a quarter of a mile from the town — the tenant of which lowly abode is of no small consequence to our story.

Like Holgrave, Margaret was the offspring of the bond and the free. Her father had been a bondman attached to the manor of Sudley; and her mother a poor friendless orphan, with no patrimony save her freedom. Such marriages were certainly of rare occurrence, because women naturally felt a repugnance to become the mother of serfs; but still, that they did occur, is evidenced by the law of villeinage, ordaining that the children of a bondman and free woman should in no wise partake of their mother's freedom.

It might be, perhaps, that this similarity in their condition had attracted them towards each other; or it might be that, as Margaret had been motherless since her birth, and Edith had nursed and reared her till she grew to womanhood, from the feelings natural to long association, love had grown and strengthened in Stephen's heart. Indeed, there were not many of her class who could have compared with this young woman. Her figure was about the middle height of her sex, and so beautifully proportioned, that even the close kerchief and russet gown could not entirely conceal the symmetrical formation of the broad white shoulders, the swelling bust, and the slender waist. Plain braids of hair of the darkest shade, and arched brows of the same hue, gave an added whiteness to a forehead smooth and high; and her full intelligent eyes, with a fringe as dark as her hair, were of a clear deep blue. The feminine occupation of a sempstress had preserved the delicacy of her complexion, and had left a soft flickering blush playing on her cheek. Such was Margaret, the beloved — the betrothed — whom Holgrave was now hastening to invite, with all the simple eloquence of honest love, to become the bride of his bosom — the mistress of his home.

The duskiness of the twilight hour was lightened by the broad beams of an autumn moon; and as the moonlight, streaming full upon the thatch, revealed distinctly the little cot that held his treasure, all the high thoughts of freedom and independence, all the wandering speculative dreamings that come and go in the heart of man, gave place, for a season, to one engrossing feeling. Margaret was not this evening, as she was wont to be, sitting outside the cottage door awaiting his approach. The door was partly opened — he entered — and beheld a man kneeling before her, and holding one of her hands within his own!

"Stephen Holgrave!" cried the devotee, jumping up, "what brings you here at such an hour?"

"What brings me, Calverley!" replied Holgrave, furiously, "who are you, to ask such a question? What brings you here?"

"My own will, Stephen Holgrave," answered Calverley in a calm tone; "and mark you — this maiden has no right to plight her troth except with her lord's consent. She is Lord de Boteler's bondwoman, and dares not marry without his leave — which will never be given to wed with you."

"You talk boldly, sir, of my lord's intents," answered the yeoman sulkily.

"I speak but the truth," replied Calverley. "You have been rewarded

well for the deed you did; and think not that your braggart speech will win my lord. This maid is no meet wife for such as you. My lord has offered me fair lands and her freedom if I choose to wed her: and though many a free dowered maid would smile upon the suit of Thomas Calverley, yet have I come to offer wedlock to Margaret."

"Margaret!" said Holgrave, fiercely, "can this be true? answer me! Has Calverley spoken of marriage to you? — why do you not answer? Have I loved a false one?"

"No, Stephen," replied Margaret, in a low trembling voice.

Holgrave's mind was relieved as Margaret spoke, for he had confidence in her truth. He knew, however, that Calverley stood high in the favour of De Boteler, and he determined not to trust himself with farther words.

"Margaret," said Calverley suddenly, "I leave Sudley Castle on the morrow to attend my lord to London. At my return I shall expect that this silence be changed into language befitting the chosen bride of the Baron de Boteler's esquire. Remember you are not yet free! — and now, Stephen Holgrave, I leave not this cottage till you depart. The maiden is my lord's nief, the cottage is his, and here I am privileged — not you."

Fierce retorts and bitter revilings were on Holgrave's tongue; but the sanctuary of a maiden's home was no place for contention. He knew that Calverley did possess the power he vaunted; and, without uttering a word, he crossed the threshold, and stood on the sod just beyond the door.

Calverley paused a moment gazing on the blanched beauty of the agitated girl, her cheek looking more pale from the moonlight that fell upon it; and then, in the soft insinuating tone he knew so well how to assume —

"Forgive me, Margaret," said he, "for what I have said. But oh," he continued, taking her hand, and pressing it passionately to his bosom, "You know not how much I love you! — Come, sir, will you walk?" Then kissing the damsel's hand, he relinquished it; and Margaret, with streaming eyes and a throbbing heart, watched till the two receding figures were lost in the distance.

Holgrave and Calverley pursued their path in sullen silence. There were about a dozen paces between them, but neither were one foot in advance of the other. On they went through Winchcombe and along the road, till they came to where a footpath from the left intersected the highway. Here they both, as if by mutual agreement, made a sudden pause, and stood doggedly eyeing each other. At considerably less than a quarter of a mile to the right was Sudley Castle; and at nearly the same distance to the left was Holgrave's new abode. After the laspe of several minutes, Calverley leaped across a running ditch to the right; and Holgrave, having thus far conquered, turned to the left on his homeward path.

The reader will, perhaps, feel some surprise that an esquire of the rich and powerful Lord de Boteler should be thus competing with the yeoman for the hand of a portionless humble nief; but it is necessary to observe, in the first place, that in the fourteenth century esquires were by no means of the consideration they had enjoyed a century before. Some nobles, indeed, who were upholders of the ancient system, still regarded an esquire as but a degree removed from a knight, but these were merely exceptions; — the general rule, at the period we are speaking of, was to consider an esquire simply as a principal attendant, without the least claim to any distinction beyond. Such a state of things accorded well with the temper of De Boteler; — he could scarcely have endured the equality, which, in some measure, formerly subsisted between the esquire and his lord. With him the equal might be familiar, but the inferior must be submissive; and it was, perhaps, the humility of Calverley's deportment that alone had raised him to the situation he now held. Calverley, besides, had none of the requisites

of respectability which would have entitled him to take a stand among a class such as esquires had formerly been.

About ten years before the commencement of our tale, a pale emaciated youth presented himself one morning at Sudley Castle, desiring the hospitality that was never denied to the stranger. Over his dress, which was of the coarse monks' cloth then generally worn by the religious, he wore a tattered cloak of the dark russet peculiar to the peasant. That day he was fed, and that night lodged at the castle; and the next morning, as he stood in a corner of the court-yard, apparently lost in reflection as to the course he should next adopt, the young Roland de Boteler, then a fine boy of fifteen, emerged from the stone archway of the stable mounted on a spirited charger. The glow on his cheek, the brightness of his eyes, and the youthful animation playing on his face, and ringing in the joyous tones of his voice, seemed to make the solitary dejected being, who looked as if he could claim neither kindred nor home, appear even more care-worn and friendless. The youth gazed at the young De Boteler, and ran after him as he rode through the gateway followed by two attendants.

He then wandered about with a look of still deeper despondence, till the trampling of the returning horses sent a transient tinge across his cheek. He followed Roland's attendants, and again entered the court-yard. By some chance, as the young rider was alighting, his eye fell on the dejected stranger, who was standing at a little distance fixing an anxious gaze upon the heir.

"Who is that sickly-looking carle, Ralph?" inquired De Boteler.

The attendant did not know. The youth interpreted the meaning of Roland's glance, and approached, and with an humble yet not ungraceful obeisance—

"Noble young lord," said he, "may a wanderer crave leave to abide for a time in this castle?"

"You have my leave," replied the boy, in the consequential tone that youth generally assumes when conferring a favour. "Indeed, you do n't look very fit to wander farther; — Ralph, see that this knave is attended to."

The stranger was now privileged to remain, and a week's rest and good cheer considerably improved his appearance. He did not presume, however, to approach the part of the castle inhabited by the owners; but never did the young Roland enter the court-yard, or walk abroad, but the silent homage of the grateful stranger greeted him.

This strange youth was Thomas Calverley, and, by the end of a month, Roland's eyes as instinctively sought for him when he needed an attendant, as if he had been a regular domestic.

It was good policy in Calverley to propitiate the young De Boteler; for had he presented himself to his father, although for a space he might have been fed, he could never have presumed to obtrude himself upon his notice.

There was a humility in the stranger which pleased Roland's imperious temper; *he* had granted the permission by which he abided in the castle, and he seemed to feel a kind of interest in his protegé; and the envy of his attendants was often excited by their young lord beckoning to Calverley to assist him to mount, or alight, or do him any other little service. Calverley began now to be considered as a kind of inmate in the castle, and various were the whispered tales that went about respecting him. At length it was discovered that he was a scholar — that is, he could read and write; and the circumstance, though it abated nothing of the whisperings of idle curiosity, entirely silenced the taunts he had been compelled to endure. If still disliked, yet was he treated with some respect; for none of the unlettered domestics would have presumed to speak rudely to one so far above them in intellectual attainments.

Such a discovery could not long remain a secret; — the tale reached the ears of young De Boteler, and, already prepossessed in his favour, it was but a natural consequence that Calverley should rise from being first an assistant, to be the steward, the page, and, at length, the esquire to the heir to the barony of Sudley. But the progress of his fortunes did but add to the malevolence of the detractor and the tale-bearer; theft, sacrilege, and even murder, were hinted at as probable causes for a youth, who evidently did not belong to the vulgar, being thus a friendless outcast. But the most charitable surmise was, that he was the offspring of the unhallowed love of some dame or damsel who had reared him in privacy, and had destined him for the church; and that either upon the death of his protectress, or through some fault, he had been expelled from his home. Calverley had a distant authoritative manner towards his equals and inferiors, which, despite every effort, checked inquisitiveness; and all the information he ever gave was, that he was the son of a respectable artizan of the city of London, whom his father's death had left friendless. Whether this statement was correct or not, could never be discovered. Calverley was never known to allude to aught that happened in the years previous to his becoming an inmate of the castle: what little he had said was merely in reply to direct questions. It would seem, then, that he stood alone in the world, and such a situation is by no means enviable; and although duplicity, selfishness, and tyranny, formed the principal traits in his character, and though independently of tyranny and selfishness, his mind instinctively shrunk from any contact, save that of necessity, with those beneath him, yet had he gazed upon the growing beauty of Margaret till a love pure and deep — a love in which was concentrated all the slumbering affections, had risen and expanded in his breast, until it had, as it were, become a part of his being.

Margaret had a brother — a monk in the abbey at Winchcombe, to whose care she was indebted for the instructions which had made her a skilful embroideress, and still more for the precautions which had preserved her opening beauty from the gaze of the self-willed Roland de Boteler. Though the daughter of a bondman, her services had never been demanded; and father John had ultimately removed her from Edith's roof to the little cottage already mentioned.

Calverley had intended to see Margaret again before leaving the castle; but De Boteler having changed the hour he had appointed, there was not a moment to spare from the necessary arrangements. Never before had Calverley's assumed equanimity of temper been so severely tried; the patient attention with which he listened, and the prompt assiduity with which he executed a thousand trifling commands — although, from the force with which he bit his under-lip, he was frequently compelled to wipe away the blood from his mouth — showed the absolute control he had acquired over his feelings — at least so far as the exterior was concerned.

The chapel bell rang for mass, at which Father John, the brother of Margaret, officiated, in consequence of the sudden illness of the resident chaplain. Calverley waited till the service was concluded; and then, first pausing a few minutes to allow the monk to recite the office, he unclosed the door of the sacristy and entered. Father John was sitting with a book in his hand, and he still wore the white surplice.

The ecclesiastic, on whose privacy Calverley had thus intruded, was a man about thirty-five, of a tall muscular figure, with thick dark hair encircling his tonsure, a thin visage, and an aquiline nose. There was piety and meekness in the high pale forehead; and in the whole countenance, when the eyes were cast down, or when their light was partly shaded by the lids and the projecting brows: but when the lids were raised, and the large, deeply-set eyes flashed full upon the object of his scrutiny, there was

a proud — a searching expression in the glance, which had often made the obdurate sinner tremble, and which never failed to awe presumption and extort respect. Such was the man whom Calverley was about to address; and from whose quiet, unassuming demeanour at this moment, a stranger would have augured little opposition to any reasonable proposal that might be suggested: but Calverley well knew the character of the monk, and there was a kind of hesitation in his voice as he said —

"Good morrow, holy father."

The monk silently bent his head.

"My Lord de Boteler," resumed Calverley, "will, in a few minutes, depart hence. I attend him; but before I go, I would fain desire your counsel."

"Speak on, my son," said the monk, in a full deep voice, as Calverley paused.

"Father John, you have a sister —"

"What of her?" asked the monk, looking inquiringly on the esquire.

"I love her!" replied Calverley, his hesitation giving place to an impassioned earnestness. —"Why look you so much astonished? Has she not beauty, and have I not watched the growth of that beauty from the interesting loveliness of a child, to the full and fascinating charms of a woman. Father John, you have never loved — you cannot tell the conflict that is within my heart."

"But," asked the monk, "have you spoken to Margaret?"

"Last evening I went to give her freedom and to ask her love, when Stephen Holgrave ——"

"Did the baron empower you to free her?" eagerly asked the monk.

"Yes, — but Holgrave entered and ——"

"She is still a nief?"

"Yes; — when that knave Holgrave entered, I could not speak of what was burning in my breast."

"Stephen Holgrave is not a knave," returned the monk. "He is an honest man, and Margaret is betrothed to him."

There was a momentary conflict in Calverley's breast as the monk spoke; — there was a shade across his brow, and a slight tremor on his lip; but he conquered the emotion — love triumphed, and, in a soft imploring tone, he said —

"Think you, father, Holgrave loves her as I do; or think you his rude untutored speech will accord well with so gentle a creature. Oh! father John, be you my friend. Bid her forget the man who is unworthy of her! She will listen to you — she will be guided by you — you are the only kinsman she can claim; — and surely even you must wish rather to see your sister attended almost as a mistress in this castle, than the harassed wife of a laborious yeoman. Oh! if you win her to my arms, I here swear to you, that not even your own heart could ask for more gentle care than she will receive from me. My happiness centres in *her* — to love her, to cherish her — to see the smile of joy for ever on her lips."

At this moment a knock was heard at the door. Calverley opened it, and De Boteler's page appeared, to say, that if Thomas Calverley had wanted the aid of the priest, he should have applied sooner, for his lord was now waiting for him.

"Tell my lord," said Calverley, "I will attend him instantly."

The page withdrew, and Calverley, turning to the monk, asked hastily if he might reckon on his friendship.

"Thomas Calverley," replied John, "I believe you do love my sister, but I cannot force her inclinations; — I will not even strive to bias her mind; there is a sympathy in hearts predestined to unite, which attracts them towards each other; —if that secret sympathy exist not between you, ye are not destined to become as one."

"Then you will not seek to win her to my love," asked Calverley, impatiently.

"I will tell her," returned the monk, "that a love so devoted, so disinterested, deserves in return an affection as pure: but if, after all this, her heart still prefers the yeoman Holgrave, I will say no more."

"And, think you, I shall endure rejection without an effort?"

"It is now too late! Why, if your happiness rested upon her, did you defer declaring your love till the moment when she had promised to become the wife of another? Know you not, Thomas Calverley, that even as the rays of the bright sun dissolve the glittering whiteness of the winter snow, just so do kind words and patient love enkindle warm feelings in the bosom of the coldest virgin, and awaken sympathies in her heart that else might for ever unconsciously have slumbered."

"You talk strange language," replied Calverley, in a voice that had lost all its assumed gentleness. "But — *remember* — I have not sought your sister's love to be thus baffled — remember! ——" Calverley was here interrupted by a quick knocking at the door.

"Remember, father John," he continued, pausing ere he unclosed the door, and speaking rapidly, "that mine is not the love of a boy — that Thomas Calverley is not one whom it is *safe* to trifle with — that Margaret is a bondwoman — and that her freedom is in my hands — *remember!*"

He repeated the last word in a tone of menace, and with a look that seemed to dare the monk to sanction the union of his sister with Holgrave. He opened the door, but, ere he passed through, his eye caught an expression of proud contempt flashing in the dark hazel eyes, and curving in the half-smiling lip of the man he had thus defied; — and prudence whispered, that he had not properly estimated the character of the priest.

CHAPTER II.

It was on a lovely October morning that the travellers returned to Sudley. The whole region of the sky was of so clear and deep a blue, that it seemed as if the pure cold breath of the morning had driven every cloud and vapour far from the skies of merry England. The sun shone brightly upon the yet green meadows, upon the hedges, and upon the trees with their broad branches, and their scanty brown leaves: the birds, rejoicing in the sunlight, were singing hymns of grateful melody, as they darted among the branches, or sailed and curved in the blue ether. Our fair Margaret, sympathizing in the gladness of nature, could almost have sung in concert with the feathered choir, as she tripped along with the light step that indicates a cheerful heart. She had just reached that point of the Winchcombe road where the green lane, turning to the left, led directly to her home, when, catching a glimpse of an approaching figure, she raised her eyes and beheld — Calverley.

Whether Calverley's quick glance had caught the marriage ring upon her uncovered finger, or, whether the basket on her arm, together with the circumstance of her being abroad at an hour that used to be devoted to her needle, told him she was no longer a thing to be thought of with hope, or looked on with love, *it is* difficult to say; but he stood suddenly still, and his cheeks and his lips became pale—almost livid. Margaret turned and walked hastily down the path, her pallid cheek and trembling limbs alone telling that she had recognised Calverley. He stood silently gazing after her, till a winding in the path shut her out from his view. He then walked rapidly on to Winchcombe, entered the first vintner's he came to, and, to the surprise of

the host, who knew Master Calverley to be a sober man, called for a measure of wine, drank it off at a draught, and throwing down the money, departed as abruptly as he came. In a few minutes after, he entered the room of old Luke, the steward of Sudley Castle.

"Master Luke," said he, with an assumed carelessness of manner, "you are rather chary of my lord's wine — you have not yet offered me the cup of welcome."

"I ask your pardon, Calverley," replied the steward, "but you so seldom care for wine, that one hardly thinks of offering it to you: here, however, is a cup that will do your heart good."

Calverley took the cup, and drinking it off with as much zest as if he had not already tasted wine that morning — "Any news?" said he, "master Luke — any news?"

"Not much, squire. — Stephen Holgrave, indeed, has got married, and, I 'll warrant me, there will be a fine to-do about it; for he has married a *nief*, and you know my lord is very particular about these matters: — he told me, no longer ago than just before he went away this last time, that he would not abate a jot of his due, in the marriages or services of his bondfolk. To be sure the lass is sister of the monk who now shrives the castle, and, as my lord thinks much of Holgrave, it may all blow over."

"Who married them?" asked Calverley, in a stifled voice.

"Oh! Father John, to be sure — nobody else — "

"Did he!" said Calverley, in a voice that made the old man start; but, before the astonished steward could reply, he burst from the room. None of the inmates of the castle saw him again during the remainder of that day.

When he appeared before De Boteler the next morning, such a change had twenty hours of mental suffering produced in his countenance, that his lord, struck by the alteration, inquired if he were ill. Calverley said something about a fall that had partly stunned him, but assured De Boteler he was now perfectly well. While he yet spoke, the steward entered, to say that Stephen Holgrave had come to crave his lordship's pardon for marrying a nief without leave, and also to pay the merchet.

"Married a *nief!* has he?" returned De Boteler. "By my faith I thought the kern had too proud a stomach to wed a nief. I thought he had no such love for villeinage. I do not like those intermarriages. Were free maidens so scarce that this Holgrave could not find a wife among them?"

Calverley slightly coloured as De Boteler spoke; he knew his lord was no admirer of people stepping in the least out of their way, and it seemed probable it was to him he alluded, when he expressed his dislike of unequal marriages.

"Why, my lord," said Luke, in reply to De Boteler's interrogatory, "there is hardly a free maiden in the parish that would not have been glad of Stephen; but, though I have never seen her, I am told this wife of his is the comeliest damsel between this and Winchcombe: and, besides, she is not like a common nief — and then, my lord, she is the sister of the good monk John."

"Father John's sister, is she?" asked the baron. "Why then my good esquire here has more to do with the matter than I — but however, Luke, go tell Holgrave I cannot attend to him now. — Why, Calverley," continued De Boteler, when the steward had withdrawn, "is not this the maiden you spoke to me about? Do not turn so pale, man, but answer me."

"Yes, my lord," replied Calverley.

"And did this Holgrave dare to wed a nief of mine! — when I had ready disposed of her freedom and her hand?"

"Yes, my lord."

"By my faith, the knave is bold to thwart me thus."

"My lord," said Calverley; "the evening before you left the castle for London, I went to the maiden's cottage to ask her hand; Holgrave immediately came in, and I then distinctly told him that your lordship had given me the maiden's freedom, and also had consented that I should wed her, and yet; you see what regard he has paid to your will!"

"Yes, this is the gratitude of these base-born vassals, but, Calverley, what priest presumed to wed them?"

"The monk John."

"What! the wife's brother! He who has attended the chapel since the death of the late good father?"

"Yes, my lord."

"By heaven! they seem all conspiring to set my will at naught! — he, at least, should have better known what was due to the lord of this castle."

"The monk," replied Calverley, "was not ignorant of my lord's will: and it vexes me, not on my own account, for it was merely a passing fancy; but it vexes me, that this proud, stubborn priest, while he is eating of your bread, and drinking of your cup, should, in the teeth of your commands, do that which I could swear no other priest would have dared to do; it ill becomes him to preach obedience, who ——"

"True, true, I will see to him — he shall answer for what he has done — but now Calverley, tell me honestly, for you are not wont to be familiar even with your fellows — tell me what you saw in this maiden that could make you wish to rival Stephen Holgrave?"

"Her beauty, my lord."

"What! is she so fair?"

"My lord, I have seldom looked upon one so fair. In my judgment she was the loveliest I ever saw in these parts."

"Say you so!" returned De Boteler. "I should like to see this boasted beauty, only if it were to convince me of your taste in these matters. Calverley, order one of the varlets to go to Holgrave, and desire him to come to the castle directly — and, mind you, he brings his wife with him."

Calverley could scarcely repress a smile of exultation as the baron delivered this command, but composing his countenance to its general calm expression, he bowed to De Boteler, and immediately withdrew.

Holgrave, when the henchman delivered the baron's command, hesitated, and looked angrily to Margaret.

"What ails thee, my son," asked Edith. "Is she not thy wife? — and can the baron break asunder the bonds that bind ye? — or dost thou fear that Margaret's face may please him — and that he would strive to take from the man who saved his life in the battle, the wife of his bosom! Shame! shame!"

"No, no, mother," returned Holgrave, musing; "yet I would rather she should not go to the castle — I have seen more of the baron than you: and, besides, this Calverley ——"

Holgrave, however, considering it better not to irritate the baron by a refusal, at length consented that Margaret should accompany him, and they quitted the cottage together.

"Come hither, Holgrave," said De Boteler, as Holgrave entered. "Is this your wife?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the yeoman, with an humble reverence.

"Look up, pretty one," said De Boteler to Margaret! — "Now, by my faith, Holgrave, I commend your choice. I wonder not that such a prize was contended for. Margaret, — I believe that is your name? Look up! and tell me in what secret place you grew into such beauty?"

Margaret raised her bright blue eyes, that had been as yet hidden by the long dark lashes, and the downcast lids; but, meeting the bold fixed gaze

of the baron, they were instantly withdrawn, and the deep blush of one unaccustomed to the eyes of strangers suffused her cheek and brow, and even her neck.

"Were you reared on this barony, Margaret?" resumed the baron.

"Yes, my lord," answered Margaret, modestly, raising her eyes: "my mother was a freeman's daughter; my father was a bondman on this land: they died when I was but a child; and Edith Holgrave reared me till I grew up a girl and could work for myself — and then ——"

"You thought you could not do better than wed her son through gratitude. That was well — and so this good squire of ours could not expect to find much favour in your eyes. But, do you not know, you should not have wedded without my consent?"

"My lord," answered Holgrave; "I beg your pardon; but I thought your lordship would n't think much of the marriage, as your lordship was not at the castle, and I did not know when you would return. Here is the merchet, my lord, and I hope you will forgive me for not awaiting your return."

"I suppose I must, for there is no helping it now; and by my faith, it is well you did not let me see that pretty face before you were wedded — but take back the merchet," he continued, waving back with his hand the money which Holgrave was presenting. "Keep it. An orphan bride seldom comes rich; and here is a trifle to add to it, as a token that De Boteler prizes beauty — even though it be that of a bondwoman!" As he spoke, he held a broad piece of gold towards Holgrave.

"Not so, my lord," said Holgrave, suffering the coin to remain between De Boteler's fingers. — "Not so, my lord. I take back the merchet with many thanks, but I crave your pardon for not taking your gold. I have no need of gold — I did not wed Margaret for dower — and with your lordship's leave I pray you excuse my taking it."

"As you please, unthankful kern," replied the baron, haughtily. "De Boteler forces his gifts upon no one — here," he continued, throwing the piece to an attendant, who stood behind his chair — "*you* will not refuse it." He then turned round to the table, and commenced a game at cards, without further noticing Holgrave. The yeoman stood a few minutes awaiting the baron's pleasure, but perceiving he did not heed him, presently took Margaret's hand, and making a low obeisance, retired.

When the game was finished, De Boteler threw down the cards.

"Calverley," said he, "think you that this Margaret loves her husband?" A slight shade passed over Calverley's cheek as he answered,

"I should hardly think so, my lord. She is — her temper is very gentle — Holgrave is passionate, and rude, and — "

"It is a pity she should be the wife of such a carle" — mused his lord.

That afternoon De Boteler, throwing a plain dark cloak over his rich dress, left the castle, took the path that led to Holgrave's abode, and raising the latch, entered the cottage.

Margaret was sitting near the window at needlework, and Edith, in her high-backed arm-chair, was knitting in the chimney-corner. Margaret, blushing deeply, started from her seat as her eyes so unexpectedly encountered those of the baron.

"Keep your seat, pretty dame," said De Boteler. "That is a stout silk. For whom are you working these bright colours?"

"It is a stole for my brother, the monk, my lord," replied Margaret in a tremulous voice.

"Your work is so beautiful," returned De Boteler, looking at the silk, "that I wish you could find time to embroider a tabard for me."

"My lord," replied Edith, rising from her seat, and stepping forward a few paces, "Margaret Holgrave has little leisure from attending to the

household of her husband. There are abundance of skilful sempstresses; and surely the Baron de Boteler would not require this young woman to neglect the duty she has taken upon herself."

De Boteler looked at Edith an instant with a frown, as if about to answer fiercely; but after a moment he inquired calmly,

"Does your son find his farm answer, dame?"

"Yes, my lord, with many thanks to the donor. Stephen has all he can wish for in this farm."

"That is well," returned De Boteler; and then, after a momentary but earnest gaze at Margaret, he turned away and left the cottage.

Holgrave entered soon after the baron's departure. Margaret strove to meet him with a smile; but is was not the sunny glow, that usually greeted his return. He detected the effort; nay, as he bent down to kiss her cheek, he saw that she trembled.

"What ails you, Margaret?" inquired he tenderly. "You are not well?"

"O yes," replied Margaret. "I am perfectly well, but—I have been a little frightened."

"By whom? Calverley?"

"No; his master."

"The baron! Surely, Margaret—"

"Oh! Stephen," said Margaret, alarmed at the sudden fierceness his countenance assumed. "Indeed he said no harm. Did he, mother?"

"No," replied Edith, "and if he had, Stephen, your wife knew how to answer him as befitting a virtuous woman."

"It was well," replied Holgrave; "I am a freeman, and may go where I list, and not King Edward himself shall insult a freeman's wife!—but do not weep, Margaret. I am not angered with you."

That evening De Boteler spoke little during supper, and while drinking the second cup after the repast, he desired the page who stood behind his chair, to order the monk John to attend him directly. Father John presently appeared, and approaching the foot of the table, made a low obeisance, and then with his hands crossed on his bosom, and with eyes cast down, awaited till De Boteler should address him. De Boteler looked for a moment earnestly at the monk, ere in a stern voice he said:

"Father John, know you not why I have sent for you?"

"My lord, I await your pleasure," replied the monk submissively.

"Await *my pleasure!*" replied the Baron scornfully. "Did you consider my pleasure, monk, when you presumed to set at naught my prerogatives?"

"My lord," answered the monk, still mildly, though in a firmer tone than he had before spoken; "My Lord de Boteler, servants must obey their masters."

"Hypocrite!" interrupted the baron, in a voice that resounded through the hall. "Did you consider the obedience due to a master when you presumed to dispose of a bondwoman of mine, without my sanction—nay, even in direct opposition to my will? Answer me. Did you consider the order of dependence then?"

"Baron of Sudley," replied the monk, in a voice which, though scarcely elevated above the ordinary pitch of colloquial discourse, was nevertheless in that clear distinct tone which is heard at a considerable distance—"Baron of Sudley, I am no hypocrite, neither have I forgotten to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. If I pronounced the nuptial benediction over a bondwoman and a freeman without your lordship having consented, it was because you had first violated the trust reposed in you. You are a master to command obedience, but only in things that are not sinful; yet would you sinfully have compelled a maiden to swear at the holy altar

of God to love and honour a man whom her soul abhorred. It was because you would have done this, that I, as the only being besides your lordship who could — "

"Insolent priest!" interrupted De Boteler, "do you dare to justify what you have done? Now, by my faith, if you had with proper humility acknowledged your fault and sued for pardon — pardon you should have had. But now, you leave this castle instantly. I will teach you that De Boteler will yet be master of his own house, and his own vassals. And here I swear (and the Baron of Sudley uttered an imprecation) that for your meddling knavery, no priest or monk shall ever again abide here. If the varlets want to shrive, they can go to the abbey; and if they want to hear mass, a priest can come from Winchcombe. But never shall another of your meddling fraternity abide at Sudley while Roland de Boteler is its lord."

"Calverley," he continued, turning to the squire, who stood at a distance, enjoying the mortification of the monk — "Calverley, see that the priest quits the castle — remember — instantly!"

The monk, for the first time, fully raised his eyes, and casting upon the baron a momentary glance of reproach, turned, without speaking, from the table. He walked on a few steps towards the door, and then stopping suddenly, as if recollecting that Calverley had orders to see him depart, he turned round, and looking upon the squire, who was almost at his side, he said in a stern voice, and with a frowning brow, "I go in obedience to your master; but even obedience to your master is not to be enforced upon a servant of the Lord by such as *you*. Of my own will I go forth; but not one step further do I proceed till you retire!"

There was that in the voice and look of the monk, which made Calverley involuntarily shrink; and receiving at the same instant a glance from De Boteler, he withdrew to the upper end of the room; and Father John, with a dignified step, passed on through the hall, and across the court-yard, and giving a blessing to the guard at the principal gate, who bent his knee to receive it, he went forth, having first shaken the dust from his sandals.

The next morning, when his lord had released him from attendance, Calverley, little satisfied with the progress of his vengeance, left the castle, and walked on to meditate alone more uninterruptedly on the canker-worm within.

He had not proceeded far along his path, when the heavy tread of a man on the rustling leaves, caused him to raise his eyes, and he saw a short, thickset figure, in gray woollen hose, and a vest of coarse medley cloth reaching no higher than the collar-bone, hastening onward. A gleam of hope lighted Calverley's face as he observed this man.

"What is the matter this morning, Byles?" said he, "you look troubled."

Byles looked at Calverley for an instant, perfectly astonished at his condescension.

"Troubled!" replied he — "no wonder. My farm is bad; and — "

"It *is* a poor farm," said Calverley hastily; "but there are many fine farms that have lately reverted to my lord in default of heirs, or as forfeitures, that must soon be given away or sold."

"But, Master Calverley, what is that to me?" said Byles, looking with some surprise at the squire — "you know I am a friendless man, and have not wherewithal to pay the fine the steward would demand for the land. No, no, John Byles is going fast down the hill."

"Don't despair, Byles — there is Holgrave — he was once poorer than you — take heart, some lucky chance may lift you up the hill again. I dare say this base-born I have named thinks himself better now than the free-born honest man."

"Ay, that he does, squire: to be sure he does n't say any thing; but then he thinks the more; and, besides, he never comes into the alehouse when his work is done, to take a cheering draught like other men. No, no, he is too proud for that; but home he goes, and whatever he drinks he drinks at his own fireside."

For a moment Calverley's brow contracted; but striving to look interested for the man he wished to conciliate, he replied, "Yes, Byles, it is a pity that a good-hearted yeoman like you should not prosper as well as a mere mushroom. Now, Byles, I know you are a discreet man, and I will tell you a piece of news that nobody about the barony has yet heard. My lord is going to be married — yes, Byles, he leaves Sudley in a few days and goes again to London, and he will shortly return with a fair and noble mistress for the castle."

"We shall have fine doings then," said Byles, in an animated tone, and with a cheerful countenance; not that the news was of particular moment to him, but people love to be told news; and, besides, the esquire's increasing familiarity was not a little flattering.

"Oh, yes," replied Calverley; "there will be fine feasting, and I will see, Byles, that you do not lack the best. Who knows but your dame may yet nurse the heir of this noble house."

"I am afraid not, — many thanks to you; John Byles is not thought enough of in this barony — no, it is more likely Holgrave's wife, if she has any children, will have the nursing."

"What! Margaret Holgrave? — never" — said Calverley, with such a look and tone, that the yeoman started, and felt convinced, that what he had heard whispered about the esquire's liking for Margaret was true: "but, however," added Calverley, in a moment recovering his self-possession, "do not despair, Byles. My lord tells me I shall replace old Luke as steward in a few months, and if I do, there is not a vassal I should be more inclined to favour than you; for I see, Byles, there is little chance of your doing good unless you have a friend; for you are known to the baron as an idle fellow, and not over-scrupulous of telling a falsehood. Nay, my man, do n't start, I tell you the truth."

"Well, but squire, how could the baron hear of this?"

"Perhaps Stephen Holgrave could answer ——"

"The base-born kern," replied Byles, fiercely; "*he* shall answer ——"

"I do n't say he told the baron," said Calverley; "but I believe Holgrave loves to make everybody look worse than himself; and to be plain with you, John Byles, I love him not."

"No sir, I believe you have little reason to love him any more than other people —."

"Byles," interrupted Calverley, speaking rapidly, "you are poor — you are in arrear with your rent; a distress will be levied, and then what will become of you — of your wife and the little one? Listen to me! I will give you money to keep a house over your head; and when I am steward, you shall have the first farm at my lord's disposal, if you will only aid me in my revenge! Revenge!" he repeated, vehemently — "but you hesitate — you refuse."

"Nay, nay, squire, I do n't refuse: your offer is too tempting for a man in my situation to refuse; but you know — "

"Well," interrupted Calverley, with a contemptuous smile — "well, well, Byles, I see you prefer a jail for yourself, and beggary and starvation for your wife and child. Aye — perhaps to ask bread from Stephen Holgrave."

"Ask bread from him! — of the man who crows over us all, and who has told my lord that I am a liar! No, no, I would sooner die first. I

thank you for your kindness, Master Calverley, and I will do any thing short of——"

"Oh, you need not pause," interrupted Calverley, "I do not want you to do him any bodily harm."

"Don't you? — oh! well, then, John Byles is yours," said he, with a brightening countenance: "for you see I don't mind saying any thing against such a fellow as he."

"Yes, Byles, and especially since you will not be asked to say it for nothing," returned Calverley with a slight sarcastic smile; but immediately assuming a more earnest and friendly tone, he continued, "I have promised you gold, and gold you shall have. I will befriend you to the utmost of my power, and you know my influence is not small at the castle; but you must swear to be faithful. Here," said he, stooping down and taking up a rotten branch that lay at his feet, and breaking it in two, he placed it in the form of a cross; "here, Byles, swear by this cross to be faithful." Byles hesitated for an instant, and then, in rather a tremulous voice, swore to earn faithfully his wages of sin.

It was nearly four months subsequent to the departure of De Boteler from the castle, ere Byles proceeded to earn the gold which had, in some measure, set him to rights with the world. It was about the middle of March; —the morning had risen gloomily, and, from a dense mass of clouds, a slow heavy rain continued to pour during the whole of the day. "Sam," said Byles to a servitor, a faithful stupid creature, with just sufficient intellect to comprehend and obey the commands of his master,— "Sam, if this rain continues, we must go to work to-night?"

The rain did continue, and, after Byles had supped, he sat at the fire for two or three hours, and scarcely spoke. His countenance was troubled;— the deed he had promised to do — which he had contemplated with almost indifference — was now about to be accomplished; and he felt how different it is to dwell upon the commission of a thing, and actually to do it. Frequent draughts of ale, however, in some measure restored the tone of his nerves; and, as the evening wore away, he rose from the fire, and, opening the door, looked out at the weather. A thick drizzling rain still fell; the moon was at the full; and though the heavy clouds precluded the possibility of her gladdening the earth, yet even the heavy clouds could not entirely obscure her light; — there was a radiance spread over the heavens, which, though wanting the brightness of moonlight, was nevertheless equal and shadowless.

"'T is a capital night," said Byles, as he looked up at the sky in a tone of soliloquy; "I could not have wished for a better — just light enough to see what we are about, and not enough to tell tales. Sam," continued he, closing the door and sitting again at the fire, "bring me the shafts, and let me look if the bow is in order."

The serving man took from a concealed place a couple of arrows, and a stout yew-tree bow, and handed them to his master.

"You did well, Sam, in getting these shafts from Holgrave. You put the quiver up safe? — there is no fear of his missing them?"

"I should think not, master. It would be hard if he missed two out of four-and-twenty."

"Mary," said Byles, addressing his wife, "put something over the casement, lest if, by chance, any body should be abroad, they may see that we are up; — and now, bring me the masks. Never fear, Mary, nobody is out such a night as this. Now Sam," he continued, "fetch the hand-barrow, and let us away."

Mary began to tremble; — she caught her husband by the arm, and said something in a low and tremulous voice. As the fire revealed her face, Byles started at the strange paleness it exhibited.

"What ails you, Mary?" said he. "Have you not all along urged me to this? and now, after taking Calverley's gold, and spending it, and signing the bond, you want me to stand still! No, no, I must go to the Chase this night, were I sure to be hung to-morrow morning!" He then pushed her away with some violence, and the servitor preceding him, he passed over the threshold and closed the door.

They entered the Chase — and the wind, as it came in sudden gusts through the branches of the tall trees, gave an air of deeper gloom to the night. Frequently they paused and listened, as if fearful of being discovered; and then, when convinced that no human being was near, hastened on to the spot where the deer usually herded at night. A deep ravine, ten or twelve feet in breadth, intersected the Chase at a few paces from the enclosure; and about a stone's throw to the right of this enclosure stood the dwelling of the keeper.

"Sam," said Byles, "is not that a light in the cottage?"

"Yes, master, but I think they are in bed, and maybe have forgotten to rake the ashes over the fire."

"It may be so," answered Byles, doubtfully; "keep in the shade of the trees, and let us stop a while — I do not much like this light." They watched the cottage anxiously, and, in about twenty minutes, the light disappeared.

"Sam," said Byles, "I believe you were right — that last faint flicker, I doubt not, came from the dying embers. Creep softly to the enclosure, and gently rustle the brushwood. Do 'nt let them see you. Softly — there — go on."

Byles drew his shaft from beneath his garment, and fixed it in the bow as Sam crept into the enclosure and did what he was ordered. The animals started on their legs, and stretched their heads forward in various directions, as if to ascertain whence the danger seemed to threaten.

"Down, Sam, a little to the left," whispered Byles, as a noble buck bounded forward towards the servitor, who had sheltered himself so as to avoid being seen by the animal. Sam dropped on the drenched grass to avoid the shaft that now sped from the bow of the marksman. The arrow entered the neck of the affrighted creature, as, for an instant, it stood with upraised head, its lofty antlers touching the branches. It then bounded forward, but, in its giddy effort to clear the obstruction of the opposing chasm, fell gasping among the brushwood that lined the sides of the ravine.

"Confound him, he has escaped us!" exclaimed Byles. See the whole herd scudding off, as if the hounds were in full cry at their heels. But forward, Sam, and creep to the edge, for he may not have fallen into the stream."

Sam obeyed; but whether owing to his trepidation or the slippery surface of the earth, he lost his footing and disappeared, uttering a cry of terror. Byles stood for an instant, irresolute whether to advance to the succour of his servitor, or leave him behind, for he apprehended that the cry would arouse the guardians of the Chase. Recollecting, however, that it would be as dangerous to abandon him as to attempt his extrication, he rushed forward to the spot where Sam had disappeared. The man had, in his fall, grasped the root of a tree from which the late heavy rains had washed the earth, and he lay suspended midway down. Byles hastily threw him a rope, with which he had intended to bind the animal on the barrow, and, with some difficulty, succeeded in dragging him up.

The dying throes of the buck recalled Byles to the object of his journey; and they were about making an effort to extricate the animal from the brushwood, when the servitor's eye caught the gleam of a light in the cottage.

"It 's all over," said Byles, in a disappointed tone; "but the arrow may

answer our purpose where it is. Take up the barrow and fly, but keep in the shade of the trees."

A quick knock aroused Mary from her seat at the fire. She approached the door on tiptoe, and hesitated a moment ere she unclosed it; but the rapid breathings of Byles relieved her alarm, and she opened it hastily. A pale, haggard look met her eyes as her husband rushed in. "Fasten the door, Mary," said he — "haste, quench the fire. Here, put these wet clothes in the hiding place" — stripping himself of his garments — "and when you have done, hasten to bed. I am afraid they have overtaken poor Sam."

"Oh!" said Mary, dropping the clothes and staggering to a seat — "oh! Byles, Byles, we are lost! What will become of us! Sam will tell all!"

"Hold your tongue, woman," said Byles, jumping out of the bed into which he had thrown himself, and taking up the clothes, concealed them in the pit. "Do you want to have me hanged? To bed, I tell you."

She tremblingly obeyed, and Byles listened with breathless anxiety for the signal that would assure him of his servant's safety. At length a footstep and a low tap at the door summoned Byles from his bed. "Who is there?" said he.

"Hasten, master, open the door," answered the servitor.

"All is well; Sam is returned!" He opened the door, and the servitor, panting with fear and fatigue, threw the barrow on the floor.

"That 's right, Sam; there is nothing left to tell we have been in the Chase to-night. Now hasten to bed as quickly as you can. You shall have a new suit at Easter for this night's business. But Master Calverley will not be well pleased that the buck was not lodged in Holgrave's barn. However, it cannot be helped now."

CHAPTER III.

It was a fair morning in the June succeeding Holgrave's marriage, that Sudley Castle presented a greater degree of splendour than it had exhibited for some years before. Roland de Boteler had wedded a noble maiden, and it was expected that the castle would that day be graced by the presence of its future mistress.

There was a restless anxiety that morning, in every inhabitant of the castle, from old Luke, the steward, who was fretting and fidgeting lest the lady should consider him too old for the stewardship, to the poor varlet who fed the dogs, and the dirty nief who scoured the platters. This anxiety increased when a messenger arrived to announce that the noble party were on the road from Oxford, and might be expected in a few hours: and when at length a cloud of dust was observed in the distance, old Luke, bareheaded, and followed by the retainers and domestics, went forth to greet, with the accustomed homage, De Boteler and his bride.

The graceful Isabella de Vere was seated on a white palfrey, and attired in a riding-dress of green velvet, while a richly embroidered mantle of the same material, trimmed with minever, fell from her shoulders, and in some measure concealed the emblazoned housing that ornamented the beautiful animal on which she rode. A pyramidal cap of green satin, with a long veil of transparent tissue flowing from the point, and falling so as partly to shadow and partly to reveal the glow of her high-born beauty, was the only head-gear worn that day by the daughter of the Earl of Oxford, and the new baroness of Sudley.

On her right hand rode her husband, clad in a tunic of fine cloth, in colour

resembling the habit of his lady, and mounted on a dark, fiery charger, which with difficulty he could rein in to the slow pace of the palfrey. On the left of the lady Isabella was her brother, young Robert de Vere, and though but a boy, one might have read much in the lines of that countenance, of his future destiny. His smooth dimpled chin was small and round, and his mouth possessed that habitual smile, that softly beaming expression, which won for him in after years the regard of the superficial Richard; while there shone a fire in the full dark eyes, which betokened the ambitious spirit that was to animate the future lord of Dublin and sovereign of Ireland.

Sparkling with jewels, and attired in a white satin robe, the Lady de Boteler took her seat for the first time at the table of her lord, and well was she calculated to grace the board. Her person, tall and well formed, possessed that fulness of proportion which is conveyed by the term majestic; and her movements were exceedingly graceful. She had fine auburn hair, and the thick curls that fell beneath the gemmed fillet encircling her head, seemed alternately a bright gold or a dark brown according to the waving of the tress. Her fair and high white forehead, which the parted curls revealed, possessed sufficient beauty to have redeemed even irregular features from the charge of homeliness; but Isabella de Vere's face was altogether as generally faultless as falls to the lot of woman.

The guests were numerous, and the evening passed away in feasting and revelry. The blaze of the lights — the full strains of the minstrels — the glad faces and graceful motions of the dancers, the lustre of the ladies' jewels, and the glitter of the gold embroidery on the dresses of male and female, combined to give to the spacious hall that night more the appearance of a fairy scene, which might dissolve in a moment into air, than a palpable human festivity. The tenantry had also their feasting and their dancing; but these had to pay for their amusement: each tenant, according to the custom of the manor, on the marriage of their lord, being obliged to bring an offering in proportion to the land which he held.

On the morrow, accordingly, the vassals brought their presents. The lady Isabella, surrounded by visiters and attended by her handmaidens, was seated in the spacious apartment intended for the ceremony, as Edith, supported by Margaret, entered the room. The baroness raised her head and gazed upon the latter, with that complacent feeling which beauty seldom fails to inspire. The delicate hue of Margaret's cheek was, at this moment, deepened by embarrassment: and, as kneeling down, she raised her bright blue eyes, the lady thought she had never seen so lovely a creature.

"What is your pleasure with me, maiden?" asked the baroness, in a condescending tone.

"Lady," replied Margaret modestly; "I am the wife of one of my lord's vassals; and my mother and myself humbly beg you will accept this present."

"And is this your present? — What is your name?"

"Margaret Holgrave, lady."

"Look, Lady Anne," said Isabella, displaying a pair of white silk gloves, beautifully wrought with gold. "Do you not think this a fair present for a vassal to bestow?"

"The gloves are very beautiful," replied the lady.

"Your gift betokens a good feeling, young dame," said Isabella, turning to Margaret. "But why did you choose so costly a present?"

"Indeed, noble lady," replied Margaret, "the gloves cost but little — Edith, here, my husband's mother, knitted them, and I have striven to ornament them."

"What! Is this your embroidery?"

"Yes, my lady."

"This is not the work of a novice, Lady Anne — You are accustomed to needlework!"

"Yes, my lady — before I was married I obtained my support by making the vestments for some of the monks at Hailes Abbey."

"Indeed! very well — and *you* are this young person's mother-in-law?" said the baroness, for the first time addressing Edith.

"Yes, Baroness de Boteler," replied the old woman.

"Very well," said the lady, and looking alternately at Edith and Margaret, she added, "I accept your gift — you may now retire."

They accordingly withdrew from the chamber, and, in the court-yard, were joined by Holgrave. "Did the baroness take the gloves?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Margaret, in delight, "and she seemed pleased with the embroidery. O, Stephen, she is so beautiful! She looks like an angel! Does she not, mother?"

"She has beauty, Margaret," answered Edith, "but it is not the beauty of an angel — it has too much of pride."

"But all ladies are proud, mother! I warrant she is not prouder than another."

"Maybe not, Margaret; but yet that lady who sat at her side looked not so high as the baroness. There was more sweetness in her smile, and gentleness in her voice."

"O yes, she spoke very sweetly, but she is not so handsome as the baron's lady."

"Margaret," replied Edith; "when you are as old as I, you will not look upon beauty as you do now; — a gentle heart and a pallid cheek will seem lovelier then, than brightness and bloom, if there be pride on the brow. But, Stephen, what said the steward when you gave him the gold?"

"Oh, he said mine was the best gift that had been brought yet. But come, mother, it is time we were at home."

The Lady de Boteler, Lady Anne Hammond, and the other ladies, were admiring the embroidered gloves, when De Boteler and Sir Robert Knowles entered the apartment.

"See, Roland," said the baroness, holding the gloves towards her husband; "see, what a pretty gift I have received since you left us!"

"They are indeed pretty," answered De Boteler; "and the fair hands that wrought them deserve praise. What think you, Sir Robert?"

"O, you must not ask Sir Robert for any fine compliment," interrupted the baroness. "They are not a *lady's* gift — they were presented to me by the wife of one of your vassals."

"The wife of a vassal would not have taste enough to buy such as these; and there is but one about Winchcombe who could work so well. And, by my faith, I now remember that it was part of the tenure by which I some time since granted land, to present a pair of gloves. — Was it not a fair-looking damsel, one Stephen Holgrave's wife, that brought them?"

"I think she said her name was Holgrave," replied the lady in a cold tone. "But indeed, my lord baron, you seem to be wondrously well acquainted with the faces and the handywork of your vassal's wives!"

"Nay, Isabella," said the pale interesting lady of Sir Robert Knowles; "it is not strange that my Lord de Boteler should know the faces of those who were born on his land; and this young woman's skill could not fail to have procured her notice. But the handiness of her fingers has not made her vain. You know I am fond of reading faces, and I would answer that she is as modest and good as she is fair."

"O, I dare say she is," replied the baroness, and immediately changed the conversation.

The next morning Holgrave received a peremptory order to attend at the castle in the afternoon; and the henchman of the baron, who was the bearer of the message, refused to give any information why he had been so summoned. Edith, with her natural penetration, saw, by the hesitation of the servitor, and by the tone in which the mandate was conveyed, that something of more than ordinary moment was about to be transacted, and, with an undefined feeling of alarm, she resolved to accompany her son.

As they entered the court-yard, the henchman, who had delivered the message, accosted Holgrave, telling him he must go into the hall to answer to some matter before the baron.

"What is the matter which my son is to answer, friend?" asked Edith; but the man evaded the question, and Holgrave, leaving his mother in the outer court-yard, passed through one of the arched doors into the other, and, with a firm step, though with some apprehension of evil, entered the hall.

He had scarcely time to give a nod of recognition to several neighbours who stood near the entrance, when the steward approached, and, desiring him to walk farther up the hall, placed him at the first step that elevated the upper end, thus cutting off every possibility of communicating with his neighbours. Holgrave felt anything but composure in his present conspicuous situation: though strong in the rectitude of his conscience, yet he felt apprehensions and misgivings; and the strange silence that was observed respecting the intended charge alarmed him the more. As the hall was always open on such occasions, he speedily saw a crowd of vassals pouring in — some anxious to know the event, either through a feeling of friendship or hatred, and others merely from curiosity. The eyes of each man, as he entered, fell, as if instinctively, upon the yeoman; and he could perceive, as they formed into groups, that he was the subject of their conversation. Presently his mother, supported by an old friend named Hartwell, entered, and he thought she regarded him with an earnest and sorrowful look. But his attention was immediately diverted; — the upper door opened, and De Boteler and the baroness, with Sir Robert and Lady Knowles, entered the hall.

There was near the steps a small table with writing materials, at which the steward ought to have been seated, to write down the proceedings; but old Luke was not so quick of hearing, or perhaps of comprehension, as Calverley, and the esquire, therefore, took his place.

"Stephen Holgrave," said the baron, in a stern voice, "are these your shafts?" as he beckoned to old Luke to hand the yeoman two arrows which he had hitherto concealed.

Holgrave looked at them an instant —

"Yes, my lord," said he, without hesitation, but yet with a consciousness that the answer was to injure him.

"What, they *are* yours then?" said De Boteler, in a still harsher tone.

Holgrave bowed his head.

"Come forward, keeper," continued the baron, "and state how these arrows came into your hands!"

The keeper made the deposition which the reader will have anticipated; and his men were then examined, who corroborated the statement of their master.

"Now, Stephen Holgrave," asked the baron, "what have you to say to this?"

"My lord," replied Holgrave, still undaunted, "the shafts are mine; but I am as innocent of the deed as the babe at its mother's breast. Whoever shot the buck must have stolen my arrows, in order to bring me into this scrape."

"By my faith, Holgrave, you seem to think lightly of this matter. Do you call it a scrape to commit a felony in your lord's chase? Have you any thing further to urge in your defence?"

There was a momentary pause after the baron had ceased. Holgrave hesitated to reply; — he had denied the charge, and he knew not what else to say. But when every eye except Calverley's, from Roland de Boteler's to that of the lowest freeman present, was fixed on the accused, expecting his answer, a slight movement was observed among the people, and Edith Holgrave, supported by Hartwell, pressed forward, and stood on the step by the side of her son. The gaze was now in an instant turned from the son to the mother, and Edith, after pausing a moment to collect her faculties, said, in a loud voice —

"My Lord de Boteler, and you, noble sir, and fair dames — it may seem strange that an old woman like me should speak for a man of my son's years; but, in truth, he is better able to defend himself with his arm than his tongue."

"Woman!" interrupted De Boteler impatiently, "your son has answered for himself—retire."

"Nay, my lord," replied Edith, with a bright eye and a flushing cheek, and drawing herself up to a height that she had not exhibited for many years —"nay, my lord, my son is able to defend himself against the weapon of an open foe, but not against the doings of a covert enemy!"

"What mean you, woman?" quickly returned De Boteler; "do you accuse the keeper of my chase as having plotted against your son, or whom do you suspect?"

"Baron de Boteler," replied Edith, with a look and a tone that seemed to gain fresh energy from the kind of menace with which the interrogatories were put, "I do not accuse your keeper. He had an honest father, and he has himself ever been a man of good repute. But I do say," she added in a wild and high tone, and elevating her right hand and riveting her flashing eyes on Calverley — "I *do* say, the charge as regards my son is a base and traitorous plot."

"Hold your tongue, woman," interrupted De Boteler, who had listened to her with evident reluctance. "Why do you look so fiercely on my squire. Have you aught against him?"

"My lord baron," replied Edith, "I have nothing to say that can bring home guilt to the guilty, or do right to the wronged: but I will say, my lord, that what a man is to-day he will be to-morrow, unless he has some end to answer by changing. The esquire will scarcely give the word of courtesy to the most reputable vassal, and yet did he talk secretly and familiarly with John Byles — and here is one who will swear that he heard him repeat the name of my son, and then something about an arrow."

Old Hartwell now stepped forward, and averred that he had seen Calverley and Byles talking together in the chase, and that he had overheard the name of Stephen Holgrave repeated in conjunction with an allusion to arrows. The circumstance, however, had been quite forgotten until the charge this morning brought it to his memory. This eaves-dropping testimony amounted to nothing, even before Calverley denied every particular of the fact, which he did with the utmost composure —

'What motive have I to plot against Holgrave?" asked Calverley.

"You *have* a motive," said Edith, "both in envy and in love. You well know that if this charge could be proved, Stephen Holgrave must die."

Calverley was about to speak, when he was interrupted by De Boteler, who expressed himself dissatisfied with the explanations on both sides:

"The proof is doubtful," said he, suddenly. "Give the fellow back his arrows, and dissolve the court. -- Away!"

When the arrows were handed to their owner, he instantly snapped them asunder.

"What means this, Stephen Holgrave?" asked the baron impatiently.

"My lord, these arrows were used in a foul purpose; and Stephen Holgrave will never disgrace his hand by using them again. The time may come, my lord, when the malicious coward who stole them shall rue this day!"

"Bravely said and done, my stout yeoman!" said Sir Robert Knowles, who broke silence for the first time during the investigation: "and my Lord de Boteler," he continued, addressing the baron, "the arm that acquitted itself so well in your defence, you may be assured, could never have disgraced itself by midnight plunder."

"The blessing of the most high God be with you for that, noble sir," said Edith, as she knelt down and fervently thanked Sir Robert; and then, leaning on the arm of her son, she left the hall.

"By my faith, Sir Robert," said De Boteler, "Stephen Holgrave wants no counsel while that old dame so ably takes his part. But a truce with this mummery. Come along—our time is more precious than wasting it in hearing such varlets."

The baron and his guests then withdrew.

At the distance of nearly a mile from Sudley Castle, and at about a quarter of a mile from the high road that led to Oxford, was a singular kind of quarry or cliff. Its elevation was considerable, and the portion of the hill visible from the road was covered with the heathy verdure which usually springs from such scanty soil; but on passing round to the other side, all the barren unsightly appearance of a half-worked quarry presented itself. Huge masses of stone stood firmly as nature had formed them, while others, of a magnitude sufficient to awaken in the hardiest a sense of danger, hung apparently by so slight a tenure, that a passing gust of wind seemed only required to release their fragile hold. But the hill had stood thus unaltered during the remembrance of the oldest inhabitant of Winchcombe. Strange stories were whispered respecting this cliff, but as the honour of the house of Sudley, and that of another family equally noble, were concerned in the tale, little more than obscure hints were suffered to escape.

One evening, as the rumour went, a female figure, enveloped in a mantle of some dark colour, and holding an infant in her arms, was observed, seated on one of the stones of the quarry, with her feet resting on a fragment beneath. Her face was turned towards Sudley, and as the atmosphere was clear, and her position elevated, the castle could well be distinguished. Wild shrieks were heard by some during that night, and the morning sun revealed blood on fragments of the stone, and on the earth beneath; and at a little distance it was perceived that the grass had been recently dug up, and trodden down with a heavy foot. The peasants crossed themselves at the sight, but no inquiries were made, and from that day the cliff was sacred to superstition, for no inhabitant of the district would have touched a stone of the quarry, or have dared to pass it after nightfall for the world.

It was beneath the shadow of those impending stones, and over the spot where it was whispered that the murdered had been buried, that Calverley, on the night of the day that Holgrave left scatheless the hall of Sudley Castle, was pacing to and fro, awaiting the appearance of Byles. "He lingers," said Calverley, as the rising moon told him it was getting late, "I suppose the fool fears to come near this place." But after some minutes of feverish impatience, Byles at length came.

"What detained you, sirrah?" asked the other sharply.

The yeoman muttered an excuse; but his speech betrayed him.

"You have been drinking," said Calverley, with anger. "Could you not have kept sober till you had seen me?"

"Why, Master Calverley, to tell you the truth, that old mother Holgrave frightened me so that—"

"Your childish cowardice had like to have betrayed us. Byles, you have not dealt honestly by me in this affair—but you are not in a state to be spoken to now."

"There you are mistaken, squire. I am just as sober as I ought to be to come to this place: but I can't see why we could n't have talked as well any where else as here!"

"Yes, and have some old gossiping fool break in. No, no—here we are safe. But come nearer, and stand, as I do, in the shadow of the cliff."

"Not a foot nearer, Master Calverley, for all the gold in England. Why, you are standing just where the poor lady and her babe were buried!"

"Suppose I am—think you they will sleep the worse because I stand on their grave? Oh! it is a fine thing," he continued, as if following up some reflection in his mind, "to bury those we hate—deep, deep—so that they may never blast our sight again!—Byles, you perjured yourself in that affair of the buck. You swore to aid me. You had gold for the service, and yet it would have been better that the beast were still alive, than to have left it behind in the chase; it has only brought suspicion on me, and given Holgrave a fresh triumph!"

"No fault of mine, squire," answered Byles, in a sullen tone; "there was no such thing as getting the creature out; and if Sam or I had been caught, it would have been worse still. But bad as Stephen is, he would n't have thought of accusing us, if it had n't have been for that old she-fox, his mother."

"Aye," said Calverley, with a smile—if the curve of a bloodless lip could be so designated—"aye, you name her rightly, Byles: she is a fox, and like a fox shall she die,—hunted—driven—tortured. Byles, have you never heard it said that this woman was a witch?"

"Why—yes—I have, Master Calverley; but in truth I do n't like to have anything to do with her. If she set a spell upon me, I could never do good again. Did not she tell Roger Follett, that if he did n't take care, sooner or later, the gable end of his house would fall? and so, sure enough it did."

"And yet, knowing this woman a witch, you would not assist in ridding the parish of such a pest?"

Byles made no reply.

"Well," resumed Calverley, taking some nobles from a small bag he had in his hand, "these must be for him who will aid me. You have been well paid, John Byles, for the work you did not do, and now,—see if your *industry* and your *profitable* farm will befriend you as much as *I* should have done."

This speech acted as Calverley had anticipated. The yeomen's scruples fled; and alarmed at the prospect of losing those comforts he had enjoyed since entering into the nefarious league, he said more earnestly than he had yet spoken—

"Master Calverley, you will find no man act more faithfully by you than John Byles. You have been a good friend to me, and I would do any thing to serve you, but——you see a man can't stifle conscience all at once."

"Conscience!" repeated Calverley, with a smile of irony. "Do you know, Byles, I think that conscience of yours will neither serve you in this world, nor in the next! You have too little to make you an honest man,

and too much to make you a reckless knave. But a truce with conscience. I have here," said he, holding up the bag of coin, "that which would buy the conscience of twenty such as you; and now, Byles, if you choose to earn this gold, which will be given to another if you hesitate, swear on these gospels," presenting to the yeoman a Testament, "that you will be a faithful and willing confederate in my future plans respecting the Holgraves. Will you swear?"

"Yes," replied Byles; but as he spoke, he looked wistfully round, in evident trepidition.

"Are you afraid of good or bad spirits? Nonsense! — do as you have promised, and take the gold."

Byles made the required asseveration, and took the price.

"What are you gazing at, Byles?" asked Calverley.

"See, see!" said Byles, pointing to the northwest.

Calverley stepped from the shadow of the cliff, and beheld a meteor in the sky, brightening and expanding, as the clouds opened, until it assumed the appearance of a brilliant star, of astonishing magnitude, encircled by dazzling rays, which, in a singular manner, were all inclined in one direction, and pointing to that part of the horizon where lay the rival of England — France.

Even in Calverley's breast, the bad passions were for a moment hushed, as he gazed upon the radiant phenomenon; but upon the more gross and more timorous mind of Byles, the effect produced was much more striking. He seemed to imagine, that from that brilliant star some celestial being was about to descend, and blast him with the wrath of heaven: and when a lambent flame, darting across the firmament, played for an instant around the quarry, he concluded that heaven's vengeance had, indeed, overtaken him. Rushing from the haunted spot, he stopped not in his headlong course, until he stood in the midst of a group of half-dressed neighbours near his own door, who had been aroused from their slumbers to gaze upon the comet.

Calverley, although possessed of more moral courage than Byles, and viewing the meteor with altogether different feelings, was yet not so entirely imbued with the philosophy of later times, as to behold it without apprehensions. When Byles had fled, he turned, and walked on towards the castle with a more rapid pace than usual.

Nothing of moment occurred at Sudley Castle for many months, if we except the birth of an heir; the appointment of Mary Byles, through Calverley's influence, to be the nurse; and the accession of Calverley himself to the coveted stewardship. The baroness's infant grew a fine, healthy child; but, as is sometimes the case with stout children, it had occasionally convulsive fits in teething. This, however, was carefully concealed from the mother, and Mary continued to receive great praise for her nursing. But it unfortunately happened, that one morning, when the boy had been laughing and playing in the highest spirits, Mary saw its countenance suddenly change. This was the more unfortunate, as De Boteler and his lady were momentarily expected to return, after a fortnight's absence, and Mary had dressed the infant in its gayest apparel to meet its parents, and had been congratulating herself upon the sprightliness and health of the boy. No excuses of sleep would satisfy the mother now: if the child was not taken to her, the nurse was assured she would come to look at him, and kiss him as he slept.

At this moment of perplexity, some medicine, that she had obtained from Edith, occurred to her, and, with a feeling of confidence, and almost of ecstasy, she took a phial from a shelf in a cupboard where she had placed it, and, pouring out the contents in a large spoon, hesitated an instant ere she administered it. "Let me see," said she; "surely it was a large spoon-

ful Edith told me to give — yet all that was in the phial does n't fill the spoon. Surely I can't be wrong: no — I remember she said a large spoonful, and we did n't talk of anything else — so I must be right." But Mary still hesitated, till, hearing a sudden noise in the court-yard, which, she conjectured, was her mistress returned, and as the child was getting worse every moment, she leaned back its head, and, forcing open its mouth, compelled the patient, though with difficulty, to swallow its death. The draught was taken; the rigid muscles relaxed, and for a minute the child lay motionless in her lap; but in an instant after, Mary could scarcely suppress a shriek at the horrid sight that met her gaze. The eyes opened, and glared, and seemed as if starting from the head — the fair face and the red lips were blue, deepening and deepening, till settling in blackness — the limbs contracted — the mouth opened, and displayed a tongue discoloured and swollen — then came a writhing and heaving of the body, and a low, agonized moan: and, as Mary looked almost frantic at this dreadful sight, Edith's words, when she had given her the phial, "that there was enough there to kill," suddenly occurred to her — and then, too, came, with a dreadful distinctness, the remembrance of the true directions which Edith had given.

"Oh, I have murdered the child!" exclaimed Mary, in the dreadful excitement of the moment. "What will become of me? what shall I do? I shall surely be hung. Oh! oh!" she continued, covering her face with her hands, to shut out the sight of the gasping infant. At this instant, the door opened; Mary looked up fearfully — it was her husband. "Oh, Byles! Byles! look at this child! What will become of me?"

"The saints preserve us!" ejaculated Byles, as he looked at the babe: "Mary, how is this?"

"Oh! do n't ask me; but go for Master Calverley. For God's sake, do not stand as if you were bewitched: see! see! he is dying. The poor child! What will become of me? Run, Byles, run, for mercy's sake, and tell Master Calverley."

Byles stood looking, with a countenance expressive of stupified horror, and yet, as if doubting that the livid, distorted, suffering creature could be the fine blooming boy he had so lately seen. At length, aroused by the increasing energy of Mary, he turned silently round and left the room; as he closed the door, the agonized spirit of the little Roland passed away.

In an instant Byles returned with Calverley, and even *he* started and uttered an exclamation, as his eyes fell on the ghastly face of the dead child.

"Mary Byles, how did this happen?" asked Calverley, eagerly.

"Master Calverley, I will tell you truly," answered Mary, in a voice scarcely audible from its tremor. "You have been our best friend, and you would not see me hung? It was all a mistake — I am sure I would n't hurt a hair of the dear creature's head." And here the feelings of woman so far prevailed, that she shed some disinterested tears.

"You could have no motive to destroy the child — but tell me quickly what you have to say." Calverley spoke with a harshness that instantly recalled all Mary's fears and selfishness.

"Edith Holgrave," said she, "gave me some medicine to — "

"Edith Holgrave!" interrupted Calverley, with a quickness of voice and eagerness of look that told how greatly the name interested him.

"Yes, Edith Holgrave told me to give ten drops out of that little bottle, (pointing to the empty phial,) and I — gave — but, oh! Master Calverley, I forgot — "

"You gave it all?" said Calverley, impatiently.

"Yes."

"And you will swear it was a draught that Edith Holgrave gave you

that has killed the child ?" said Calverley, with a brightening countenance.

"Oh, yes," replied Mary; "but indeed —"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Calverley. "Hear me, or you will be hanged! If you hope to save your life, Mary Byles, you must swear that you gave it according to Edith's directions — breathe not a syllable of the drops!"

Mary looked with a fearful wildness at Calverley, as she comprehended his meaning; but Byles said quickly,

"What! do you mean her to hang old Edith ?"

"Certainly," returned Calverley, coolly, "unless you prefer a gallows for your wife. But I dare say you would rather see Mary hanged than that old witch! I will leave you to manage the matter between yourselves."

"Oh, do n't leave us! — do n't leave us!" said Byles, in an agony. "Oh, save me! save me!" sobbed Mary.

"Was any one present when you gave it ?" inquired Calverley, as he turned round and addressed Mary.

"Yes; Winifred handed me the bottle, but the child began to cry, so I sent her out."

"It was well she was here," returned he: "and now, remember — not a word of the drops! swear, simply, that the draught destroyed the infant." And, without awaiting her reply, he seized the pale and trembling Byles by the arm, and dragged him from the room into the passage. He then unlocked a door that had never been observed by either Byles or his wife, and, closing it after them, led the yeoman down a flight of dark steps, and, pausing a moment at the bottom to listen, he unlocked another door, and Byles found himself in a dark passage that branched from one of the entrances of the court-yard to some of the culinary offices. "Go you that way, and I will go this," said Calverley, "and, remember, you know nothing of the child's death." As he spoke, he darted from Byles, and gained the court-yard without farther observation. He walked carelessly about, till a female domestic passing, he called to her, desiring her to go and ask Mary Byles if the young Lord Roland was ready to meet his parents, as they were momentarily expected. The woman departed, and he walked over to the gate between the front towers, as if looking for the return of his lord.

CHAPTER IV.

"What ails you, Stephen," asked Margaret, alarmed at the strange paleness of the yeoman's countenance, and the agitation of his manner, as he entered the cottage on the afternoon the child died. But Holgrave, without replying to her interrogatory, hastily closed and bolted the door. He then drew the large oak table from the side of the wall, and placed it as a barricade before it. "Stephen, what means this bolting and barring ?" inquired Edith, as she saw with surprise his defensive preparations. "What fear you, my son ?"

"Fear! mother ?" replied Holgrave, taking a lance and battle-axe from their place over the chimney, and firmly grasping the former as he stood against the table; "I do not fear now, mother, nor need you — for, by the blessed St. Paul, they shall pass over my mangled body before they reach you!"

"Stephen Holgrave, are you mad ?" returned Edith, alarmed: "tell me the meaning of this! — Speak, I command thee!"

"Oh, mother, I cannot tell you," answered Holgrave, turning away his face from her searching glance; "oh, no, I cannot tell you!"

"Stephen, you were not used to answer me thus. I charge you, by the authority and love of thy mother, and in the name of the blessed saints, to tell me what has happened."

"Alas! my mother, you will know it soon enough. It is said you have — have — bewitched — or poisoned — the baron's son!"

"Oh, mother!" shrieked Margaret. "Fly! — to the abbey, and take sanctuary!"

"Margaret!" replied Edith, "I stir not hence. The guilty may take refuge from the anger of the laws; but it is not for the innocent to fear and fly like the felon!"

Margaret then threw herself at the feet of Edith, and besought her, in the most earnest and pathetic manner, to take refuge at Hailes Abbey, in which she was seconded by Holgrave. The old woman remained silent; but there was a brightness — a glistening in her eyes as if a tear had started; — but if a tear did start, it did not fall. At length, recovering her composure, she rose firmly from her seat —

"My son," said she, "lay down your arms, I command. Should my life be offered up to the vengeful spirit of Thomas Calverley, who alone can be the foul author of this charge, it will be only taking from me a few short years — perhaps days — of suffering. But thou hast years of health and life before thee, and thou hast this gentle weeping creature to sustain."

"What!" interrupted Margaret warmly; "Oh, no — the mother of Stephen Holgrave to be torn from us without a blow! Did he not fight for his lord? and shall he not risk his life for his mother?"

"And is this thy counsel, foolish woman?" replied Edith, in a tone of rebuke."

"She speaks my purpose," said Holgrave, as he grasped still firmer the poised weapon.

Edith stepped quickly up to her son and knelt before him —

"Oh Stephen, my son, my first-born — thy mother kneels to thee. Lay aside that lance, and hearken to the words of her who bore thee and nourished thee. Oh, bring not sorrow and ruin on thyself and her! What would be the bitterness of my dying moments if my son lived not to lay me beside his father? — if thy Margaret was left to mourn in lowly widowhood — and, perhaps, to fall beneath the base arts of Calverley! Oh, my son, my son, by the soul of thy dead father, and by the blessing of thy mother, resist not! — Hark! they come — they come! Haste, Stephen — Give me the weapon."

Holgrave, shocked and agitated, could only think of raising his mother from her knees. He suffered her, without resistance, to take the lance from his hand, and then attempt, with her weak fingers, to remove the barricade, while advancing footsteps were heard without.

The hostile party reached the cottage, and the latch was quickly raised; but, finding it resist their attempts, the voice of Calverley, in an authoritative tone, pronounced —

"In the name of the Lord Roland de Boteler, I demand the body of Edith Holgrave, who is accused of the foul crimes of witchcraft and murder. — Open the door, Stephen Holgrave, if you are within!"

"Fiend of hell! it is he!" muttered Holgrave, gnashing his teeth, but without moving.

The party without seemed to have expected resistance; for the next moment a blow was struck upon the door which made the whole house shake; and the besieged perceived that they were forcing an entrance with the trunk of a young tree, or some such machine, in imitation of the ram, not yet disused in warfare. Speedily the timber yielded and cracked; and

Holgrave, starting from the stupor in which he was plunged, caught up the axe, and posted himself in an attitude of striking near the door.

"Pollute not thy hand with the blood of the base," said Edith, grasping her son's arm — "Judgment is mine, saith the Lord!"

"Thomas Calverley," continued she, in a loud calm voice, "produce your warrant!"

"The word of the Lord de Boleter," replied Calverley, "is warrant enough for the capture of the murderess of his child. Surrender, Stephen Holgrave, I command!"

At this moment a noise was heard, as if an entrance had been effected through the roof; and ere Holgrave could release his arm from his mother's hold, a shriek from Margaret struck upon his ear. He turned his head and beheld her covering him with outstretched arms from the drawn bows of two retainers, who appeared at the door of the room, or loft, above.

"Archers, do your duty!" shouted Calverley; but at the moment some voices without exclaimed suddenly, "My lord comes! My lord comes!" and the bowmen drew back, and Holgrave instinctively dropped his axe.

De Boteler, either through anxiety for Edith's arrest, or from an apprehension that Holgrave might oppose it, did indeed approach, and as he advanced, with hasty and agitated steps, and beheld the evidence of resistance in the rent roof and shattered door, his rage was extreme.

"Tear down the cottage!" cried he, his voice choked with passion, "and take this foul sorceress dead or alive!" The command was about to be fulfilled when the door was unbarred and opened by Holgrave.

"Stop;" said the baron, "the knave surrenders. Base-born churl, how dare you oppose my commands?"

"My lord," said the intrepid yeoman, "I had a right to defend my dwelling against unlawful assault."

"Unlawful! Do you call the orders of your lord unlawful?"

"My Lord de Boteler," said Edith, stepping forward, and looking full at the baron, "it *is* unlawful to send armed men, in the open day, without warrant, save your own will, to attack the house of a faithful vassal and set his life in jeopardy. Had you sent a messenger in peace, Edith Holgrave would have obeyed the mandate. There was little need of all this tumult to take an aged woman, whom *He* knoweth is innocent, and whom you, Lord of Sudley, in your own breast ——"

"Foul-mouthed witch!" interrupted De Boteler, "keep thy tongue silent — no more — lest I anticipate justice by hanging you at your own threshold!"

"That you dare not do!" said Edith, calmly.

"Bear her away, Calverley — bear her away, or I cannot answer for the result. Place her in the dungeon at the top of the tower, and let no one see her till to-morrow, when she shall be conveyed to Gloucester Castle."

That same day, Calverley summoned, or rather packed, a jury, at which he himself presided; and a verdict of wilful murder was returned against Edith. Apprehensive, however, that the charge of poisoning might not be sustained upon the unsupported testimony of Mary Byles, he easily influenced the credulous jurors to believe that witchcraft had as much to do with the child's death as poison. His usual tact, however, had forsaken him on this occasion, and it was not until the verdict was announced and recorded, that the unwelcome conviction flashed across his mind, that the temporal courts could exercise no jurisdiction over the crime of witchcraft. It was now too late to alter the language of the inquisition. It had gone forth to hundreds who awaited its promulgation with intense anxiety; and the language of the verdict, that "Edith Holgrave delivered to Mary Byles a certain charmed or poisonous drug, for the purpose of destroying Roland de Boteler, and which said drug was administered to, and caused the death

of, the said Roland," was, in a few hours, familiar to the whole town and neighbourhood.

Calverley was too well aware of the jealous vigilance the church exercised in cases appertaining to its jurisdiction, not to feel apprehensive that its influence might be exerted to defeat the operation of the temporal court; for, although the ecclesiastical courts could not award the last penalty to persons convicted of witchcraft or heresy, yet they were as tenacious of their exclusive right to investigate such cases, as if they possessed the power to punish. When a person accused of those crimes was adjudged to die, a writ was issued from the court of King's Bench, called a writ *de heretico comburendo*, by virtue of which the victim was handed over to the temporal authority, and underwent the punishment awarded. But it was seldom, at this period, that the obstinacy of a delinquent brought about such a consummation, for a confession of the crime (if the first) only subjected him to ecclesiastical penance or censure. It was not till the reign of James the First that we find any legislative enactment against witchcraft. The well-known passage in Exodus which conveys the divine command to the great lawgiver, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," was the supposed authority from which the church derived its jurisdiction; and though the priests of the old law were armed with, and probably exercised, the ordinance in its fullest meaning, yet the disciples of a purer and milder doctrine delegated that authority to a power more suited to carry its decrees into effect.

The news of these transactions had no sooner reached the ears of Father John, than he hastened to the abbot of Winchcombe, for the purpose of beseeching him to demand the prisoner in the name of the church.

Simon Sudbury, the mitred abbot, was a man of a fair and florid complexion, with large, expressive eyes, that even at the age of fifty were of a deep and clear blue. He was tall, and just sufficiently corpulent to give an air of dignity to his figure; but even had his person been insignificant, there sat on his brow, and glanced in his eye, that pride and conscious superiority which, even from an equal, would have extorted respect.

The monk made a lowly obeisance as he approached the abbot, and when desired to make known his business, he detailed in a brief but perspicuous manner the charge against Edith. The superior listened with calm attention; but it was evident that the Baron de Boteler was not one with whom he would feel disposed to interfere.

"My son," said he, when Father John had ceased, "it seems an oppressive case according to your statement; but you are well aware how much our holy church has been shorn of her power, and how eager the monarch, and nobles, and even the people, are to abridge our privileges." The abbot paused, and again resumed: "I fear, my son, our remonstrance would be disregarded by this young lord, and only cause a farther indignity to be cast on our holy church."

"My lord," answered the monk, "I would not urge you; but I so well know the woman's piety and innocence, that it would be to participate in the guilt of her accusers not to implore your lordship's interposition." The abbot took up a pen that lay before him, and was about to write; but he laid it down again, saying—

"Would it not be better to await her trial, and should she be found guilty, petition the king for a pardon?"

"My lord, she may not survive the imprisonment."

"Well, my son, her earthly troubles would then cease without our interference — the innocent are better away from this sinful world, where oppression rules with a strong hand."

"True," answered the monk, with increased tenacity; "but will the Lord of life hold us guiltless, if we heed not the cry of the innocent?"

The abbot looked frowningly on Father John, as he again took up the pen. "My son, you are not serving the church by such pertinacity. This application will only expose one of its dignitaries to humiliation; however, I shall write to the baron, since you desire it, and demand that the accused be transferred to the tribunal over which we preside."

The abbot waved his hand impatiently, and the monk withdrew.

The hall of Sudley had been hastily hung with black cloth, and the walls of the adjoining apartment exhibited a similar covering; and here, surrounded by a number of lighted tapers, lay the corpse of the little Roland. At the foot of the bier knelt a monk in silent prayer, at the side sat the Lady Isabella, absorbed in a grief which none but a mother can feel, and regardless of her husband's entreaties to withdraw."

"Oh no, not yet," she said, "I cannot yet leave my babe. It was but yesterday my heart bounded at the thought of caressing my lovely boy; and to-day — but this witch — this murderess!" she continued, turning round, and elevating her voice; "what of her? Does she confess her guilt?"

"No," replied Boteler; "and she persists that the potion, if rightly administered, would rather have benefited than harmed our Roland."

"Heed her not — she is as artful as vile — they are an evil brood altogether. Know you, De Boteler," she added quickly, "whether the young woman participated in the deed of darkness?"

"Nothing has appeared against her," replied the baron.

At this instant an attendant entered, and delivered a letter to her lord, from the abbot of Winchcombe, adding that two messengers were waiting in the hall.

The baron untied the silken cord that confined the parchment, and having hastily perused it, handed it to the Lady Isabella.

"De Boteler," said the lady, rising from her seat when her eyes had run over the writing, "this woman shall *not* escape justice. Go, my lord — remember your murdered child, and compromise not with those who would screen the guilty from punishment."

De Boteler moved from the illuminated bier, and entered the hall with a haughty step; and as his eye fell on Father John, the frown on his brow increased. He did not, however, appear to heed him, but, turning to the abbot's messenger, said,

"Monk! — I have read my lord abbot's letter, and it would seem that he ought to have known better than interfere in such a matter. My child has been poisoned — the evidence is clear and convincing — why, therefore, does he make such a demand?"

"My lord baron," replied the messenger, "the verdict states that a charmed potion has been administered to the young lord. This accusation precedes the charge of poisoning: therefore, the spiritual court must first decide on the fact of witchcraft, before the temporal tribunal can take cognizance of the other offence."

"And does your abbot think, when the hope of my house has perished, whether by false incantations or deadly poison, that —— Depart, monk!" continued he, in a choked voice, "and tell your abbot that this woman's guilt or innocence shall be tried by the laws of the realm."

"Then, my lord, you will not comply with the mandate of my superior?"

"Mandate!" repeated the enraged baron — "ha! ha! Mandate, forsooth! From whom — from an impotent priest of a waning church — and which church, with the blessing of God and our good king, will soon cease to arrogate to itself the encroachment which it has made upon the royal prerogative."

"Note down this speech, Father John," said the messenger. "And now, Baron of Sudley, I formally demand, in the name of Simon Sudbury,

the mitred abbot of Winchcombe, the body of Edith Holgrave, whom you impiously and rebelliously detain against the privileges of holy church: and —"

"Hold, minion! Cease! or you will tempt me to hang the culprit from the battlements of yonder keep, if it were only to afford news to your master. Presumptuous shaveling! know you not that the royal franchise granted to this manor empowers me to sit in judgment on my vassals, and that it is only as an act of grace that she is handed over to a jury of the county."

"The 'act of grace,' my lord," said Father John, looking sternly at De Boteler, "only shows that your mind is not so fully convinced of this woman's guilt as to imbolden you to take the charge of her death entirely upon your own conscience —"

"Base-born knave! do you think you wear a coat of mail in that hypocritical garb. Ho! Calverley, let the woman be instantly transmitted to Gloucester castle, that my lord abbot may thunder his anathemas against its walls, if it so please him; and then bear this meddling monk to the tumbrel, that he may learn better than to beard his natural lord under his own roof."

"Not so, my lord," said Isabella, at this moment entering the hall, attracted by the loud tones of De Boteler's voice; "not so, my lord; the tumbrel is not for such as he, however rude his bearing. My Lord de Boteler," turning to the monk, "has doubtless given you an answer — retire, and do not farther provoke his wrath."

"Lady," returned Father John, with dignity, "I retire at your bidding, but not through fear of the Baron de Boteler. Let him, if he will, insult and expose an anointed priest — but wo to him if he does! The blight has already fallen on the blossom — beware of the tree!"

The baroness looked rebuked; and before De Boteler could reply, the two monks left the hall.

"Did I not anticipate this result?" said the abbot, looking sternly at the mortified monk, as the messenger detailed the interview with the baron.

Father John bowed.

"*Your* importunity," continued the abbot, has cast this indignity on holy church, and on me its minister; but nevertheless, this lord, powerful though he be, must be taught obedience to that power he has contemned."

"My lord," replied the monk, encouraged by the abbot's energy, "our holy church, thank heaven, is not without *one* able and zealous advocate. A timorous attitude at this moment would only give fresh vigour to those who seek to abridge its power."

"Aye, my son, there has been timidity enough in those prelates, who tamely acquiesced in the late enactment against the clergy; and, alas! how often since have the servants of God been dragged from the altar and imprisoned like felons, merely to gratify the haughty barons in their desire to humble our holy religion! The king, too, is a masked enemy, and countenances the impious attempts to abridge our rights."

"And yet, my lord," returned John, "the church is the natural bulwark of royalty: by humbling it, he paralyzes a power the most zealous, and the best calculated to maintain the divine right of kings."

"It is, indeed, the stay and hope of monarchy," replied Sudbury; "but kings are men, and fallible. This woman's case will, nevertheless, demonstrate whether farther encroachments will be submitted to by the prelates without a struggle. I shall write letters to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Abbot of Westminster, and you, my son, shall bear them to London. Retire for the present, and prepare for your journey."

The abbot was as good as his word, and presently the fate of the obscure Edith Holgrave became a question which kindled the fires of party zeal in

half the noble breasts in the kingdom. It is not to the purpose of our story to describe the intrigues which, at this period, tore asunder the court of Edward. Suffice it to say, that after many stormy discussions in the cabinet, at which the abbot's first messenger, father John, and De Boteler himself, were interrogated — the church triumphed; the Baron of Sudley was condemned to offer an expiatory gift, and a writ was issued to prohibit the court of assize from trying the prisoner.

On the day the prohibitory writ left London, a small iron box, with a superscription, addressed to Thomas Calverley, was left by a stranger at Sudley Castle, and immediately after, by another messenger, a packet, in which, within many envelopes, a key was concealed. Calverley, naturally concluding that this key belonged to the box he had just received, with a variety of perplexing conjectures, unlocked it, and beheld the crimson damask dress of a pursuivant, on which the royal arms were embroidered in gold, and beneath the dress a purse of gold coin and a scroll of parchment, on which the following was written, evidently in a disguised hand: —

"A chancery messenger will leave London on the morning you receive this: he is the bearer of a writ to prohibit the court of assize at Gloucester from trying Edith Holgrave. — Surely justice should not be thus defeated. The messenger will rest for some time to-morrow evening at Northleach. — Could not the dress that accompanies this enable you to demand the writ from the messenger in the king's name. Remember, however, the writ must not reach Gloucester."

Calverley started at the boldness of the proposition, and resolved, much as he desired that Edith should suffer, not to engage in so daring an act. But in a few minutes, as his mind became more familiarized with the idea, much of the supposed danger of the undertaking disappeared. He might disguise his countenance so, that, aided by the dress, detection would be almost impossible; and even if detected, the letter, which, despite every effort at concealment, bore evidence of the Lady Isabella's handwriting, would compel her to exert all her influence in his favour. Nevertheless, Calverley, possessing less physical than moral courage, could not bring himself to look with total indifference upon even the possibility of personal danger, and he determined, therefore, to associate with him in the adventure the bold and reckless Byles.

Calverley would have willingly risked every thing *but* his personal safety to be revenged of her who strove to attach to him the suspicion of crime; and even when mounted on his steed, with a large dark cloak thrown over him to conceal the material of his dress, lest its singularity should attract observation, he could not help feeling a slight inward trepidation.

As they proceeded, the heath gradually assumed the appearance of a scanty wood, the trees became more numerous, the thickets of greater extent, and the animal on which Calverley rode was frequently impeded by the withering stumps of trees that had been carelessly felled. He alighted just at the point where an abrupt opening between the clustering thickets led by a circuitous path of not more than a hundred yards to the high road to Gloucester.

Here Calverley's quick ear caught the sound of the tramping of a horse — his heart beat quick — it might be a traveller journeying to Gloucester, but it was more probable that it was the messenger. He threw the bridle of his horse over the branch of a tree, sprang to the end of the path, and, concealing himself behind the underwood, discovered in a moment, by the dark medley hue of the rider's dress, that it was the man he expected. He hurried back, and, mounting his steed, waited till the echo of the horse's hoofs could no longer be distinguished; and then, giving the impulse to his own spirited animal, he was the next moment bounding at full speed after the messenger, followed at a distance by his accomplice.

Calverley was a good horseman, and it was but a short space ere he was within a few yards of the messenger, and shouting to him to halt. The man stopped, and, turning in his saddle, surveyed with some surprise (which could be seen even in the duskiness of twilight) the bright colours that distinguished the garb of a pursuivant.

"What! for Gloucester, friend? You must have been hard upon my heels the whole way, for ——"

"No," interrupted Calverley, in an assumed gruffness of tone, and with something more than his usual authoritativeness, "my journey is ended now. The king has recalled that writ of prohibition you were to deliver to the judge. You are to return the writ to me, and proceed with your other despatches."

The messenger had heard — for state secrets will sometimes transpire — that the chancellor had a struggle to obtain the writ; and this knowledge, though it made him the more readily credit Calverley's assertion, yet vexed him that his master should be foiled. Looking, therefore, with a surly scrutiny at the steward —

"The writ," said he, "was given to me by my lord archbishop; and how do I know that I should be right in surrendering it to a stranger? Have you any order from his grace?"

"Order from his grace," repeated Calverley, sarcastically: "Do you not know, my good friend, that *your* master is in disgrace with *mine*, and that the eloquent William of Wykeham will, ere many days pass, be high chancellor of England. Come, come, give me the writ, and do n't lose time. I must not stir from my saddle this night, unless to change horses, till I reach Westminster."

The news of Islip's dismissal confounded the messenger. This new pursuivant might be in the interest of William of Wykeham, and it would be ill policy to make an enemy where every good office might be wanting to preserve him his situation. At all events, there was little use in contending: he accordingly unlocked his bag, and Calverley, with a thrill of pleasure, felt the writ within his grasp.

A hasty salutation passed, and the horsemen rode off in opposite directions. Calverley then, sending his associate home, spurred on to Gloucester.

The steward's first care was to put up his horse at an inn a little within the north-gate of Gloucester; and then, proceeding on to where the four streets, leading from the four gates of the city, form a cross, he went down Westgate-street, and, passing the beautiful cathedral, presently reached the Severn. The evening was dark, and, looking cautiously round, he dropped the damask dress, — and, as he thought, the prohibitory writ, — in the oblivious waters.

CHAPTER V.

The steward, after thus relieving his mind from all anxiety respecting the dress, proceeded to the sign of the Mitre in Silver Girdle-street, a well-known resort for certain useful adjuncts to the courts of law.

Calverley entered the Mitre, and, after calling for some wine, was shown into a little private room by the host. A few minutes after, the door opened, and a man entered and took his seat at the end of the table at which Calverley was sitting. The individual who thus invaded the privacy of the steward was a man not much above the middle height. His face had once been comely, but a close intimacy with the bottle had given to his countenance a bloated and somewhat revolting expression. The latter peculi-

arity, however, was only to be detected by the few who read the heart in the "human face divine;" and even these might be deceived into a prepossession favourable to the man; for his large full blue eyes beamed with much apparent benevolence, and his nose, though clothed in a fiery mantle, and tipped with two large carbuncles, was not a nose Lavater himself could with conscience have objected to. Large black whiskers, and thick bushy hair, with a beard of the same hue, had given him the characteristic *soubriquet* of Black Jack. On the whole, his appearance and deportment were those of a respectable burgher of the period. This man was not a stranger to Calverley, and Black Jack was, by some chance, still better acquainted with the person and character of the steward. He had heard every particular relative to the child's death, and had consequently divined the motive of the steward's visit to the Mitre, and, as he now and then cast a keen glance at Calverley, he might be likened to the author of evil contemplating a man about to engage in some heinous offence, the commission of which would connect them in still closer affinity.

A flagon of ale soon followed Black Jack, in which he drank Calverley's health with the familiarity of an old acquaintance, though this was the first time he had interchanged courtesies with the steward, who returned the compliment coldly, though not in that repulsive tone which forbids farther intimacy.

A pause of a few minutes ensued, and though each was anxious to introduce some allusion to the intended trial, yet both hesitated to begin;—Calverley, from a prudential fear of committing himself, and Black Jack from an apprehension of hazarding a chance of employment by too ready a proffer of his services.

The latter became tired first of his reserve, and perceiving that Calverley, like a spirit, would only speak when spoken to, resolved, with characteristic modesty, to plunge *in medias res*.

"Master," said he, "you are here, no doubt, on the business of the witch? For my part, I hold such creatures in religious abhorrence. That's neither here nor there, however—can I do any thing to serve you?—That is the short of the matter."

"Master Oakley," replied the steward, with a grim smile which told he knew his man, "you have correctly surmised the business that brings Lord de Boteler's steward to the Mitre—you know the particulars of the affair?"

"I do."

"Well," resumed Calverley, "the evidence is not so good as I could wish. A country jury might acquit her."

"Aye, aye, I see—it shall be done—she returns no more to Winchcombe——"

"But, you know," interrupted Calverley, quickly, "that she deserves death for the death she has inflicted."

"That's neither here nor there: I never trouble myself about such matters—I am no schoolman—the judge will see to that; and, if she *is* to be disposed of, it matters little whether by substantial freeholders or myself and my eleven."

The price was now agreed upon, and the purse that accompanied the pursuivant's dress was more than sufficient to satisfy the exorbitant demand of the foreman.

"I may depend upon you, Master Oakley?" said the suspicious steward, pausing at the door.

"By the green wax! may you—Black Jack is a man of honour. As sure as Judge Skipwith sits on the bench, so sure shall I and my men sit in the jury-box. He is a carle to doubt me," said Black Jack, as Calverley shut the door—"Has he emptied his flask? No—by the green wax!

he seems to think as little of his wine as his money;" and, after emptying the cup, left the Mitre.

The next night, being the eve of the trial, Black Jack entered the Mitre, and, ordering a fresh gallon of stout ale, proceeded on to the little room where he had seen Calverley, and in which, around an oak table which nearly filled the area of the apartment, ten men were seated. A measure stood before them, which they had just emptied, and were murmuring at their leader's close hand that restricted them to a single gallon.

This room was sacred to the confraternity: here they held their meetings — here they were instructed by their chief in the parts allotted to them in the shifting drama of crime. And here, under lock and key, pledged to the host, were the garments in which they appeared in the jury-box as respectable yeomen. Black Jack cast a rapid glance round the table as he entered, and perceiving one seat still unoccupied, he frowned with impatience.

"What!" exclaimed he, "has Beauchamp broke cover on such a night as this? Speak!"

"He has not been seen to-day," said a sleek-faced old man who sat opposite.

"Not seen to-day — hah! — Has the fellow shrived himself? or is he laid up after last night's tipple?"

"Aye, master," said another, "he is laid up, but I fear he has forgot the shriving. However, he will never again say guilty or not guilty in a jury-box, or kiss the book in justification of bail!"

"Saints protect us! not dead!" exclaimed the foreman. The man nodded assent: — "Then, by the green wax! we shall lose two of the best jobs we have had these three years. Come, come, Harvey, you only banter — the knave is lazy."

"By Saint Luke, poor Beauchamp is as dead as he need be, master," answered Harvey. "I saw him this morning, and his face was as black as — your own this moment!"

Black Jack seized the empty flagon, and was about to hurl it at the head of the facetious understrapper, when his arm was arrested by the old man who had first spoken.

"Hold, master," said he, "you will find it difficult to fill Beauchamp's seat, without making another vacancy."

The irritated foreman replaced the flagon on the table, but swore he would have no more jesting. "Poor Beauchamp," continued he, "is gone — the cleverest man among ye — no whining — no qualms about him, when a shilling was to be earned by swallowing a pill or sending a traveller before his time to the other world! How unlucky, he had not postponed his flight for another week; this witch would then be disposed of, and the sheriff satisfied. Poor Jack, poor Jack! where shall we find a substitute — but a substitute must be had, if it were he of the cloven foot himself! This news has made me thirsty," continued he, raising the pitcher to his lips, "but remember, no jesting."

Black Jack then buried his face in his hands for some minutes, meditating how he should supply the place of the defunct Beauchamp. In vain he racked his brain; he knew many who would accept the offer, but they were untried.

"This assize will be a hungry feast," he at length exclaimed; "we may bid adieu to the Mitre — I must refund the money I received on account of the witch, and the old Ferrett, too, must have his earnest money — what is to be done? Do ye know any one who could be trusted to stand in the shoes of Beauchamp?"

"We leave the filling up of vacancies to our foreman," returned they.

"Aye, aye! ye shrink from responsibility, and throw all on my shoulders,"

returned Black Jack, snatching up a renewed flagon, and drinking freely, as if to forget his perplexity in the intoxicating influence of the beverage. "Aye, aye! but, knaves, the money ye have received must be refunded, and ye may go starve, or rob, for aught I care."

"But, master, where, think you, shall it be found?" answered Harvey: "you might as well dissolve this society, as think of making us refund what is already scattered in every corner of Gloucester."

"Dissolve this society! impudent knave!" retorted the foreman: "I should like to know what new profession ye are fit for: how could ye live but for me? Think ye the sheriff would expose himself by communing with such untaught knaves? No more sulkiness, or I take you at your word. Give me another swoop of the goblet." It was handed to him, and, after ingulphing a long draught, he slowly drew breath--his eyes were observed to brighten with some new idea, and, in a moment after, he started from his seat, exclaiming, in a burst of joy,

"By the green wax! I've got him!—I've got him at last—I shall be back in half an hour!" He then darted out of the room, leaving his confederates conjecturing who the welcome auxiliary was to be that should fill the void at the oak table.

It was a full hour, however, before the indefatigable purveyor reappeared, accompanied by a dark sun-burnt looking young man, attired in the garb of a dusty-foot or foreign pedler. He appeared to be one of an inferior description of galleymen, or Genoese merchants, (as described by Stowe,) who traded to England, and trafficked with a coin called galley half-pence. They chiefly resided at a wharf named Galley Key, in Thames-street, and travelled as itinerant hawkers through the kingdom. His countenance, however, was not that of a Genoese—it had more the appearance of the English cast of features, though, judging from its dark and seaman-like hue, it was many years since he left his native country.

"Come, my friends, be not cast down! Black Jack and his eleven are themselves again!" cried the foreman, exultingly. "Here, Harvey, fill up a goblet for our new friend. Poor Jack's chair is occupied during the assize; see ye make much of his successor."

"Is he not engaged as a fixture?" asked Harvey, with some disappointment.

"No, no, Harvey; his feet are not for the narrow limits of Gloucester. He is a bird of passage, that makes its periodical migrations, and cannot be called peculiar to one country more than another: in short, he is a kind of privileged outlaw."

"Aye, aye, master; he breathes the various atmospheres of Christendom, and yet I'll swear he is a dog of a heathen, notwithstanding, ha! ha! ha! No offence," he added, addressing the galleyman; "jests are privileged in this free society."

"Christian men," returned the dusty-foot, good-humouredly, "would be suffocated in this poisonous air you breathe, and would die, like the heathen, without benefit of clergy."

"That's right, galleyman—you have hit him there. That knave's skull is a perfect book of entries, and can furnish precedents for every crime, from high treason to a simple assault. He'll crack jokes to the last. But, by the green wax! we must think of a proper description for him, to insert in the pannel. Let me see—aye, I have it. A man from Worcester has lately settled at Deerhurst; his name is James Mills, a substantial man. Here, Harvey," as he took from his pocket a slip of parchment, and wrote the necessary particulars, and sealed it carefully, "take this to Lawyer Manlove. We must now see whether Beauchamp's clothes will suit our friend here."

The host was called in, and unlocked a drawer in which they were depos-

ited. The galleyman, with visible reluctance, arrayed himself in the garments, and he was observed to shudder more than once during the investiture of the dead man's apparel.

"He 's better have some warm ale," said the old man we have before mentioned, with a sneer — "these garments seem to weigh down the spirit of our new guest."

"Aye, and well they may," returned the foreman: "it is not every man who could feel at ease in the clothes of a —— Hang it! my brain wanders — fill up a fresh bumper." Another and another followed, and dispelled all symptoms of compunction in the heart of the foreman and his companions; till even their new guest, so powerful is example, was almost persuaded that conscience was a bugbear. It was late ere they separated, to reassemble the next morning for more important transactions.

The next morning, Sir Robert Skipwith, Chief Justice of England, entered the court, and took his seat on the bench. After the names of the jury were called over, Black Jack, and the eleven, respectively answered, and entered the box, clad in respectable yeoman's or burgher's apparel, and their countenances wearing a gravity suitable to the occasion. They looked like a jury to whom either a guilty or innocent prisoner would unhesitatingly have committed his cause. When the prisoner was asked whether she had any objection to the jury, and told, that if so, she might challenge the number prescribed by law, the attention of the spectators was naturally fixed on Edith, who replied in the negative; and her face and figure were certainly ill calculated to make a favourable impression.

Her face was shrivelled and yellow, and the dark full eyes that now, as it were, stood forth from the sunken cheeks, looked with a strange brightness on the scene, and seemed well adapted to stamp the character of witch on so withered a form. And perhaps there were few of those entirely uninterested in the matter who now gazed upon her, who would not have sworn that she merited the stake.

Calverley had beheld the group as they entered the court, and instantly averting his eyes from the mother and son, he fixed them upon Margaret.

The stranger's eyes that now gazed upon her, beheld her as a lovely interesting creature; but Calverley, who had not seen her since the day that Edith was arrested, saw that the rich glow which used to mantle on her cheek had given place to a sickly paleness. It is true, that as she entered the court, there was a faint tinge upon that cheek, but it fled with the momentary embarrassment which had caused it. That full dimpled cheek itself was now sunken, the lips were colourless, and the eyes dim.

A momentary thought of "Oh, had she been mine would she have looked thus?" and an execration against Holgrave, told that the demon had not wholly possessed her quondam lover; but the next moment, as Holgrave, after looking round the assembly, caught the eye of his enemy, the solitary feeling of humanity died away, and Calverley turned from the fierce glance of the yeoman with all the malignity of his heart newly arrayed against him.

After the usual preliminaries, the indictment was read, and Edith called upon to plead.

"Not guilty, my lord," she replied, in a voice so loud and distinct, that the surprised hearers wondered so feeble a creature could possess such a voice.

The evidence was then entered into, and Mary Byles was called into the witness box. A rod was handed to her to identify the prisoner, and she then, without venturing to encounter the look of her whose life she was about to swear away, deposed to having received the liquid which had occasioned the child's death, from Edith; and to certain mysterious words and strange gestures used by the prisoner on delivering the phial.

When she had concluded, Edith questioned her, if she had not, at the

time of giving her the medicine, warned her of its dangerous strength, and strictly enjoined her not to administer more than ten drops; but Mary, prepared for such questions, positively denied the fact, alleging, that Edith had merely desired her, when she saw the child looking pale, to give it the contents of the phial.

"My lord," said Edith, in her defence, "this woman has sworn falsely. The medicine I gave was a sovereign remedy, if given as I ordered. Ten drops would have saved the child's life; but the contents of the phial destroyed it. The words I uttered were prayers for the life of the child. My children, and all who know me, can bear witness that I have a custom of asking *His* blessing upon all I take in hand. I raised my eyes towards heaven, and muttered words; but, my lord, they were words of prayer — and I looked up as I prayed, to the footstool of the Lord. But it is in vain to contend: the malice of the wicked will triumph, and Edith Holgrave, who even in thought never harmed one of God's creatures, must be sacrificed to cover the guilt, or hide the thoughtlessness of another."

"Prisoner," said the judge, "have you any witnesses to call on your behalf?"

"My lord, my daughter was present when I gave the medicine; but I seek no defence."

Margaret faintly answered to her name, and entered the box. She delivered her evidence with so much simplicity and meekness, that it seemed to carry conviction to the majority of the audience. In vain did the wily lawyer for the prosecution endeavour to weaken her testimony on her cross-examination. Truth, from the lips of innocence, triumphed over the practised advocate, and Edith would probably have had a favourable verdict from an impartial jury and an upright judge; but from the present, she was to receive no mercy. The jury were bribed to convict, and the judge influenced to condemn. Skipwith now proceeded to sum up the evidence, artfully endeavouring to impress the jury with the strongest belief in the statement of the nurse, "who," he said, "could have no motive but that of bringing to justice the destroyer of her lord's heir;" and, on the other hand, insinuating, as he commented on Margaret's evidence, that her near relationship to the prisoner must be cautiously weighed: but ere he had concluded, a sound at the entrance of the court attracted his attention. Horton, the tall and dignified abbot of Gloucester, with his mitre on his head, his staff in his hand, and clad in the robes of his order, (that of Saint Benedict,) entered the hall. His crosierer preceded him, bearing a massive golden cross; on his right and left hand walked two monks, and several others (among whom was father John) closed the procession.

A passage was instinctively made for the dignitary, who walked majestically on till he stood before the bench, and then pausing, he said in a clear firm voice —

"My lord judge, I demand, in the name of holy church, and in the name of the gracious king Edward, that you deliver up this woman, Edith Holgrave, to me. A writ from the chancery, signed by the royal hand, commanding her delivery to the ecclesiastical power, has been sent down, and how is it that thus, in opposition to the church's prerogative, and the royal will, I see the woman standing a criminal at this bar?"

"My lord abbot," replied Skipwith, bowing to the priest, "the writ you speak of has been recalled; a chancery messenger was here not three days since."

"Did he not deliver to you the writ?" interrupted the impetuous Horton.

"Pardon me, my lord abbot, but I believe I have already said that the writ has been recalled. The messenger, indeed, came with a prohibitory writ respecting the prisoner; but when within a few miles of Gloucester,

a royal pursuivant, expressly from the king, overtook him, and to *him* the writ was delivered."

The calm dignity of Skipwith's reply produced some effect upon the abbot; for in a tone less abrupt than before, he replied —

"My lord judge, that writ of prohibition has not been recalled. This monk, pointing with his staff towards Father John, left London two days subsequent to the messenger, and there was not then the least intimation of the royal mind being changed."

"My lord," returned Skipwith, with a slight smile, "know you so little of Edward as to imagine that no change could pass in his royal mind without the monk being privy to it?"

"But," returned Horton, losing his temper at such skepticism, "this monk was lodged in the palace of his Grace of Canterbury; and, at the very hour of his departure, his grace spoke as if the surrender of the woman were already accomplished. Would he have spoken thus had the writ been recalled?"

"Probably his grace was ignorant that the prohibition was recalled?"

"Simon Islip ignorant! However, you admit that a writ was sent?"

Skipwith bowed.

"Then as readily may you believe that it has been kept back through fraud and malice, and that you have brought this woman before a tribunal incompetent to judge of matters relating to witchcraft. But now, my lord judge, repair the wrong done, by delivering her up to a dignitary of holy church."

"Abbot Horton," returned the chief justice, gravely, "the poisoning has been satisfactorily proved, and a strong presumption of witchcraft created in my mind, from the mysterious behaviour of the prisoner when the drug was delivered to the nurse. But even were the witchcraft a more prominent feature of the case, I do consider the king's courts are empowered by the late act, which provides that all felonies may be heard and determined by the king's justices, to take cognizance of this crime. Witchcraft is a *felony* at common law."

"That act," replied Horton, hastily, "relates to local magistrates."

"And are the judges of the land to be less privileged than petty magistrates?"

"I came not to argue points of law, my lord judge," returned Horton, vehemently, "but to demand a right. Will you surrender this woman?"

"My lord abbot," replied Skipwith, "the indictment has been read — the evidence has been gone through with the customary attention to justice — I have only to finish my charge to the jury, and it will remain with them to pronounce her guilt or innocence."

The cool and determined tone of the chief justice exasperated the abbot; and, fixing a stern glance upon the judge,

"It is not justice, Sir Robert Skipwith," said he, "to wrest the unfortunate from the merciful interposition of the church — it is not justice, but a high contempt of supreme law, to set at naught the merciful commands of the sovereign — it is not justice to usurp a power that belongs not to you, in order to crush a friendless woman — it is not justice to set the opinions of an individual against the sacred authority of God's church. The church alone, I repeat, has power to judge in cases where the soul is concerned, as in heresy and witchcraft."

His voice had risen with each pause in the period, till the last sentence was uttered in a tone that reverberated through the court. An instant of hushed silence followed, and then, to the surprise of all, Edith raised herself up as erect as her feebleness would allow, and resting one hand upon the bar, she raised the other towards the abbot, and said,

"My lord abbot, my soul is guiltless of any crime which the church in its

mercy absolves, or the law in its justice punishes — I am neither murderess nor witch. As much would my soul abhor communing with the spirits of darkness, as my heart would shrink from destroying the innocent ——"

"Peace, woman!" interrupted the abbot: "peace — presume not to interfere." And then, turning to the judge, he added, "Sir Robert Skipwith, I again demand of you the custody of this woman."

"Abbot Horton, you have had my answer," returned Skipwith, in a tone of perhaps still more vehemence than the abbot's.

The face of the provoked dignitary glowed, his eyes flashed, and he looked, in his glittering mitre and splendid vestments, like a being more than human, as, turning from the judge, and raising the staff he held in his right hand, he pointed it towards the assembled crowd, and said,

"I call upon this assembly to witness, that I have, in the name of holy church, demanded the accused — that I have demanded her in the name of the king, by virtue of his royal writ of prohibition, which has been basely purloined — and that, unmindful of that divine power, and despite the king's express command, Judge Skipwith, the servant of the one, and an unworthy son of the other, has contemptuously refused this demand. But," he added fiercely, as he again turned towards Skipwith, and shook his staff at the no less irritated judge, "the royal ermine is disgraced on the shoulders of such as thee — beware that it is not speedily transferred to one more worthy to bear it. I say again, beware!"

The abbot then lowered his staff, the crosierer once more preceded him, and, followed by the monks, he proudly walked forth from the court, the people, as he passed, forming a passage, and humbly bending forward to receive his blessing.

The eyes of the spectators, which, during this strange scene — this trial of strength between the lay and ecclesiastical dignitaries — had alternately wandered to each, were now anxiously directed to Skipwith alone, who hastily concluded his charge, and turned to the jury, as the arbiters of Edith's fate. Calverley, among the rest, cast a look at the jury-box: and Black Jack, turning to his companions, proceeded, in the usual manner, to ask their opinions. Ten, after a minute's consultation, decided that the prisoner was guilty; but the eleventh, the stranger, who had endeavoured to screen himself from observation, and whose changing aspect and agitation had betrayed the deep interest he took in the trial, positively refused to return a verdict of guilty. Black Jack cast an intimidating glance on the non-content, but he heeded him not; and as the jury-box, exposed to the eyes of the whole court, was not a place for farther debate, the foreman declared, that as one of his brethren would not agree with the rest, they must withdraw.

When the jurors were closeted in their private room, Black Jack asked the galleyman the reasons of his refusal.

"There was no evidence toprove her guilt — I could not, on my conscience, say she was a murderess," returned the stranger, firmly.

"Conscience!" replied the foreman: "whoever heard a galleyman talk of conscience before? By the green wax! you forgot you had a conscience the day I first saw you. You recollect the court of *pié-poudré*, my conscientious dusty-foot, do n't you?"

"Master Oakley, the thing is quite different," replied the galleyman. "To cheat a fool of a piece of coin, is what neither you nor I would think much about: but to rob a poor, helpless old woman of her life — to hang her up at a gallows, and then to bury her like a heathen, where four roads meet — no, no; that must not be."

The foreman's face assumed a deeper hue than usual; he looked fiercely at the galleyman, but there was a determination in his weather-beaten face that made him pause ere he spoke. "Galleyman," he at length said, "you

knew the business before you came: if you be so fond of saving old witches' lives, why did n't you say so, that I might not now be in this dilemma?"

"You told me," returned the other, "she was a witch, and that she had killed the child. Now I know she is not a witch; and neither you nor any one here believes a word of the poisoning."

"You heard what the judge said," returned Oakley: "but, however, you are a sworn juryman, and here you must remain till you've brought your mind to bear upon the point."

"Aye, aye," said Harvey; "four-and-twenty hours in this cold room, without meat or drink, will bring him to reason, I'll warrant you."

"Four-and-twenty days," said the stranger, in a voice so loud that the eleven started, "if I could live so long, shall never make me a murderer! No, no; you may go tell of the lushburgs, and hang me for a coiner," he said, starting suddenly up, and looking proudly at Black Jack; "but, by the holy well! you shall not make me hang the woman who nursed my mother, and prayed by her when every body else was afraid to go near her. She a witch!" he continued, with a bitter laugh — "by the holy well! if she had been so, she would n't have given the poor orphan a groat and a piece of bread, to come back, after ten years, to hang her at last! But this comes of carding and dicing, and sabbath-breaking. The fiend drives one on and on, till at last a man thinks nothing of murder itself."

"By the green wax! all this ranting is unprofitable. No one could call Black Jack an informer when his word was pledged," interrupted the foreman. "The affair of the lushburgs has passed away — it shall rest so, though I might pocket some good pieces by a breach of faith, which, after this obstinacy, would not detract much from my honour. This woman is nothing to us, and surely the judge, who is paid to hang criminals, knows more about the guilt or innocence than I or my eleven. He told us, as plainly as man could speak, that she deserved to be hanged. But, remember, galleyman, neither you nor I break our fast till our opinions are unanimous?" Black Jack winked at his companions, but the action was unnoticed by the stranger.

During this mock deliberation, Edith remained at the bar; but when the hour had passed away, and no probability appeared of an immediate verdict, she was directed by the judge to be taken back to prison until the jury had agreed.

It was nearly noon the next day, when the under-sheriff entered the room to ask if their opinions were yet unanimous. The galleyman still refused.

"My friend," said Manlove; "it matters little now whether you agree with your brethren or not, the woman is at this moment dying! The verdict is, therefore, of little moment to her — she can never be brought into court to receive judgment — guilty or innocent, the law can have nothing to do with her; but I would advise you to look to yourself, you will not be released till she is dead. Your brethren are accustomed to fasting, but you look ready to drop from your seat: and, if the woman linger many hours, you will certainly be guilty of *felo de se*."

With a little more persuasion and the most solemn assurances that the verdict could not possibly affect Edith, the galleyman at length reluctantly consented to agree with the eleven, and the foreman gave in the verdict of guilty.

"Let the prisoner be brought up for judgment?" said Skipwith to the officer in waiting.

"It is impossible, my lord — the woman is dying!"

"Dying!" repeated the judge; "yesterday she spoke with the voice of one who had years to live. Perhaps she wishes to defer the sentence, which she well merits, by feigning illness. If she will not rise from her bed, bring her into court upon it!"

The officer departed, and shortly afterwards reappeared, and informed the judge that the Abbot of Gloucester was standing beside the prisoner, and threatened to excommunicate the first who presumed to remove her.

"Does he? Does he dare think to evade justice thus — this subterfuge shall not avail!" exclaimed Skipwith with vehemence, and then musing an instant, he continued: "No, this subterfuge shall not avail — I will constitute the cell of the criminal a court of justice for this occasion. Officers of the court, proceed. I go to pronounce a just sentence:" and then, rising from the bench, and preceded by his officers, he departed to adopt the unprecedented course of passing sentence in a prison.

When the door of the dungeon was thrown open, Skipwith started at the unexpected sight he beheld; but, instantly recollecting himself, he walked on, determined to persevere. Edith was lying on her back, upon the mattress, her eyes half opened, and the ghastly seal of death impressed on every feature. Margaret and her husband were kneeling on one side, and the Abbot Horton and Father John standing on the other. A lighted taper and a box of chrism, which the monk held in his hand, told that the last sacrament of the church had been administered — a sacrament that cannot be administered to a condemned criminal.

Holgrave suddenly rose from his knees and withdrew to the farthest corner of the cell. Margaret continued to kneel, and raised her burning eyes towards the judge with terrified astonishment.

The abbot turned pale with rage as he beheld the somewhat abashed Skipwith enter.

"What! impious man! Do you thirst so for innocent blood that you harass the last moments of the dying! Retire, or I curse thee — depart, ere I invoke Heaven's wrath on thine head!"

"Insolent priest!" returned Skipwith, in a suppressed tone, as his look wandered from the abbot to the distorted features of the departing, "I come, not as an individual to harass, but as a judge to fulfil the law."

He then put on the black cap, and slowly commenced the sentence. The life that seemed to have departed from the still and contracted form, rallied for a moment — the eyes unclosed and fixed on the appalled countenance of Skipwith; and, when the concluding invocation of mercy for the soul of the criminal fell tremulously from the lips of the judge, she, in a voice low but distinct, answered "Amen!" and then a slight tremor and a faint gasp released the soul of Edith.

"The Lord will have mercy on her, vindictive judge," said the abbot, "though you had none; but she is now beyond your malice, and the glorified spirit will accuse you of this when ——"

A wild shriek from Margaret, and a smothered groan from Holgrave, interrupted the abbot. The judge turned silently away, and left the dungeon; and, as there was now no prisoner to confine, the door was left open after him.

CHAPTER VI.

On the evening succeeding the day of Edith's decease, Black Jack's associates were, as usual, squandering away their ill-gotten money at the Mitre. A ribald song was just concluded, when a loud knock at the door caught the attention of the foreman: the door was opened, and the galley-man entered. His countenance looked pale and haggard, and without speaking, he threw himself in a chair.

"What ails you, man?" inquired Black Jack — "you look the worse for your long fast — here, drink," handing him a full pitcher.

"I want no drink," said the galleyman, impatiently, pushing away the vessel — "but stay, 't will do me no harm."

He then snatched the pitcher, and drank a full quart ere he removed it from his lips.

"Master Oakley," said he, "you played me false in this game. Do ye think if I had n't been fool enough to believe what you and that master sheriff told me, I would have given in till poor Edith Holgrave had slipped her cable. Did you not swear to me," added he fiercely, "that the law could not touch her?"

"True, O King; and though the judge did a queer thing in her case, yet the woman died like a Christian in her bed after all."

"Is she *buried* like a Christian?" passionately interrogated the stranger. "No," he continued, in a quieter tone, "she was buried last night in the high road without kyste or shroud, or prayer, just as one would throw a dead dog overboard: but there is no use talking now — this is not what I came for. I came to ask if ye will give me a hand to get her out again."

"To dig up the old witch out of the grave?" inquired the foreman, with a stare of astonishment. "To unearth a dead body? By the green wax! man, your long fast has touched your brain!"

"No," said the galleyman, gravely. "I am as sound and as sober as ever I was; and, mind you, (casting a quick glance round the table,) I do n't want any one to work for nothing — here, (he said, taking a small leathern purse from his pocket) is what will pay, and I shall be no niggard. You shall have money and drink too — speak! will you assist? There is no time to lose."

"What say you, brethren?" resumed the foreman, looking at the rest: "our friend served *us* — and besides, it is a pity to let good things go abegging."

The brethren felt no great appetite for a job so much out of their way — and sundry hems! and awkward gesticulations expressed their reluctance.

"Suppose we do assist," drawled out Harvey and three or four others; "who is to remove the body?" The galleyman hastily answered,

"Leave it to me — I fear not the dead — though if the old woman started from the grave, she could owe me no good will. Would you lend a hand if this Calverley should bear down upon us?"

"Aye, aye," said Harvey, with some show of courage; "we do n't mind, unless the odds are against us, and in that case, you know, we must retreat."

"What!" said Black Jack, laughing, "think you squire Calverley would busy himself about the dead! Come, come, tell out the silver, and replenish the flagon: we are yours for this adventure — and, by the green wax! a strange one it is."

The sum agreed upon was paid; the liquor furnished and freely circulated; and the galleyman, now relieved from a weight that had oppressed him, gradually became cheerful.

It was about midnight when the party set out, well armed and muffled in large cloaks, and in less than two hours arrived within view of Winchcombe. Here, without entering the town, they turned into a lane branching off to the left, that led to Hailes Abbey, and down this avenue the galleyman piloted his companions. The way was narrow — at least two only could ride abreast — with a hedge on each side, and here and there the picturesque branches of a well-grown elm, displaying at this season (in the daylight) the soft green of the budding leaves. They had proceeded in silence about half a mile, when the galleyman suddenly paused.

"Yonder," he said, pointing to the end of the lane, "where you see the moonlight full on the ground — must be the place — at least it cannot be far

off, for there the roads meet. There is the lane and the road straight ahead to Hailes — then away to the right takes you to Sudley Castle and the other end of Winchcombe; and the road this way, elevating his left hand, leads on to Bishop's Cleave."

"But you have brought nothing to put the body in?"

"I brought a winding-sheet," replied the stranger; and when the grave is dug, and the coast clear, I 'll wrap it round poor Edith, and lay her in my cloak — and ye will hold the corners."

"O yes," returned Black Jack; "we won't go from our promise. But where do you mean to take her?"

"To Hailes. — But when all is ready, I must go up the lane yonder," pointing to the right — "t' is but a step, and fetch Stephen Holgrave — and the poor fellow shall go with us to see his mother buried as she ought to be."

The party then dismounting, secured their horses to the hedge; and, concealing their faces by masks of parchment, smeared over with paint, proceeded to the end of the lane: but a sudden exclamation from the galleyman, who was a little in advance, arrested the steps of all.

The moon was standing round and bright in a sky gemmed with stars, and, as the rover had just said, her beams fell unshadowed upon the open space where the roads met; — and here, directly in the centre, two dark figures were revealed. One was kneeling, while the other stood erect, holding at arm's length a cross. The galleyman gasped for breath as he drew closer to his companions, who, concealed in the shade of the hedge, looked eagerly at the objects of their alarm.

"Are they spirits?" asked the stranger in a subdued and terrified tone.

"O yes, my brave heart!" said the foreman, with something of ridicule; "they are spirits, but spirits in the flesh — like good wine in stout bottles."

"Aye, aye," said Harvey, encouraged by the unembarrassed manner of his leader; "they are spirits, I 'll warrant, that can be laid by swords and staves instead of prayers!"

The galleyman breathed freer at this united testimony that he had nought to fear — for he feared none of this world; — and as he still gazed, almost entirely relieved from his superstitious dread, he observed the extended arm of the upright figure gradually fall to his side, as if his prayer or invocation had ended, and he stooped as if addressing his companion; but the latter still maintained his kneeling posture.

"It must be Stephen," said he, mentally; "he is mourning over his mother. Comrades," he said, turning to the others, "it is but the woman's son: at any rate there are but two. I 'll go and hail them; and if ye see me stop, ye can come forward with the shovels." The galleyman went forward; but the moment he left the shade, his figure caught the eyes of him who stood erect. He spoke to the other, who, instantly starting on his feet, prepared himself to meet the intruder. The stranger, nothing daunted, hurried on, and, in an instant, stood before those who, by the menacing attitude they assumed, evidently regarded him with no friendly feeling.

"It is no enemy, bearing down upon you, friends," said the galleyman, in that tone of confidence which seems neither to suspect or purpose ill. "Tell me, is either of you the son of her who — who lies here?"

"Why ask you?" replied the taller figure, in a deep commanding voice.

"I will not answer till I am answered: but this I may say, be ye who ye will, that there is not a man I would befriend sooner than Stephen Holgrave."

"If you are a friend, I will trust you; and if not, I do not fear you," said Holgrave, raising the brim of a slouched hat that had shadowed his face — "I am Stephen Holgrave."

"Then may luck attend you," answered the galleyman, grasping his hand; "I thought it was you, and I came, not alone, for I have helpmates yonder to — to — do, what I thought would be a good turn for you — to bury your mother."

"It is an act of charity, stranger, to bury the dead," said Father John courteously; "and you are calling down mercy upon your soul like that pious man of old ——"

"Aye, and I have need of mercy," returned the galleyman, "more need than he, whoever he was. But see, my mates are coming; — we must fall to work, for the night is wearing."

"But who may you be, stranger, who thus interest yourself for the injured?" asked the monk, "or why this disguise?"

"It is of no consequence who I am: and as to this mask, why! a man can work as well with it as without it."

The approach of Black Jack and three of the others (the fourth had been left with the horses) prevented any farther conversation; and, throwing aside their cloaks, the galleyman and the three jurors instantly commenced clearing the grave.

Holgrave drew the brim of his hat again over his face, and, folding his arms, looked silently on as the work proceeded.

"By the green wax!" said Black Jack, approaching at this instant, "as I stood yonder, reconnoitering the ground, a man showed his head behind that ruined wall!"

"'Tis the fiend Calverley, or one of his imps," exclaimed Holgrave, springing forward to the broken wall; but if any object had really presented itself, it had, in a singular manner, disappeared — for Holgrave, after a few minutes of anxious search, returned without having discovered the trace of a human being.

The body of Edith had been raised during his absence, and, with the winding-sheet wrapped around the clothes in which it had been laid in the earth, was just placed in the galleyman's cloak when Holgrave came up. An involuntary cry burst from the yeoman as he threw himself upon the ground beside the corpse, and, removing the cloth, passionately kissed the hands and the forehead.

"Stephen Holgrave," cried the monk, sternly, "where is thy fortitude? — you have broken your word. Has thy manhood left thee?"

"She was my mother!" said the mourner, rising.

When he had retired, the chasm was hastily filled up; and then Black Jack, the galleyman, and two other jurors, took each a corner of the cloak, and, preceded by the monk, reciting in a low voice the prayers for the dead, and followed by Holgrave and the remaining jurors, leading the horses, proceeded at a quick pace to the churchyard of Hailes Abbey.

In little more than half an hour, they arrived at the meadow in which stood the parish church and the abbey of Hailes. The church, a small, plain Gothic building, with a red tiled roof, stood in the centre of a burial-ground, of dimensions adapted to the paucity of inhabitants in the parish. A low stone wall enclosed it, and some old beech-trees threw their shadows upon the mounds and the grave-stones that marked where "the rude forefathers of the hamlet" slept.

Father John went forward, and pushing open a wooden gate, led the way to the osier-girt mound and head-stone over the grave of Holgrave's father. The body was deposited on the grass, and a space cleared of sufficient depth to receive it.

In the mean time, Holgrave had conducted those in charge of the horses to an old barn at a short distance, and then returned to the church-yard; and when the deceased was lowered into the grave, the yeoman knelt at the head, the galleyman and Harvey at each side, and Father John stand-

ing at the foot, pronounced, in a low but audible voice, the prayers usual on interment. The moonbeams fell on the church, so as to cast a far shadow upon the ground that lay towards the abbey; the foot of the grave was within the shadow, so that Father John's figure was little revealed; and the branches of a tree (against whose broad trunk Black Jack leaned) concealed Harvey, and cast a trembling shadow upon that side; but the light streamed full upon Holgrave and upon the galleyman, who was kneeling at his right hand.

At this instant, an arrow whizzed past Holgrave, and struck fire from the opposite wall. The yeoman sprang upon his feet; another shaft was sped, but instead of the object for which it was intended, pierced the hat of the foreman.

"By the green wax!" cried Oakley, as he lifted the perforated hat from the grass, "we shall need more graves, if we stand here for marks. Come round, and stoop close to the wall, and the trees and grave-stones may ward off the shafts. If they will, let them come to close quarters."

"You counsel wisely, stranger," said the monk, passing round, and standing in the shadow of the tree on the left of Holgrave, whom he forced to retire and crouch like the rest.

As this was accomplished, a third shaft tore the bark from the tree; and in an instant after, Calverley, followed by some of his myrmidons, sprung down from an aperture of the wall.

"Sacrilege!" shouted he — "sacrilege! Take them, dead or alive!"

Holgrave rushed on the steward, and the clash of steel rang through the church-yard.

The assailants, however, were somewhat damped by a loud blast from the foreman's horn, which was instantly echoed by one of his men; and the tramping of horses in the direction of the gate increased the panic. The retainers of Sudley at length retreated more speedily than they had approached, pursued by the galleyman and Harvey, who had burst from their concealment on perceiving them enter.

Byles, who was of the party, but had hitherto looked on as a spectator, (being determined to allow the steward and the yeoman to fight it out,) now glared fiercely around in search of an adversary. A cry from Calverley, however, drew him unwillingly to his assistance, and he sprang to the spot; but his uplifted arm was seized by a giant grasp, the axe wrenched from his hands, and himself hurled violently to the earth.

A strange sensation thrilled through the heart of the excited monk — an impulse to shed blood! The weapon of the prostrate Byles was snatched from the earth — it waved fiercely round his head; nature and religion warred, for an instant, in his bosom, but the latter triumphed: the weapon was flung to a distance; and Father John, crossing himself, disappeared among the tombs.

The combatants were as yet little hurt, for each was well skilled in the use of his weapon; but the steward, in endeavouring to ward off a blow that might have cleft his head, only succeeded at the sacrifice of his right ear, which was severed by the descending blade; and, ere he could recover this shock, Holgrave sprang within his guard, and wrenched the sword from his hand. A brief but fierce struggle ensued, in which Holgrave, at length, prevailed — the steward was thrown backward to the ground, and the next moment his enemy's hand was on his throat.

"Mer-c-c-y! mer-c-c-y! oh! mercy, Stephen Holgrave!" gasped he, as, with a despairing effort, he attempted to unloose the death-hold.

"Yes! mercy, Stephen — mercy to the coward!" exclaimed the galleyman; "he is not worth your vengeance."

"Mercy! he had little mercy for her," muttered Holgrave, bitterly, as he tightened his grasp.

At this moment, the voice of the monk was heard, as he rang the abbey bell, shouting " Murder! sacrilege! Ho! porter! murder!"

Holgrave, struck with awe, relinquished his hold, and Black Jack and his jurors instantly fled.

" Fly, knaves!" cried the galleyman, addressing Byles and Calverley, as he released the latter. " And now, meddling steward, if you attempt to interfere with her who is in that holy berth yonder, or injure the honest yeoman, her son, for this night's doings, the Lord have mercy upon you! Here, Stephen," (walking towards Holgrave, who had thrown himself beside the grave,) " up, and jump behind on my horse, for the cry of sacrilege will edge their brands, and friend or foe will have little chance. There — the abbey-gate is thrown open, and out they come with brand and torch."

" God speed you!" cried Holgrave, as the galleyman turned away, and grasped his hand: " God speed you! and reward you for this night: and if ever you or yours are in want of a friend, remember Stephen Holgrave." The galleyman hastily pressed the extended hand, and, springing to the gate, was in an instant on his horse, and galloping in the track of his companions, pursued, but in vain, by the arrows of the abbey retainers.

When Calverley saw his lord after this transaction, the scene, much to the amazement of the former, partook more of comedy than tragedy, for De Boteler, when he saw the head of his esquire minus an ear, could not refrain from laughter.

"Meddling knave!" said he, "why did you interfere? The woman was dead — what more would you have? Did you understand it to be the custom of the Lord of Sudley to war with dead enemies?"

This mortification only added fuel to the steward's wrath, and he determined to carry on, with all the vigour of soul and purse, an action which he had already commenced against his enemy.

Towards the end of June the sessions commenced at Gloucester, and Holgrave once more stood in the hall of justice — not as a looker on, but as an actor. Although, at the present period, the charge would have assumed a truly formidable shape, yet the deed was not then accounted even as *maihem* — for the simple reason, that the loss of an ear did not prevent a man from performing military duties.

But in this instance the offence was aggravated, at least in the eye of the law, by the manner and occasion. The law had not as yet contemplated the evasion of its decisions, by the disinterment of the bodies of criminals, and, consequently, there was no provision for punishing the deed. It was, however, taken into account in the verdict, and the damages were proportionably heavy. Holgrave, as may readily be imagined, had not a coin to meet the demand, and his crops, which had grown and flourished, as if by miracle — for they had been little indebted to his attention — were now condemned to be cut down, and put up for sale to pay the damages. The yeoman had often looked upon his plentiful fields with a feeling of pleasure: not that his mind had latterly been in a mood to find pleasure in the prospect of gain; but his house and his land were mortgaged, (for his mother,) and even in the darkest and most troubled scene, there is a beauty, a redeeming brightness, encircling the domestic hearth, — nay, perhaps, the heart clings more closely to home, and treasures, more fondly, the little nameless pleasures, and even the cares and anxieties of domestic life, in proportion to the bleakness of the prospect without.

His farm itself was at length forfeited, and Holgrave took shelter for the moment at old Hartwell's. The hut his father had reared when he married his mother, was still standing; the roof had fallen in, the ivy had grown over its walls; but even yet it sometimes sheltered the wandering mendicant, and often would the blaze of a large wood fire look cheerily

through the shattered casement and the broken door, and shed an air almost of comfort over the bare walls. Holgrave remembered the ruin, as he was considering where he could abide until Margaret, who was far advanced in the family way, should be enabled to travel farther. His resolution was instantly formed; and refusing the assistance offered by Hartwell, and some other neighbours, and as decidedly rejecting the idea they proposed, of striving to regain possession of his house, he requested Lucy Hartwell to look to Margaret for a day or two, while he sought out a place to shelter them; and then, without mentioning his purpose, quitted the house.

It was late in the afternoon ere Holgrave resolved to put the hut that had sheltered him when a boy, in a state to receive him now; but there were several hours of daylight before him, and even when the day should close, the broad harvest moon would afford him light to prolong his labour. The rushes that grew by the Isborne, the clay from the little spot of ground attached to the hut, and the withered and broken branches that lay thickly strewn over the adjoining forest, gave him ample materials for his purpose.

Holgrave set about his task with that doggedness of purpose which persons of his disposition display when compelled to submit. His misfortunes had in some measure subdued a pride that could never be entirely extinguished; — it might be likened to a smothered fire, still burning, although diffusing neither heat nor light, but ready upon the slightest breath to burst forth in flame. Even here he was interrupted by a visiter.

"Good even, Stephen," said Wat Turner, the parish smith, in as kind a tone as his abrupt manner could assume; "you are hard at work, master — are you going to set the old cot to rights?"

Holgrave answered carelessly, and without looking at the smith, continued his work.

"I think you are doing well, Stephen, not to allow the idle vagabonds to house here any longer. By St. Nicholas! when these holes are stopped up, and the thatch is put to rights, and the casement whole, and a couple of hinges put to the door, it will be a place fit for any man. When I go home I will send my son Dick, and the knave Tom, to help you."

"You need not trouble yourself," replied Holgrave: "what I want to do I can do myself."

Turner looked at Holgrave, as if he meant to resent the unsociable manner in which the reply was uttered; but speedily recollecting himself —

"I can't blame you, Stephen," said he, "you have had enough to sour any man's temper; nevertheless, I shall send Dick if I can find him; and Tom is a famous hand at thatching, and I will step over myself in the morning with the hinges and a latch for the door. But harkee, Stephen, if you wish to keep your *own* house, only say the word, and myself, and one or two more, will beat the old miser and his men to powder, if they do n't give it up again."

There was so much of good feeling in this rude speech, that Holgrave turned to the smith and grasped his hard hand.

"Hush! man," interrupted the smith, as his friend attempted to thank him; "say nothing for the present; only remember, if Wat Turner, or any belonging to him, can lend you a hand, just say the word, or come over to my forge and give me a nod, and we 'll be with you in a twinkling."

One morning, about a month after this, Margaret had as usual prepared her husband's dinner. The frugal meal was spread by eleven o'clock, but Holgrave came not: twelve arrived, and then one, and two, and the dinner was still upon the table untasted. Margaret was first surprised, and then alarmed, but when another hour had passed away, she started up with the intention of going to seek her husband. At this moment, Holgrave pushed open the door, and entering, threw himself upon a seat. There was a wild-

ness in his eyes, and his face looked pale and haggard. It occurred to Margaret, that he had probably partaken of some ale with a neighbour, and having neglected his customary meal, that the beverage had overcome him. However, he looked so strangely, that she forbore to question him. He bent forward, and resting his elbows on his knees, buried his face in his upraised hands, and sat thus, ruminating on something that Margaret's imagination arrayed in every guise that could torture or distress. At length he raised his head, and looking on his wife with more of sorrow than anger—

"I was right, Margaret," said he, "it *was* Calverley that set the usurer upon taking the land. He gave the miser something handsome, and John Byles is to have it upon an easy rent!"

"John Byles, Stephen?"

"Yes, Margaret," replied Holgrave, "John Byles is to have it; he told the smith so himself. But," he continued, sitting upright in his chair, and then starting upon his feet, — "does he think he shall *keep* it?"

Margaret shuddered, as she looked in his eyes.

That night, the freeman and serfs that dwelt on the estate of De Boteler, and even the inmates of the castle itself, were alarmed by the sudden glare of red flames rising in a bright column above the tallest trees, and so fiercely burned the flame, that in a few minutes the horizon was tinged with a ruddy glow. There was an eager rush to discover from whence the phenomenon arose, and many were the exclamations, and many the whispered surmises, when it was ascertained that the cottage was on fire from which Holgrave had been so recently ejected.

Stephen stood at the door of his hut, looking with an air of derision on the vain efforts of the people to extinguish the flames; and Margaret wept as she saw the flames rising, and brightening, and consuming the house, which she still loved to look upon, even now that it was for ever lost to *her*. The roof at length fell in, and myriads of burning particles, sparkling like diamonds, showered for a moment in glittering beauty.

Holgrave was still looking on the conflagration, that had in a great measure spent its fury, when Wat Turner came up to him, and applying a hearty smack on the shoulder—

"A famous house-warming for John Byles," said he. "By Saint Nicholas! I wish his furniture had been in, to have made the fire burn brisker. 'T is almost over now: there it goes down, and then it comes up again, by fits and starts: 't is a pity, too, to see the house which stood so snugly to-day, a black and smoky ruin to-morrow; but better a ruin, than a false heart to enjoy it. By Saint Nicholas! 't will give the old gossips talk for the whole week. Aye, 't is all over now; there will still be a spark and a puff now and then; but there's nothing to see worth keeping the carles any longer from their beds, and I think it is time that we be in ours — so good night. But a word with you, Stephen; — you did the business yourself this time without help; but mind you, if ever Wat Turner can lend you a hand, you have only to say so — Good night."

"Good night," replied Holgrave, though without moving his eyes from the now darkly-smoking ruin; and there he stood with unchanging gaze till the sky had entirely lost its ruddy hue, and the smouldering embers of the cottage could no longer be distinguished; and then he entered his dwelling, and, closing the door, threw himself upon his bed — but not to sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

An hour had not elapsed since Holgrave retired to bed, before the cottage door was burst open, and Calverley with a strong body of retainers entered, and arrested him for the felony.

The fourth day from his committal happened to be a court day of the manor, and it was selected for the trial, for the purpose of showing the tenantry what they might expect from the commission of an offence of such rare occurrence. The hall was thronged to suffocation; for many more were attracted by the expected trial, than by the familiar business of a manorial court, and the people beguiled the time till the entrance of De Boteler in commenting on the transaction.

"Silence!" was at length vociferated by a dozen court keepers, and Calverley was asked if he was ready to begin. The steward answered in the affirmative, and slowly read the indictment, during which a profound silence was maintained throughout the hall.

"Are you guilty or not guilty?" asked Calverley, in a tone, the emotion of which even his almost perfect control of voice could not disguise.

"Thomas Calverley," replied Holgrave, firmly, "if you mean me to say whether I burned my cottage or not, I will tell these honest men (looking at the jury) that I did so. All here present, know the rest."

A buzz of disapprobation at this confession was heard, and the epithet "fool, fool," was faintly whispered, and then another loud cry of silence was shouted from the court keepers, as De Boteler appeared about to speak.

"You have heard his confession," said the baron. "See, steward, that he is sent to Gloucester, to receive sentence from the king's judge when he goes the next assize. Record the verdict, and let the record be transmitted to the superior court."

Wat Turner, whose attention was anxiously fixed on the proceedings, now stepped forward, and forcing his way till he stood opposite the baron, demanded, in a voice of mingled anger and supplication, "May I be heard, Baron de Boteler?"

"Be brief, Sir Blacksmith," replied the Baron, surprised at the abrupt question, "be brief with whatever you have to say."

"I was going to say, my lord, that poor Stephen here has called nobody to speak to his good character, but maybe it is n't wanting, for every man here, except one, would go a hundred miles to say a good word for him — But, my lord, I was thinking how much money that house of Holgrave's cost in building — Let me see — about twenty florences, and then at a shilling a head from all of us here," looking round upon the yeomen, "would just build it up again — I for one would not care about doing the smith's work at half price, and there 's Denby the mason, and Cosgrave the carpenter, say they would do their work at the same rate — By St. Nicholas! (using his favourite oath) twelve florences would be more than enough — Well then, my lord, the business might be settled," — and he paused, as if debating whether he should go farther.

"And what then, impudent knave," asked the baron, — "what is the drift of this long-winded discourse?"

"Why then, my lord," replied Turner, "this matter settled, I and these vassals of yours here, would ask you to give this foolish man free warren again. We (mind your lordship) going bail for his good bearing from this day forth, and —"

The baron reflecting that his dignity would be in some measure compro-

mised by thus countenancing the smith's rough eloquence, commanded him in a harsh tone to be silent, although it was evident, from his altered looks, that his heart had felt the rude appeal. He beckoned Calverley to approach, and they remained for some moments in earnest discourse.

"Neighbours," said Turner in a whisper, "my lord is softened. Let us cry out for pardon." And the hint was not long lost upon the people; in an instant a deafening cry of "Pardon, pardon for Stephen Holgrave!" resounded through the hall. The unexpected supplication startled the astonished De Boteler, and a loud threat marked his displeasure at the interruption. Silence was again shouted by the hall keepers.

"Prisoner," resumed De Boteler, assuming a tone of severity, "you are forgiven; but upon this condition, that you renounce your freedom, and become my bondman."

"Become a bondman!" cried the smith, disappointed and mortified at the alternative: "Stephen, I would sooner die."

"Silence, knave!" said the baron; "let the man answer for himself."

"It was on this spot too," persisted the smith, "where, but two years ago, he did homage for the land you gave him: and by St. Nicholas, baron, boastful and proud was he of the gift; and if you had heard him as I did, that same day, praying for blessings upon you, you could not now rive his bold heart so cruelly for all the cottages in England."

Pale as death, and with downcast eyes, Holgrave, in the mean time, stood trembling at the bar. His resolution to brave the worst, had, with a heart-wringing struggle, yielded to the yearnings of the father and the love of the husband. The bondmen pressed forward, and marked the change; but that scrutinizing gaze which he would so recently have repelled with a haughty rebuke, was now unheeded, and his eyes remained fixed on the ground to avoid contact with that degraded class with whom he was soon to be linked in brotherhood.

Just as the baron was about to put the dreaded interrogatory, to the surprise of all, Father John entered the hall, and walked with a firm step towards the justice-seat. The monk had not visited the castle since his expulsion, and he had now no desire to stand again where his profession as a priest, and his pride as a man, had been subjected to contumely; but the desire of aiding Holgrave in his defence had overcome his resolution.

"What dost thou here, monk?" asked De Boteler, sternly, "after my orders that you should never more enter this hall."

"Baron de Boteler, I have not willingly obtruded myself. The duty of affording counsel to this unfortunate man impelled me to enter thus once again. Stephen Holgrave must choose the bondage, because he would live for his wife and his yet unborn child; but, ere he resigns his freedom, he would stipulate for his offspring being exempt from the bond of slavery."

He ceased, and fixed his eyes anxiously on De Boteler, who seemed collecting a storm of anger to overwhelm the unwelcome suitor.

"Audacious monk!" said he at length, "this is thy own counsel — away, quit the hall, or — "

"Hold, Lord de Boteler," interrupted Father John, calmly; "the threat need not pass thy lips: I go; but before I depart I shall say, in spite of mortal tongue or mortal hand, that honour and true knighthood no longer preside in this hall, where four generations upheld them unsullied."

"Strike down the knave!" cried De Boteler, rising fiercely from his seat. "Drive him forth like a dog," continued he, as the monk, without quickening his pace, walked proudly away; but no hand responded to the baron's mandate. A cry arose of "Touch not the Lord's anointed," and the monk was permitted to depart as he came, unharmed.

"Now, sirrah," said the baron, whose anger was aroused to the highest pitch; "say the word — is it death or bondage?"

Holgrave trembled; he cast a longing eager glance towards the door. Margaret was in the pains of labour, brought on by the shock she received on his arrest; and this it was that caused him to hesitate. His face brightened as he beheld the animated ruddy face of a serving boy, who breathlessly approached. He bent forward his head to catch the whispered intelligence that told him he was a father, and then, with a joy which he strove not to conceal, announced his selection in a single word — "bondage!"

"Then the child is born?" asked De Boteler.

"Yes, my lord, HE is free!"

Calverley's countenance displayed the mortification with which he received the intelligence, but he presented the gospels to Holgrave in silence.

Notwithstanding the recent flush of pleasure which warmed the heart of the yeoman, his resolution appeared again to forsake him — he endeavoured to speak, but in vain — he appeared to be overwhelmed by a variety of contending emotions; but the stern voice of De Boteler aroused him, and in a choked voice, he pronounced after Calverley the fealty of a bondman, holding his right hand over the book: —

"Hear you, my Lord de Boteler, that I, Stephen Holgrave, from this day forth, unto you shall be true and faithful, and shall owe you fealty for the land which I may hold of you in villeinage, and shall be justified by you both in body and goods, so ——"

A loud blast of a horn, accompanied with the voices of men and the tramp of horses, interrupted the ceremony; and De Boteler, recollecting that his cousin Ralph de Beaumont, with other guests, were expected, turned to Calverley and ordered him to receive and conduct them to the hall.

"Stephen Holgrave, my lord, has not yet finished his fealty."

"What! do you dream of such things when my noble cousin and guests are waiting for our courtesy? Away! I shall attend to the matter myself."

Calverley reluctantly departed on his mission, cursing the interruption that prevented his enjoying the degradation of his rival, and the baron now inquired whether Holgrave had confessed himself his villein.

One of the retainers, who stood by, boldly answered, "He has, my lord; Master Calverley gave him the words;" and the baron perceiving Holgrave's hand still resting on the book, took it for granted; and then ordering the yeoman to be set at liberty, arose and advanced to meet his guests.

Holgrave, too, retired; and though secretly rejoicing that, legally speaking, he was as free as when he entered the court, he yet felt bitterly that in the eye of the baron and the barony, he was as much a villein as if he had pronounced every letter, and sealed the declaration with the customary oath.

He returned home gloomy and discontented; and, as he stood by the bed of the pallid Margaret, and inquired of her health, there was nothing of the tender solicitude with which he used to address her, in his manner or in his voice.

"Thank God!" said Margaret faintly, as she took his hand and pressed it to her lips; "thank God, that you have returned to me without hurt or harm."

"Without hurt or harm!" repeated Holgrave: "*she* would not have said so — oh! no, no, *she* would not have rejoiced to see me return thus; — but your soul is not like hers — if life is spared, it matters little to you that the spirit be crushed and broken: but Margaret, do not weep," he said, bending down to kiss the pale cheek, over which the tears his harsh language had called forth were streaming fast. "Do not weep, I cannot bear your anguish now: I did not mean to speak unkindly — I love the gentleness of your spirit — you are dearer to my heart, Margaret, than even the freedom that was of higher price to me than the breath I drew!"

"Will you not look at the little babe?" said Margaret, anxious to turn the current of her husband's thoughts.

"Another time, Margaret — not now; but — the child was born before its father declared himself a wretch! and I will look upon it — poor little creature!" he continued, gazing at the babe as Margaret raised it up, "what a strange colour it has!"

"Yes," said Margaret, "and it is so cold! they think it will not live!"

"So much the better."

"Oh! don't say so, Stephen," replied Margaret, pressing the infant to her bosom; "I have prayed it might live, and I suppose it was only the fright that makes it so cold and discoloured."

"Maybe so," answered Holgrave; "but if your prayers be not heard, and the child dies ——"

It seemed scarcely a human voice which had uttered the last words, so deep and hoarse was the sound, and there seemed more of threat, in the sudden pause, than if he had thundered out the wildest words. Margaret gave an involuntary shudder; and Holgrave, who was not so wrapped up in his own feelings, as to be wholly regardless of those of his wife, moved away from the bed, and sat apart, brooding over the dark thoughts that filled his breast.

On the second day after Holgrave had become a bondman, he was summoned by an order from Calverley to go to labour for his lord. His heart swelled as he sullenly obeyed the mandate, and Margaret trembled as she saw him depart. She looked anxiously for the close of the day; and, when she saw her husband enter with some vegetables and grain that had been apportioned to him for his day's toil, her heart was glad. It was true that the gloom on his brow seemed increased, and that he threw down his load, and sat for several minutes without speaking, — but she cared not for his silence, as she saw him return in safety.

The next day he went to his task, and pursued his labour with sullen industry, but no approaches to familiarity would he permit in the companions of his toils. He still regarded himself as a free man; he knew not how distant the day of his release might be; but he resolved, if an opportunity ever did occur, that he should not let it pass.

He disdained the villeins, and he felt that the free men would disdain him. He would not associate with those now, whom, in his day of prosperity, he had sought to befriend, and whose degraded state he had wished to ameliorate; nor would he associate with those who had so lately been his compeers, lest they should seek to befriend him or ameliorate his lot.

One evening, about the eighth day after the birth of his infant, fatigued in body, and troubled in spirit (for Calverley had that day exercised to the full the commanding power with which he was invested), he entered the cottage, and found Margaret weeping over the little babe.

"Oh, Stephen," she said, "how I wished you would return — for our child is dying!"

"Great God!" cried Holgrave, rushing forward to look at the infant, — the feelings of the father overcoming every selfish consideration.

"Oh, see!" said Margaret, her voice almost choked with her sobs. "See how pale he looks! Look at his white lips! His breathing becomes faint! Oh, my child, my child!"

Margaret ceased to speak, and her tears dropped fast on the little innocent she was so anxiously watching; presently it gave a faint sigh, and the mother's agonizing shriek told her husband that the breath was its last. Holgrave had beheld in silence the death-pang of his child; and now, when the cry of the mother announced that it had ceased to be, he turned from the bed and rushed to the door without uttering a word.

"Oh, Stephen, do not leave me!" exclaimed Margaret. "Oh! for mercy's sake, leave me not alone with my dead child!"

But Stephen heard her not; — indeed, he was a few paces from the door ere she had finished the exclamation.

All without the cottage, as well as within, was darkness and gloom. Perhaps, if the beauty of moonlight had met his view, he might have turned sickening away to the sadness of his own abode; but as it was, the dreariness of the scene accorded with the feelings which seemed bursting his heart, and he rushed on in the darkness, heedless of the path he took. As if led by some instinct, he found himself upon the black ruins of his once happy home. No hand had touched the scattered, half-consumed materials, which had composed the dwelling; the black but substantial beams still lay as they had fallen. Perhaps his was the first foot that pressed the spot since the night it blazed forth, a brilliant beacon, to warn the base-hearted what an injured man might dare. The fire had scathed the tree that had sheltered the cottage, but the seat he had raised beneath it yet remained entire. He sat down on the bench, and raised his eyes to the heavens; the wind came in sudden gusts, drifting the thick clouds across the sky; for a moment a solitary star would beam in the dark concave, and then another cloud would pass on, and the twinkling radiance would be lost. He gazed a few minutes on the clouded sky, and thought on all he had suffered and all he had lost: his last fond hope was now snatched away; and he cursed De Boteler, as at once the degrader of the father and destroyer of the child. But a strange feeling arose in his mind as a long hollow-sounding gust swept past him; it came from the ruin beside him — from the spot *he* had made desolate; and, as he looked wistfully round, he felt a sudden throbbing of his heart, and a quickened respiration. In a few minutes his indefinite terror became sufficiently powerful to neutralize every other sensation. He arose — he could not remain another instant; he could scarcely have passed the night there under the influence of his present feelings, had it even been the price of his freedom. He hurried down the path that led from the place where he had stood, and at every step his heart felt relieved; and, as the distance increased, his superstitious fears died away, and gradually gloom and sorrow possessed him as before.

And as he walked on, choosing the most unfrequented paths, a sudden gleam of light startled him, till he recollected that Sudley Castle stood before him; and, without bestowing a thought on the unusual number of tapers that were seen burning in various parts of the building, he pursued his way. But the sound of steps approached, and he stooped to conceal himself in the shade of a thicket, for he was not in a mood to talk, and, besides, he might now be subject to interrogatories as to his wandering about in the dark: he had before been accused as a deer-stealer, and why should he not be suspected now? The steps came from opposite directions; they met just before the bush where Holgrave had crouched; and a voice, that he recognised as a neighbour's, said,

"Holla! who is that? man or maid? — for, by the saints, there is no telling by this light."

"It is I, Phil Wingfield," replied one of the castle servitors: "my lady was took suddenly ill, and is delivered; and I am going to Winchcombe for a priest to baptize the child."

"My lady was in the right not to make much stir about it: I suppose there 's not one in the parish knows any thing of the matter. But what is it, Phil?"

"A bouncing boy, the wenches say. But I wish, Dick, you would come with me — I do n't much like to be trudging this dark road by myself."

The man he addressed consented, and their steps were soon lost in the distance.

Holgrave raised himself erect as the men departed. Wild thoughts, such as he had never known before, rushed through his heart. It is dangerous to snatch from any man, even the lowest of the species, that which he values above every other thing. Be the thing what it may — be it grand or mean, base or beautiful, still the soul has clung to it, has treasured it up, has worshipped before it; and none but the bereaved can comprehend the desolation which the bereavement causes. Holgrave's idol was his freedom; it was the thing he had prized above all things else; it was the thing he had been taught to revere, even as the religion he professed. It must, therefore, have had a strong hold upon his feelings; it must have grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength: and this it is necessary to understand before a perfect idea can be formed of the hatred which he now felt towards the man who had wrested from him his treasure. It is true he might have rejected his terms, at the sacrifice of a thing of less value — his life; but there was then love and hope to contend against him — the hope of a man and a father. But he had now no longer hope; it had fled with the spirit of his little babe; its last faint breath had dissipated all the illusions of far-off happiness; and he now looked forward to a life of degradation, and a death of dishonour.

"Can it be?" said Holgrave, as he looked before him at the castle, which the tapers revealed — "can it be, that the lord of this castle and I are the sons of the same heavenly Father? Can the same God have created us? — and is his child to live and grow to manhood, that he may trample on his fellow-men, as his father has trampled on me? Is this to go on from generation to generation, and the sons to become even worse than the fathers? — No!" said he, pausing; "I have no child — Margaret must forgive me — I have only a worthless life to forfeit." He paused again. "I *will* attempt it!" he said, vehemently — "he can but hang me; and if I succeed, the noble blood they think so much of may yet ——" Holgrave suffered the sentence to remain unfinished, and he rushed towards the castle.

There was a wicket in the northern gate, the common outlet for the domestics, which, as Holgrave had anticipated, the servitor had not closed after him. He entered, and stood within the court-yard; he heard the sound of voices, and the tread of feet, but no human being was near: he paused an instant to consider, and then, with the swiftness of a deer, he sprung towards the stables, and entered the one appropriated to the select stud of the baron. A lamp was burning, but the men who attended on the horses were now away, quaffing ale to the long life of the heir. The baroness's favourite palfrey was lying in a stall; he stepped across the animal, and, after pressing his hands on various parts of the wall, a concealed door flew open, and a dark aperture was before him. He stooped and passed through, and ascended a long winding flight of steps, till a door impeded his progress; he opened it, and stood in a closet hung round with dresses and mantles, and displaying all the graceful trifles of a lady's wardrobe. There was a door opposite the one at which he had entered, which led into the baroness's chamber, where there were lighted candles, and a blazing fire on the hearth. The floor was thickly strewn with rushes, and he could just perceive the high back of a chair, with the arms of the family wrought in the centre; he paused and listened; he heard the faint cry of a babe, and discovered, by the language of the nurse, that she was feeding it; then there was the hush-a-by, and the rocking motion of the attendant. In a few minutes, the sound of a foot on the rushes, and "the lovely babe would sleep," now announced to Holgrave that the child was deposited with its mother: then he heard the curtains of the bed drawn, and the nurse whisper some one to retire, as her ladyship was inclined to sleep; there was another step across the rushes, and a door was softly closed, and then

for a few minutes an unbroken silence, which the nurse at length interrupted by muttering something about "whether the good father had come yet." Again there was a tread across the rushes, and the door again was gently closed; and Holgrave, after a moment of intense listening, stepped from the closet, and entered the chamber. In an elevated alcove stood the bed of the baroness; the rich crimson hangings festooned with gold cord, the drapery tastefully fringed with gold, even to the summit, which was surmounted by a splendid coronet. Holgrave, unaccustomed to magnificence, was for a moment awed by the splendid furniture of the apartment — but it was only for a moment — and then the native strength of his soul spurned the gaudy trappings; he stepped lightly across the spacious chamber; he unloosed the rich curtains — the heir of De Boteler was reposing in a deep slumber on a downy pillow; beyond him lay the exhausted mother, her eyes closed, and the noble contour of her face presenting the repose of death. For an instant, Holgrave paused: remorse for the deed that he was about to do sent a sudden glow across his care-worn face — but had not the baron destroyed his offspring? whispered the tempting spirit. He raised the babe from the pillow without disturbing its slumber — he drew the curtains, and — he reached the stable in safety, closed the secret door, and arrived at the postern, which was still unfastened, passed through, and gained his own door without impediment.

"Margaret," said Holgrave, as he entered, put away that babe, whom your tears cannot restore to life. Here is one that will be wept for as much as yours. — Do you hear me, Margaret? lay your babe under the coverlid, and take this one and strip it quickly, and clothe it in the dress of your own infant."

"Stephen, what child is this?" her astonishment for a moment overcoming her grief. "The saints preserve us! look at its dress — that mantle is as rich as the high priest's vestment on a festival. Oh! Stephen."

"Silence!" interrupted Holgrave, sternly; "take the babe and strip it, and attend to it as a mother should attend to her own infant; and, mark me, it *is* your own! *your* child did not die! As you value *my* life, remember this."

There was a sternness in his tone that entirely awed Margaret. She continued to weep, but she took the strange infant and did as her husband desired her. The changing of its apparel made the little infant cry, but the change was soon effected, and then Margaret put it to her breast and hushed its cries. While this was doing, Holgrave had taken a spade and commenced digging up the earthen floor. The sight agonized the wretched Margaret, and when the task was finished and he approached the bed to consign the little corpse to its kindred earth, it was long ere even his stern remonstrance could prevail on the mother to relinquish her child. She kissed its white cheek and strained it to her convulsed bosom, and Holgrave had to struggle violently with his own feelings, that he too might not betray a similar emotion. But fortitude overcame the yearnings of a father; he forcibly took the babe from its mother's arms, and laid it in the cavity he had prepared; and then, as the glittering mantle of the stolen child caught his eyes, he took a small iron box, in which Margaret kept the silks and the needles she had formerly used in her embroidery, and scattering the contents upon the ground, he forced in, in their stead, the different articles the little stranger had worn, and fastening down the lid, laid it beside his child; and then, as swiftly as apprehension could urge, filled up the grave, and trod down the earth, to give it the appearance it had worn previous to the interment. A chest was then placed over it, and it seemed to defy the scrutiny of man to detect the deed.

Holgrave's heart might have been wrung at thus interring his own child,

but his face betrayed no such feeling; it wore only the same stern expression it had worn since the day of his bondage, and it was only in Margaret's swollen eyes and heaving breast that a stranger could have surmised that aught of such agonizing interest had occurred. The bondman then threw another fagot upon the hearth, and, in the same stern voice of a master, bidding his wife tend upon the babe as if it were her own, without a kind look or word, he ascended the ladder, and threw himself upon a few dried rushes in the loft above; where he lay brooding in sullen wretchedness over the wild and daring deed he had committed.

His meditations were soon disturbed by a confused distant noise — then men's voices and the tread of feet, and instantly the latch of the door was raised, the slight fastening gave way, and the intruders rushed into the room beneath.

"Are you drawlatches or murderers?" asked Holgrave in a fierce voice, as he started up and sprung to the ladder, "that you break open a man's house at this hour?"

"If you attempt to come down that ladder, this fellow's glaive will answer you," said Calverley, in a voice and with a look which the torch-light revealed, that told that his threat had meaning. He then cast a hasty glance around the apartment — for an instant, his eyes rested on the bed where lay the terror-stricken Margaret, who, at the first sound of his voice had concealed her face in the pillow. His eyes scarcely rested upon the bed ere he turned quickly to the men who attended him, and, in something of a hurried voice, desired them to examine the chest. What dark suspicion crossed his mind can scarcely be conceived, but Holgrave looked with a bitter smile upon the search as the men tore open the chest and scattered the contents in every direction. There was nothing else that required more than a cursory glance except the bed; Calverley did not look again towards it, and the men who were with him did only as they were ordered. At his command three men ascended the ladder, but ere they had advanced midway, Holgrave had grasped the end that rested on the entrance, and, in a voice that caused tremor in the craven heart of the steward, threatened to hurl them to the ground if they advanced another step.

"Do you think, meddling steward, that I have been in the chase again? Do you expect to find another buck?"

"Proceed — heed not this bondman's raving!"

Holgrave, conceiving that farther resistance might awaken suspicion, folding his arms across his breast, suffered the men to ascend, and looked on in silence while they carefully examined the loft. But here, after a minute search, was found nothing to repay their trouble. They descended, and Calverley said, "There is nothing here to *confirm* suspicion; but the son of Edith Holgrave is likely to be suspected when evil is done. We depart," he said to his followers, "but there shall be a watch kept on this fellow."

Holgrave looked contempt, and spoke defiance; but Calverley retired without seeming to heed either his looks or his words.

In the morning he went to his task at the usual hour, not however without again cautioning Margaret respecting the child. Soon after his departure Lucy Hartwell entered, to talk over the strange news she had just heard, and to offer her services to Margaret.

"How are you, Margaret? How is the babe?"

"The child is better," replied Margaret, "but I am very ill."

"I am sorry to hear that — I hardly thought that the child would live. Here, Margaret, take a little of this broth, it will do you good. — Oh, there are such strange doings at the castle! Yesterday evening, my lady was suddenly put to bed of a boy, and the child has been stolen away, nobody can tell how. Roberts, one of the castle guard men, told my father just

now, that my lady had accused Sir Robert Beaumont, my lord's cousin, of stealing the child, and that Sir Robert is making ready to depart, vowing never to enter the castle again. But Martha, my lady's maid, said, in his hearing, that nothing but an evil spirit could have stolen it away. She declared that she saw old Sukey, the nurse, put the child safely beside my lady, and then, as her ladyship seemed inclined to sleep, she went from the bed-chamber into the anti-room, and there she sat till the priest, who had come from Winchcombe, was ready for the baptism, and then she entered the chamber to tell the nurse; and when old Sukey went to the bed to take up the child, behold it was gone! Whereupon old Sukey gave such a dreadful scream, that the baroness started up, and discovering the loss of the child, could scarcely be kept in bed, and called the old nurse and every one who approached her murderers; and then the whole castle was in an uproar, and my lady presently hearing the sound of Sir Robert's voice in the anti-room, shrieked that it was he who had stolen her child; and then she fell into such a fit of crying, that her heart sickened, and she swooned away. But what ails you, Margaret, are you worse?" Margaret answered, faintly, "that she wished to sleep;" and Lucy's humanity, overcoming her strong desire to speak of the strange event that had happened, she left her, after doing the little services the invalid required, to her repose.

Towards the close of the day, Father John came to see his sister. "You are ill, my child," said the monk, as he drew a chair to the side of the bed, and gazed anxiously at her pallid cheek and swollen eyes. Margaret answered incoherently.

"Your child," continued he, "is it — is it still alive?"

"My child is well now!" said Margaret, in a stifled voice.

"Well! Margaret, can it be possible! — Let me look at the babe, for I fear you must be deceiving yourself."

"It is sleeping," said Margaret; but the next moment the babe, who had slept with short intermission during the day, awoke, and no soothing, no attentions of its nurse, could hush its cries. Margaret saw that the eyes of her brother were riveted on the child, and she strove anxiously to conceal its face.

"It is strange!" said the monk; "yesterday the low moaning sound it made, seemed to threaten immediate dissolution; and to-day its lusty cries seem those of a healthy child — it is quiet now — give me the babe in my arms, and let me look at it?"

Margaret did not immediately accede to his wish, and the monk looked at her with a strange inquisitiveness — something crossed his mind, but what could he suspect? He again asked Margaret, but she still hesitated. He started from his seat, and paced up and down the floor. He then stopped suddenly before the bed. Margaret had laid down the infant, and had covered it with the bed-clothes.

"Margaret," said the monk, fixing his eagle glance upon his sister, "that is not your child!"

"Hush! hush! Oh! for the life of my husband, say not so!" The sternness of the monk's countenance gradually softened as he gazed upon his agonized sister, and after the space of a minute he said, in a calm voice:—

"Fear not me, Margaret — fear not that I would add to the grief which has weighed on your heart, and paled your cheek, and dimmed your eye. Fear not that I would add one sorrow to the only being who attaches me to my kind, and who tells me I am not entirely alone! But, I ask you, Margaret, not as a servant of the High God, but as an only brother — as one who has loved you as a father, and has watched over you from infancy even until now; I ask you to tell me what you know of that child?"

Margaret bent her head forward and covered her face with her hands, but made no reply. In vain the monk reiterated his request. In vain he exhorted her — in vain he assured her that no evil should befall her husband from whatever disclosure she might make. Margaret still hid her face and remained silent. Her silence discomposed the monk. He continued to gaze upon her with a troubled countenance. Anger for the cruelty that could premeditatedly deprive a mother of her offspring, and alarm for the consequences that might result to Holgrave, could have been read in his contracted brow and anxious glance. His sister's unwillingness to speak confirmed his suspicions, and he felt as fully convinced that the child that lay before him was the baron's son as if he himself had witnessed the theft.

"Margaret," said John, "your silence does but confirm my suspicions. It is a cruel revenge — but it is done — and Stephen's life shall never be put in jeopardy by a breath of mine. He has suffered, but till now he had not sinned! But his sin be between his conscience and his God: he paused for a minute, and then looking tenderly upon his sister, he said as gently as he could, "Farewell!" and being anxious to avoid an interview with Holgrave, abruptly departed.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

About a fortnight after the birth of the baron's son was the feast of All-hallows, and from All-hallows eve to the Purification of the Virgin, was little less than a continued festival. Mummers and maskers, attired in fantastic habits, wearing garlands of holly and ivy on their heads, and bearing branches of the same in their hands, were to be met, dancing and singing along the roads that led to the castles, of the barons, or to the broad beetling houses of those of a lesser degree. The castles the manor-houses, and even the dwellings of those whom, one would think, could have no earthly object in view in their building but convenience, accorded little with, or rather was in direct opposition to, our present ideas of domestic comfort. The spaciousness of the apartments, lighted, perhaps, by a solitary window, whose small chequered panes, encased in a heavy frame, and divided into three compartments by two solid beams, curved, and meeting at the top in a point, were rendered still more gloomy by the projecting buttresses of the windows above; but still the very construction of the buildings was favourable to hospitality. A dozen, or twenty, or thirty, or fifty persons, according to the rank of the host, might be accommodated, and not the slightest inconvenience felt. The more the merrier, was undoubtedly the adage then: guests were greeted, especially on winter nights, with a genuine hospitable welcome, because, although the capacious hearth looked snug and cheerful, there was a dreariness in the void beyond — in the undefined and distant shadows of the apartment — that could alone be dispelled by additional lights and smiling faces. It will consequently be a natural conclusion, that in the castles of the nobles, and in the houses of those immediately or progressively beneath them, the arrival of the merry mummers was hailed with almost childish delight.

In addition to this annual exhibition of mirthful mummery, the town of Winchcombe was enlivened by a fair, periodically held, on the festival of All-hallows. The fair-green lay just beyond the town, enclosed on one side by the town walls, and on the opposite by an abrupt, wooded hill. All Winchcombe was in a bustle; the ale-houses were crowded with visiters, and the streets filled with strangers; young artizans or yeomen were escorting their favourite damsels to the fair, to show their gallantry by purchasing some of the various articles so temptingly displayed, as presents for the maidens. Bodkins and fillets for the hair, and ribbons of every colour, except scarlet or crimson; and furs, principally cat-skin; and spices, and fine and coarse cloths of medley, and russets, and hoods, and mittens, and hose, were among the miscellaneous wares exhibited for sale.

But there was one stall that particularly attracted the eyes of the fair-folks, by the spices, silks, damasks, fine cloth, gold and silver cords and ornaments, furs, &c. it displayed. The owner of this stall was evidently a peddling Genoese merchant, or, as they were then called, galleymen. These foreigners generally bore a bad character — they were looked upon with suspicion; but, although suspected and disliked, they sold their merchandise, passed their base coin, and returned to Genoa to purchase, with English gold, fresh cargoes for Britain. They somehow or other sold their goods cheaper than the native dealers, and their coin, if even bad, would generally circulate through a few hands before it would be detected, and, consequently, those who purchased were seldom the losers.

The beauty and richness of the chief portions of their cargoes ensured them a demand from the superior classes; and if a noble, or courtly dame, or maiden, or knight, or even esquire, would not be seen bargaining personally with the foreigners, there were always officious agents who could transact the business, and have some trifle as an acknowledgment from the itinerant merchant. The galleyman, who was displaying his merchandise on the fair-green of Winchcombe, had, towards the close of the short gloomy day, disposed of a considerable portion of his stock. The damsels of the ladies residing in the vicinity, bought even more than they were ordered, so well were they pleased with the animated glance of the foreign merchant's black eyes, and with the pretty, almost intelligible, compliments he paid them; and, above all, with the smiling liberality with which he rewarded every purchase.

In the villages, the distinctions of dress created by law were pretty generally observed, but in the towns that law was as generally evaded: furs, and colours, and embroidery, were worn by those who had no right to them, except the single one of purchase. In some instances, the law would take cognizance of the violation of its prohibitions; a fine would be imposed, but even this could not check the vain assumption; — there was no law to prevent people buying, and those who could purchase forbidden finery, would, in despite of penalties, contrive some means of wearing it. But to return to our foreign merchant.

There was now scarcely light to distinguish external objects, when a sudden rush was heard from the town, and, in an instant, a dozen persons surrounded the peddling merchant, and seizing him violently, while uttering threats and imprecations, dragged the dusty-foot to the court of Pie-powder.* As they were hauling him along, the crowd increased, the fair was forsaken, all pressing eagerly forward to learn the fate of the unlucky pedler. The galleyman seemed perfectly to comprehend the nature of his

* The court of Pie-powder (*pie-poudre*) was a court held at fairs for the redress of all grievances happening there — so called, because justice must be done before the dust goes off the plaintiff's or defendant's feet. See statute 17 Edward IV. chap. 2., confirming the common law usage of, and detailing some new regulations for, these courts.

danger -- not by the changing colour of his cheek, for that exhibited still the same glowing brown — but by the restless flash of his full black eyes, glancing before and around, as if looking for some chance of escape.

The court of Pie-powder was situated at the extremity of the fair-green, about twenty paces beyond the last stall: the court was a kind of tent, with a large, high-backed chair in the centre for the judge, a long table being placed before him, on which were balances and weights of various descriptions, to ascertain the truth of any charges that might be preferred against the sellers at the fair: there were also a smaller balance, a stone, and a small phial of liquid, to prove the weight and purity of any coin that might be doubted. At each extremity of the table was a bench, on which sat six men, to act as jurors. Although in a fair, the court was conducted with some attention to propriety; the clerk, who sat as judge, assumed as much importance as a dignitary of a higher tribunal; and, as the crowd approached, hallooing and vociferating, with the culprit, two men, who stood at the door with maces in their hands, prevented the rush of the people: and, by order of the judge, the accuser, the offender, and two witnesses were the only persons permitted to enter. The charge was laid; — the foreign dusty-foot was accused of defrauding the accuser's wife, one Martha Fuller, of the value of half a noble.

The *lushburgs* (as this base coin was called) were then produced. The judge took the money, and was raising the phial to apply the test, when the accused, whose hands had been left at liberty, drew something from his breast, and threw it on the lamp which was burning before him. The lamp was extinguished; -- a sudden explosion took place; burning fragments were scattered in every direction; a strange suffocating smell filled the tent, and nearly stifled the astonished spectators. Before they could recover from their surprise, the galleyman had knocked down the two witnesses, crept under the canvass of the tent, and, with the bound of a deer, reached the wooded hill that lay at a short distance behind.

The pause of astonishment was scarcely of a moment's duration; and then, like the hounds pursuing a hare that had broke cover, the whole multitude, uttering a wild shout, sprung after the flying stranger. The lightness of the galleyman's foot had often befriended him, upon occasions similar to the present, but now his bounding step seemed but of little advantage -- for the foremost of the pursuers was as fleet as himself. There were few spirits more bold, more constitutionally brave, than this stranger's; — he had struggled with the world till he had learned to despise it; he had buffeted with the waves till he had deemed them harmless; and, up to the last five minutes, he would have sworn that there was neither a man nor a sea that he feared to meet. But the stranger had, at that time, no law in England; -- the gallows-tree by torchlight, the execrations, the tumult, the sudden hurrying of the soul away without even a moment to call for mercy; — all this was distinctly before the eyes of the fugitive. He had seen others act a part in such a scene, and his turn seemed now at hand; -- and the galleyman almost groaned at the thought of dying unshrived.

A large thicket, at this moment, gave the dusty-foot an opportunity of doubling, and, for an instant, diverging from the straightforward course, though it availed him little, he seemed to feel the breath of his pursuer on the back of his neck; his foot sounded as if at his heels; he drew his garment closely around him, turned suddenly to the right, and, bounding from the ground, the next instant a splash was heard in the little river, and the fugitive was safe from his pursuer.

We before observed that Stephen Holgrave's dwelling was situated at a short distance from the little Eastbourne; and, on the night of All-hallows fair, a quick knocking was heard at the door just after Holgrave had retired

to rest. Holgrave, concluding it was some mandate from the castle, arose, and, in a surly voice, demanded who was there?

"A stranger who wants a shelter — open the door."

It was instantly opened; and the galleyman, with his saturated garments, and his long black hair hanging dripping over his shoulders, entered the cottage.

"Why, what mishap has befallen you?" inquired Holgrave, in surprise.

"Ask no questions," answered the dusty-foot, "but give me a cup of malmsey."

"Malmsey! and in a villein's cottage," replied Holgrave, bitterly. "No, no; but here is a small flask of sack which a neighbour brought to my wife: she will little grudge it to a man in your plight."

While Holgrave was speaking, he emptied the flask into a horn, and, handing it to the galleyman, the latter eagerly clutched it, and, with astonishing rapidity, swallowed the contents.

"Is that all you have?" inquired the dusty-foot.

"Yes," replied Holgrave; "and enough too, I think, for any reasonable man at one time."

"Nonsense!" returned the stranger, "I would drink ten times as much and be nothing the worse. But hark you, Stephen Holgrave — I have come to you for shelter, and I expect you will give it."

"While I have a roof the wayfaring man shall never sleep ——"

"I do not talk of sleep," interrupted the stranger: "I would not trouble any man for the sake of a night's rest: but to be plain with you, my life is sought for — the hue and cry is even now after me; — so, if you mean to keep your word, give me some dry clothing, and hide me — anywhere."

Holgrave turned from the galleyman in silence, and, opening the large chest, took out his only spare clothing — a suit of medley; and, as he offered it to the stranger, he looked at him with an earnestness which attracted the attention of the galleyman.

"You do not know me?" asked the latter.

"No," replied Holgrave, "I cannot call your face to mind; but surely I must have heard your voice before."

"Maybe you have; but that matters little; I know you are an honest man, and were I even your enemy, you would not betray me."

"No," said Holgrave, "I would betray no man; but I should not like to harbour — a man that had ——"

"Had what!" interrupted the galleyman, impatiently. "I wish I had never done worse than I have done this day, Holgrave; I have neither hurt nor harmed; I only gave a pretty little fair-going dame a Genoese piece instead of an English one."

"Ah! well," said Holgrave; "if she was fool enough to trust a dusty-foot, she must look to it. I care not what you did, so long as you kept your hand from blood: so come up this way." He then took one of the branches that were still blazing on the hearth, and conducted the fugitive to the loft.

The stranger instantly divested himself of his wet apparel, and attired himself in Holgrave's yeoman's garb; and then, with the natural regret of one accustomed to traffic, he drew from a secret pocket of his wet doublet a bag of coin, the wreck of his merchandise, and with a sigh for all he had lost, placed it in his bosom. His dagger was also stuck in his doublet, so that if necessity came, he might use it; and then attentively listening to Holgrave's directions, he threw himself upon a heap of rushes in a corner, and soon after his host had withdrawn to throw the tell-tale garments into the Isborne, he fell into the short light slumbers of a seaman.

The first sound of a far-off shout instantly dispelled his sleep; he started

on his feet, and as he became convinced it was really the hue and cry, he raised a small flap in the roof, as Holgrave had directed, and forcing himself through, slid down into a sort of rude garden at the back of the dwelling; then springing forward till he came to a dry well, he leaped, with a dauntless heart and sound limbs, ten feet below the surface of the earth.

The hue and cry passed on its noisy course without heeding the cottage; and, about an hour after, Holgrave threw down a rope to the galleyman, who, with the agility of one accustomed to climb, sprung up the side of the well, and entered the cottage with his host.

"You can now go to the loft, and lie down again," said Holgrave; "but do not sleep too soundly; for if any one comes in to look for you, you must go to your old hiding-place. You see, stranger, that mine is not the best place you could have chosen; there is ill blood between me and the castle folks, and they will not let any chance slip to let me know that even this hut, poor as it is, is not my own, but must be entered and searched as they would the kennel of a dog. You know me, stranger, though I know nothing of you, except your voice. You called me by my name, and you addressed me as a yeoman — think you that I *am* a yeoman?"

"Yes," said the galleyman; "I knew you were a freeman, and I heard you were a yeoman."

"Yes, I was a freeman, and I was a yeoman; but I am now a — villein! Ay, stare — stare! I live through it all. It was but the space of a moment — the drawing of a breath, that changed me from a man who dared look the heavens in the face, and close his door, if he listed, on even the baron himself, to a poor worm, that must crawl upon the earth, and has not even this (taking up a log of wood) that he can call his own. True, it was not my birthright, but I earned it, in sweat, in hunger, and cold, and I fought for it amidst swords and lances — and I sold it, like a traitor, for — her!" And he pointed, with a look of bitter reproach, to his wife.

The galleyman, for the first time, fixed his eyes upon Margaret, who was sitting, nursing her little charge within the recess of the chimney. She had latterly been accustomed to unkind language from her husband; but the bitterness with which he had now alluded to her before a stranger, brightened the delicacy of her complexion with a passing glow, and caused a sudden tear to tremble in her eye.

"And, by the good cargo I lost even now at Winchcombe," said the galleyman, after looking at her for a moment, "you could not have sold it to better advantage. Such a wife would make any man think little of her price. If you *have* made yourself a villein, is the world so small that there is no place but the manor of Sudley to live in? Come, come, let us talk like friends — we are not such strangers as you suppose."

"No," said Holgrave; "but I cannot think where we have met."

"Never mind that. As for me, I am not quite foundered, although I have left a cargo behind at Winchcombe that would have bought a dozen bondmen's freedom. Come with me to London: I have part of a galley of my own there, and you may either stow away in some hole of the city, or slip your cable, and be off for Genoa, where I 'll promise you as snug a birth as a man could wish for. Besides, there is your child — is it a boy?"

Margaret nodded assent.

"Yes, there is your boy — would you let him grow up a bondman?"

"No," said Holgrave. "Now you speak of the boy, I will not leave this place. Let him live and toil, and suffer, and ——"

"And if he was a headstrong boy, and felt one stroke of the lash," interrupted the galleyman, "would he not fly from the bondage, even to become a thing like me? Hark you, Holgrave," he continued, starting upon his feet, extending his right arm, and fixing his full black eyes on his face — "hark you, Holgrave! my father was as honest a man as ever drew the

breath of heaven; and yet I trade and traffic in cheatery. My father's greatest oath was 'the saints defend us!' and he would not drink a second cup at one sitting; and yet there is not a holy name that I have not blasphemed every day for these nine years, and scarcely a day that I have not drunk more — more than my head could well carry. My father could not have slept if he had missed the shrovetide, and yet I have passed years, aye, and am likely to pass my life, without a single shrift. Yes, yes, he continued, dropping his arm, and sinking down upon his seat, I have done every thing but — murder" — (Margaret crossed herself) — "and scarcely can I clear myself even of that; and all because I was a bondman's son! Yes, Holgrave, I know what bondage is; I know what it is to be buffeted and railed at, and threatened with the tumbrel. I never was lazy; but I hated to be driven. All men are not made alike; some are only fit to be slaves, while others are endowed by nature with a high, proud spirit — of such was your mother."

"My mother! what know you of her?"

"Never mind that," replied the galleyman; "but as for your mother, she was a good and a holy woman; but I say she was proud! You are proud, or you would not think so much of being a villein. And is it not likely that your boy will be as proud as either?"

"If that child takes after his father," said Holgrave, "he will have pride enough."

"And if he has," returned the dusty-foot, "he cannot have a greater cause. It is all very well for the great, — it looks well upon them; and even the decent chapman and yeomen get little harm by it: but for the poor man to be proud; to have the swelling heart and the burning cheek — oh! it *is* a curse!" He raised his voice as he spoke, and then sinking it to a whisper, added — "and if it is sin, surely it has its punishment."

As Holgrave looked at and listened to the stranger, his heart warmed, and he forgot for a time his own selfish feelings; but the picture the galleyman had drawn, and which his own soul acknowledged to be too true, determined him not to accept his offer. The baron had earned for his son the curse of "the swelling heart and the burning cheek," and the lad should know the toils and sufferings of a bondman.

"We shall talk further," said Holgrave: "in the mean time, we must consult for your own safety. If your father was a villein of this barony, it is not likely that the old steward, or the new one — the fiend Calverley — should forget you; and ——"

"Tush, tush!" interrupted the galleyman; "if Stephen Holgrave has forgotten Robin Wells, how should Thomas Calverley remember him?"

"Robin Wells!" repeated Holgrave, with a long inquiring look. "No — you are safe! I hardly think the foul fiend himself would detect you. Now I call you to mind — your eyes and mouth are little Robin's — but the brown skin and the black hair ——"

"Aye," said the galleyman, "you marvel what has become of the red and white, and the short, thick, yellow curls. Oh, you landsmen know nothing of the wonders that sea-suns and sea-storms can work. To be sure, it never would entirely change yellow into black, — so, when I wanted to turn Genoese, I used a certain drug that made my eyes and hair look as if they belonged to the same master."

"Well," said Holgrave, looking at his guest with that kindly feeling that is ever called forth by unexpectedly beholding an acquaintance of earlier days — "well, how often my poor mother used to talk of you, and wonder how it fared with you. I remember well when you came to bid us good-bye."

"Aye, aye, so do I," said the young man, evidently agitated; "but — let us talk no more of it."

Holgrave, thinking that Wells was averse to being reminded of an un-

pleasant circumstance, spoke no more of the day when the orphan boy had gone forth into a strange world; but, counting upon the sympathy of the galleyman, he began to recount his mother's fate.

"Hold, hold," said Wells, starting up, and covering his eyes with his hands; "as you hope for mercy, say no more — I cannot bear it."

He then sprung up the ladder, and threw himself upon the heap of rushes.

The extreme agitation of Wells, although it surprised Holgrave, by no means displeased him; — be sympathy ever so extravagant, still, generally speaking, it is gratifying; and Holgrave, at that moment, would have laid down his life in defence of the man who could feel so keenly.

Nature had given the galleyman a good and a kind heart, but evil associates had done much, and dissipation still more, to demoralize his soul; yet his natural good qualities were not entirely uprooted: the good fruit would sometimes spring up, but it sprung up only to show what the soil might have produced — it bloomed for an hour in beauty, and then was trodden under foot, and defiled in the dust.

When Wells had sprung into the loft, accusing himself of the part he had taken in Edith's trial, and of the nefarious traffic which had placed him in the power of Black Jack, he vowed that, in future, his dealings should be strictly honest; that he would give a portion of his worldly goods to the poor; offer a certain sum to the Abbot of Gloucester for masses to be said for the soul of Edith, and endeavour to make what atonement he could by befriending Holgrave. But in a few hours his feelings became less acute; and we believe all of his vow that he fulfilled was that of striving to aid Holgrave, and becoming, to a certain degree, honest in his dealings. The next day he began to feel that depression of spirits usually experienced by persons accustomed to stimulants. Several times was he tempted to go out and brave detection, — but a fear lest some of the fair-folks should recognise him, made him pause.

In the afternoon Lucy Hartwell came in to see Margaret, bringing some little gift, and asking how she fared. Wells could distinctly hear all that passed in the room below; and soon collected, from the conversation, that the visiter was the daughter of old Hartwell the ale-seller. He remembered her a pretty little girl when he had left the village — with hazel eyes twinkling and brightening like a star; with a step as light, and a form as delicate and graceful, as the greenwood fairy to whom she used to be likened. Her voice had deepened a little, but it had still much of the sprightly animation of her childhood.

She kissed and admired the infant, inquired of Margaret's health, bade her hope for better days, and then proceeded to talk of affairs at the castle; how the baroness still continued to weep and lament; and how De Boteler, ever since he had returned from London, had been almost distracted — one minute crying and raving that there was some traitor at the castle who had connived at the abduction of his child, and that he would discover him and hang him up without form of trial, — and the next offering large rewards and free pardon to any one who could give the slightest information, even though they should have aided in the theft; — and once he even went so far as to promise pardon to the actual offender. As, of course, this strange occurrence had been a prolific source of speculation to the gossips, Lucy proceeded to detail a number of stories she had heard on the subject.

Although Wells took little interest in these details, yet he loved to listen to the sweet tones of a remembered voice; and, as the evening had begun to close in, and Lucy talked of returning home, he resolved to put faith in the good feelings and discretion of the maiden. In an instant he had leaped down the ladder and stood at her side.

Lucy gave a faint scream, and cast a look of astonishment at Margaret.

"It is only a stranger," said Margaret, answering to Lucy's glance, "whom Stephen has promised to shelter. — You need not fear."

"Fear!" repeated the galleyman, as he gazed on the beautiful features of the abashed Lucy; "what can such an angel have to fear? — and yet, by the saints! such a prize would tempt the honestest captain that ever commanded a vessel. Years have passed away since I last saw you; — you were then but a child. You have forgotten me — but in storm or in sunshine, never have I forgotten you: the first sound of your voice, when I was aloft there, made my heart beat — and I thought I would run all hazards and face you. But — you don't know who is talking to you — Do you?"

"No," replied Lucy, "I do n't think I ever saw you before."

"O yes, but you did; — do n't you remember one Robin Wells, a stout rosy boy with curly hair, that made you a wreath of holly and ivy — one All-hallows day — and put it on your head, and called you a little queen? You were ten years old that day, and it is just ten years and three days since then. Do n't you remember it?"

"Yes," said Lucy, blushing deeply, and half raising her bright eyes to see if she could identify the stranger with the boy who used to pluck fruits and flowers for her, and make garlands for her hair; but the fixed gaze of the galleyman compelled her to withdraw her inquisitive glance, and then there was a moment of silence, during which Lucy's burning cheeks told she was conscious the stranger's eyes were still regarding her. But her embarrassment was far from very painful; — there was something so gratifying, especially to a warm-hearted girl, to be remembered for so many years by one whom she had herself forgotten — for poor Lucy never once suspected the truth of what Wells had asserted!

"You are changed, Lucy;" said the galleyman, in a meditative tone, "and so am I; but a quiet home has reared you into loveliness; while cold, heat, and storms, have made me what I am. It was that ivy wreath of yours that made me a wanderer — I spent a couple of hours gathering and making it, and they promised me a flogging for idling, and so, after putting the crown on your head, I set off, and here I am again after ten years, looking old enough to be your father — but, hark you, maiden — sailors are thirsty souls, and here have I been laid up these two days, without tasting a drop of any thing stronger than — ha! ha! — milk! Your father has plenty of stout ale, and I 'm sure such a little angel as you will have the charity to bring a flagon to a poor seaman adrift."

Lucy, glad to escape from the gaze of the galleyman, and also pleased at an opportunity of showing kindness to an old acquaintance instantly arose, promising to return in a few minutes with some ale.

"But, take care," said Margaret, "that you say not whom it is for."

Lucy promised to be circumspect, and in less than ten minutes placed a flagon of her father's best ale before the galleyman, and then bounding away with a light laugh, as Wells sprang forward to pay for it with a kiss, her little form was instantly lost in the darkness of the evening.

About an hour after nightfall the next evening, the galleyman prepared to depart from Holgrave's cottage: repeatedly did he urge his host to accept his offer, and with his wife and the little babe remove for ever from a spot where his proud spirit had suffered such wrong; but Holgrave steadily refused; and the galleyman, having forced Margaret to accept two pieces of gold, went forth from the roof that had sheltered him. Holgrave's dwelling, as the reader already knows, stood upon an eminence apart from the congregated dwellings that were styled the village. The only object Wells could discover as he looked around, was the glimmering of the lights in the adjoining habitations. He remained stationary for an instant, while he looked across in the direction of Hartwell's house, and then, smiling an

imaginary farewell to the pretty Lucy, with a quick step and a light heart he walked away in the opposite direction.

All was silence as the galleyman proceeded; labour had ceased, the evening repast was made, and many of the inhabitants of the village had already retired to rest. The evening was clear and cold, and the firmament was radiant with stars, the moon being only a few days old. By some strange impulse, the man who had so often gazed upon the far-spread beauty of an ocean sky, stood still for a moment here; and, by as strange a conceit, the silvery semicircle above, as it seemed, even in the crowd of lesser lights, brought to his mind the ever-smiling beauty of Lucy Hartwell. The wanderer lingered for a space — then hesitated — then turned suddenly — and, in less than five minutes, he had pushed open the hatch of old Hartwell's door and had entered boldly.

There were no guests; a bright fire was blazing on the hearth, and the galleyman, throwing himself upon a bench in the chimney-corner, requested Hartwell, who was sitting on the opposite bench, to give him a jug of his best ale.

"Here, Lucy," shouted the old man, "bring a jug of the best."

Lucy obeyed the summons with alacrity, but, as she presented the beverage, a slight start and a sudden blush told how much the appearance of Wells surprised her. The galleyman drank off the ale, and then, walking to the farther end of the kitchen, where Lucy stood, "Here, pretty maiden," said he, in his usual loud and joyous tone, "fill it again;" and, as she turned to the cask to replenish the jug, he added, in a voice that met her ear alone:—

"Lucy, I must speak to you before I go." He took the replenished jug from the little maiden, and then resuming his seat, paid Hartwell for the ale, and began chatting upon the weather and the times; and, when the old man's attention was thoroughly engaged, Lucy took the opportunity of throwing a large hood over her head and slipping out unperceived by her father. The galleyman took the hint, and draining the jug and starting on his feet, declared he should enter Winchcombe in better spirits after such excellent ale; and then bidding good evening to the unsuspecting old man, hastened after Lucy.

About thirty paces in the rear of her father's house, was an old far-spreading oak, beneath whose branches stood Lucy, awaiting him, who was even now, in her mind, to all intents and purposes a lover. As the dusty-foot looked around in the darkness, a whispered hist! decided his course, he sprung to the tree, and stooped to clasp the little form in his arms, and to imprint on the glowing cheek his first kiss; but Lucy drew back, and, with the dignity of a maiden, repelled the freedom.

"Nay," said Wells, "you know I am slipping my cable, and you should n't grudge a parting salute; but, however, do n't stand aloof— I give you the word of a sailor — I cannot say of an honest one, but that 's nothing — one man's word is as good as another's, if he means to keep it, and so I give you my word that I will not offend again, and now give me your hand, and I will trust my secret to a sinless maiden."

"Alas!" said Lucy, "I am not sinless."

"Maybe not so, entirely, yet I am sure you are as sinless as woman can be — but listen to me, Lucy — you know that I am a bondman's son — that I fled from bondage — and that ten years of roving freedom have not made me free. All this you know, but you do not know that I am the Genoese galleyman who cheated the chapman's dame at the fair of Winchcombe."

Lucy started, and made an involuntary effort to withdraw the hand that Wells had taken; but he held it firmly, while he added,

"I need not have told you this, but I would not deceive you — I have led

a wild sort of a life, and I used to laugh at it; but somehow, since I have beheld the place of my boyhood, I would give back all the lawless freedom of the seas, and all the money-making traffic of the land, to be what I was when I left this spot—but this is all foolish talking; what is past is gone, and cannot be helped."

"Aye," interrupted Lucy, "but you can help what is to come."

"Yes, and so I will; but you know I have neither home nor kin. Now one doesn't like to stand alone in the world like a deserted wreck in the midst of the ocean — nobody caring a straw whether it sinks or swims. I think I should not have done as I have done if I had thought any heart would have grieved to hear I was not steering right."

Wells paused a moment, and then added —

"I have seen blue eyes and black eyes — fair skins — and dark skins but I never saw a she of them I cared to look upon the second time; but I could n't have sheered off this night without a parting look at you, if the whole hue and cry of Winchcombe had stood to meet me. You 've never been to sea, Lucy, and so you cannot tell how it cheers a man to think of the port his vessel is steering to — to look across the heaving billows, and to see, even in his fancy, the snug harbour where he is, at length, to cast his anchor. Now, maiden," continued Wells, pressing within his own hard palms the little hand he held, "now tell me, shall not the wandering seaman look across the ocean to a sure anchorage. May he not think of a haven where he may at last moor his tossed-about galley?"

Lucy was little used to the figurative language of a sailor, yet she easily interpreted his meaning; and, after much hesitation, a little blushing, many promises of amendment — and many more protestations of unchanging love, she plighted her troth, and the galleyman departed on his journey.

CHAPTER II.

The next morning, any one ignorant of the interest thrown around Holgrave, would have been much surprised at the extraordinary sensation created in the barony of Sudley, by a report which went abroad of the flight of the bondman. The sun had risen pretty high ere any suspicion arose that Holgrave had broken his bonds. On the previous Saturday, Calverley had ordered him to commence his next week's labour with ploughing a certain field; and about two hours before noon, the steward took occasion to pass the field, in order to ascertain how Holgrave was getting on with his task; but to his surprise, however, the ground presented the same unbroken surface it had worn on the previous week; and after some fruitless inquiries after the contumacious serf, he at length repaired to his hut, which he found secured. The door was then forced with little ceremony, and the hearth was found cold, and the cottage deserted. The bed, the chest, the stools, &c. stood as heretofore; and it was but the business of a moment for the steward to glance around the apartment; to raise the lid of the chest; to spring up into the loft; to descend, and leave the cottage, and close the door as before.

Calverley had no sooner assured himself of the flight of the bondman, than he despatched a messenger to assemble the vassals for the purpose of carrying the hue and cry in different directions; and he then entered the castle to inform De Boteler of the event.

Isabella grew pale as she listened; for by some strange instinct she had so connected Holgrave with the abduction of her child, that his flight seemed now to have wrested from her her last hope.

"Send forth the hue and cry," said De Boteler. "Scour the country till

the knave be found, and promise a noble to him who discovers the runaway."

"The vassals have been collected, my lord, and John Byles is now sending them off by different routes."

"It is well," replied De Boteler; "but can you learn no certain tidings of his course?" Calverley answered, that the only intelligence he had yet obtained, was, that Holgrave had been seen at dusk on the previous evening, standing at his door, talking to his wife's brother.

"What! the daring monk who thrice entered this castle to insult its lord?"

"Steward," said Isabella, turning quickly to Calverley, "see that the vassals have obeyed your orders. Remember, the varlet *must* be found!" And, as Calverley withdrew, she said to De Boteler with a thrill of apprehension, "Roland, do you not remember the words of the monk when our first darling was lying a corpse? '*The blight has fallen on the blossom—beware of the tree!*'" De Boteler's countenance changed while she spoke, from anger to thoughtfulness.

"It is strange, Isabella, that suspicion never fell upon the monk! He is more artful than the knave Holgrave; and out of revenge for the church being defeated, might have——"

"No, no," interrupted the lady, "it was Holgrave who stole my child, although the monk, perhaps, counselled the deed. At all events, he knows of the bondman's flight."

"Yes, yes, there is little doubt of that: but how can we come at the truth? Sudbury still retains his wrath against us, and would oppose an arrest; and even could he be waylaid, and brought hither, he is stubborn, and might refuse to answer."

"I will write to the abbot," said Isabella.

"Write to Simon Sudbury?"

"Yes, De Boteler," continued the lady, "I will write to him, and try to sooth his humour. You think it a humiliation—I would humble myself to the meanest serf that tills your land, could I learn the fate of my child. The abbot may have power to draw from this monk what he would conceal from us; I will at least make the experiment." The lady then, though much against De Boteler's wish, penned an epistle to the abbot, in which concession and apologies were made, and a strong invitation conveyed, that he would honour Sudley Castle by his presence. The parchment was then folded, and despatched to the abbot.

Calverley, after seeing the last lingering vassal fairly beyond the bounds of Sudley, proceeded himself to search in the immediate vicinity of the castle; but at the close of the day returned without having obtained the slightest clue. The hue and cry was equally unsuccessful; and those engaged in the pursuit also returned, cursing Holgrave and the steward for giving them so much fruitless trouble. The idea now prevalent at the castle was, that Holgrave had concealed himself somewhere in the neighbourhood, till the vigilance of pursuit should relax, when he would attempt to effect his escape. Fresh orders were, therefore, issued, to search every house, free or bond, on the estate. Calverley himself superintended the scrutiny; questioned, menaced, nay, even entreated, but in vain; nobody could tell, except the smith, because nobody knew; and *he* would have preferred knocking Calverley on the head, and abiding the consequences, to betraying a man whom he had assisted thus effectually to elude detection.

The Lady Isabella's application to the abbot had been attended with as little effect. Sudbury had met with readiness the overtures of reconciliation, and in accordance with her desire, had interrogated the monk; but Father John evaded his questions with a firmness which gave offence to his superior, and convinced De Boteler and his lady, that he knew much more than he chose to reveal. Spies were set about his path, but nothing was

gained — nothing discovered to prove that any communication existed between the fugitive Holgrave and the obdurate ecclesiastic.

It was about a month subsequent to this, that one morning, as Turner was making the anvil ring with the ponderous strokes of his hammer, two retainers from the castle entered the shed, and delivered an order from De Boteler for his immediate attendance. Wat laid the hammer on the anvil, and, passing the back of his right hand across his forehead, to clear away the large drops that stood there, looked with a kind of smile at the men, as he said,

"My lord wants me at the castle, does he?"

"Yes."

"But does my lord remember the last time I was there? He did n't want me *then* — he told me he should n't be counselled by such as *I*. There is no rent due, and I have done no wrong — and there can be no business for me at the castle."

"But, Turner," said the men, "we must not take this answer to the baron."

"Well, then," replied Wat, "tell him that Wat Turner says he has made a vow never to enter the hall of Sudley Castle again; and if you do n't take that answer, you get no other."

It was to no purpose that the retainers strove to persuade him to send a reply more respectfully worded. The smith, without heeding them, put the iron that had lost its heat into the embers, and ordered the man at the bellows to blow on: and the messengers, after waiting a few minutes, left the shed without obtaining another syllable. They, however, shortly returned, and with so peremptory a mandate, that the smith, not wishing, from prudential motives, to provoke hostility, threw down his hammer: and first making himself, as he said, a little decent, proceeded with the retainers to Sudley Castle.

Turner thus far complied with the baron's order — but not a foot would he step beyond the court-yard. He had vowed, he said, when Holgrave's freedom had been denied him, never to cross the threshold of the hall again; and without being absolved by a priest, he would not break his vow, even at King Edward's bidding. De Boteler, accustomed to implicit obedience, was much provoked at this obstinacy, and, as was natural, his first orders were to use force; but it instantly occurred, that no force could compel the smith to speak, and it would be to little purpose to have the man before him, if he refused to answer his interrogatories. The compulsory orders were therefore countermanded, and Calverley was desired to try what persuasion might effect; but De Boteler could not have chosen one less likely to influence the smith. The instant that Calverley strove to induce a compliance, Turner might be compared to a man who buttons up his pocket when some unprincipled applicant commmences his petition for a loan — for not only was his resolution strengthened not to enter the hall, but he also determined not to answer any question that might be put to him, even should De Boteler condescend, like Edward to Llewellin, to come over to him. But De Boteler was so incensed that the stubborn artizan should presume to hold out even against solicitation, that, in all probability, he would not have troubled himself farther with one from whom there was so little satisfaction to be expected, had it not been for the remonstrances of the lady, who was instigated by Calverley to have him interrogated respecting Holgrave's flight. In compliance, therefore, with her earnest desire, he condescended so far to humour the smith, as to retire into the adjoining apartment; and as Turner's vow had not extended beyond the hall, he had no longer a pretext for refusing to attend.

The frown was still on the baron's brow when Turner was introduced; but Isabella, veiling her displeasure under a smile of courtesy, said, with gentle condescension,

"It would be well, my good friend, if all men observed their vows as religiously as you do."

She paused. The smith bent his head in silence, and the lady proceeded —

"My lord has heard from the steward that you are an honest tenant, and has directed that any alteration you may require in your tenement shall be attended to, and that the field which lies at the back of your dwelling be added to it without additional rent; and, as it gives me pleasure to encourage the industrious, in any request you may make, my interest shall not be wanting. And now, honest man," added she, with even more suavity, "my lord has a question to ask — it is but a simple inquiry, and I feel assured that a person of such strict probity will not evade it — know you Stephen Holgrave's place of concealment?" As she put the interrogatory, she looked earnestly in the smith's face.

Turner was prepared for direct and haughty questions from the baron; but the covert and gentle manner of the lady rather disconcerted him: however, though he paused with a momentary embarrassment, yet, contrary to Isabella's expectation, he firmly, but with a kind of native propriety, replied —

"Noble lady, I *cannot* tell you where Stephen Holgrave is concealed."

"It is false, knave!" said De Boteler, who had listened with impatience to the persuasive address of his lady — "it is false! We are positively informed that you aided and abetted the flight of this bondman, and that you alone can give tidings of him."

It was in vain that the baroness cast on him a glance that said he had adopted a wrong course — it was in vain that his own better judgment whispered, that he ought to leave the management of the affair in the hands of her who could smile and sooth, when she had an object to attain, without the least violence to her feelings: his anger was set in motion, and it would have required an influence much stronger than the Lady Isabella's to have calmed its ebullition. Although De Boteler spoke so rudely, yet Turner was pleased that it was *he* whom he had now to contend with; and, looking doggedly at the angry baron, he said,

"My Lord de Boteler, boy or man, Wat Turner was never a knave, and —"

"My good man," said the lady, preventing the interruption she saw De Boteler was about to make — "my good man, my lord was informed that you were privy to the bondman's flight; and if you were so far (as you considered) his friend, I commend your prudent reserve — but I pledge my word that no harm is intended him: and if he clears his conduct to my lord's satisfaction, his condition may be better than it has ever yet been ——"

"Isabella, make no promises," interrupted De Boteler — "parley not with such as he." And, striving to calm himself so as to speak dispassionately, he added, turning to the smith, "Walter Turner, you are acquainted with the spot that shelters Stephen Holgrave, and I insist that you instantly reveal it."

"And think you, my lord," said Turner, firmly, "that if Stephen Holgrave had told me of his hiding-place, Wat Turner would be the man to bring him back to his bondage? No, no! I never did any thing yet to be ashamed of."

"Do you know, blacksmith," interrupted the baron, still endeavouring to appear unruffled, "that you are not talking to one of your own class, but to one who has the will — aye, and the power — to compel a satisfactory reply? And I insist," he added, raising his voice, "that you tell me where the bondman abides!"

Isabella saw, by the undaunted look with which the smith regarded De

Boteler, that no good would result from this interview; and as she could not, with propriety, interfere any further, she arose, and left the apartment.

"Do you hear me, varlet?" asked De Boteler, in a furious tone, as the smith delayed an answer.

"Why, my lord," answered Turner, with composure, "I told you before, that if I knew where Holgrave was, I would not tell."

"Then you admit knowing where he is hidden?"

"It matters little, my lord, whether I do or not," replied the smith, in something of a sullen tone; "whatever I know, I shall keep to myself."

"Say you so, knave?" returned the enraged baron; and then, turning to an attendant, he ordered that a few retainers should instantly attend.

During the moments that elapsed between the order and the appearance of the men, De Boteler threw himself back in his chair, and was apparently engaged in counting the number of studs in his glittering sword-hilt; and the smith (who, although he felt himself a freeman, yet, from a natural principle of deference, did not consider he was at liberty to depart until the baron had given him an intimation to that effect) stood, with something of an embarrassed air, awaiting the permission, and the idea every instant crossing his mind whether this summoning of the retainers could have any reference to him. But his suspense was not of long duration — the retainers entered, and De Boteler, raising himself in his chair, said, pointing to Turner,

"Bear that man to the tumbrel — an hour or two there may teach him better manners!"

"Bear *me* to the tumbrel! ha, ha, ha," exclaimed the smith, with that indescribable kind of laugh, combining derision and defiance.

The retainers approached to execute the order. Turner glanced hastily around, but no weapon, or any portable article that might serve the purpose of one, was at hand: he, therefore, had only to step back a few paces, and to place himself in the best attitude of resistance he could.

"By saint Nicholas!" said he, pushing back the sleeves of his jerkin, and extending his long sinewy arm, "the first man of ye that lays a finger on Wat Turner, had better have shrived himself; for there is that in this hand (clenching his fist in the face of the man who was nearest, and speaking through his set teeth) — there is that in this hand will make ye remember!"

The men paused; — it could scarcely have been through fear, when four or five were opposed to one, even though that one looked at this moment rather formidable; but probably they waited for farther orders, before making the apartment a scene of contention, and, perhaps, of mortal strife.

"Aye," resumed Wat, as he observed the hesitation of the retainers; "stand back, and I'll warrant ye I shall go quicker than the whole tribe of ye could drag me. This is no place for me, where, if a man does n't tell what's in his mind, the halloo is given to the pack to put him in the — tumbrel! ha, ha, ha!" Taking advantage of their indecision, he had walked on to the door of the apartment while speaking, and his bitter derisive laugh was heard as he crossed the threshold.

"Follow him!" said De Boteler, in a voice that was reverberated from the high carved roof, "and place him instantly in the tumbrel, if the whole force of the castle should be employed." But it was easier, however, to command than to enforce; the whole strength of the castle could not attack a single individual; and Wat, on leaving the apartment, had rushed through the doorway that separated the two court-yards, and, seizing a large splinter of wood that lay on the ground, now stood with his back against the wall of the stables.

Those to whom the command was addressed now encompassed the smith,

who, with astonishing dexterity, warded off the blows that were aimed at his hands and arms to compel him to relinquish the stave. His hands were bleeding, and his arms swollen; but his heart was like the roused lion's, and, if unable to conquer his opponents (for the exertion of parrying prevented him from dealing blows), he would undoubtedly have at least tired their mettle, had not a stable boy, who saw the fray from a window above, mischievously flung down a quanity of chaff on his head. In the surprise and annoyance this created, the weapon was wrested from his relaxed grasp, and the retainers fastened on him like wolves. In the manual struggle which now succeeded, Turner was dragged towards the tumbrel; but, as it met his eyes, he seemed suddenly endowed with more than human strength. The retainers fell around him, either from blows or kicks, and blood streamed copiously. At length De Boteler (who would not permit steel to be used against an unarmed man), ashamed that so unequal a conflict should so long continue, ordered that, instead of the tumbrel, Turner should be conveyed to the keep. This, after much resistance, was effected, and a prison-door was, for the first time, locked on the intrepid smith.

The Abbot of Winchcombe had now become a frequent guest at Sudley. The feelings enkindled by the detention of Edith, and the defiance of De Boteler, had passed away and were forgotten. Expiatory presents had been made to the abbey, and a promise given that a gift of land should be added to its already ample endowments. Sudbury, as we have already related, had questioned the monk respecting Holgrave and the child, and, from the evasive replies returned, was strongly inclined to favour the opinion of Isabella, who now, that the application to the smith had failed, became more urgent that some compulsory measure should exact an unequivocal avowal from Father John. The wishes of one so powerfully connected as the wife of the influential De Boteler, were, no doubt, of some weight with the abbot; but these certainly would not have influenced him so far as to induce him to adopt a conduct incompatible with the dignity of his character, had not Father John been known of late to express strange opinions; and the monk, though poor and friendless, was one of those whose opinions somehow (it can scarcely be said why) appeared of consequence. It was true that, although but an illiterate bondman when he gained admission to the cloister, he was now, if not entirely the most learned, undoubtedly the most talented and industrious within its walls: no monk transcribed so much, none was more devout, more strict in discipline, more attentive to the numerous and fatiguing duties of his situation as a secular monk in administering the sacraments, attending the sick, &c. But, though thus exemplary, strange things were said of him. He had been heard to declare, for instance, that villeinage was oppressive, and in every sense unjust; and that every villein was justified, whenever an opportunity offered, in escaping from bondage. These opinions, although not sufficiently heinous to have subjected him to ecclesiastical punishment, were yet considered sinful; — the first as uncharitable, and the second as subversive of good order: and they induced Sudbury to act with more rigour than he would have been inclined to adopt had there been only the vague suspicions of the lady to urge his interference. Father John, therefore, was again questioned, and commanded, by his vow of obedience, to disclose the retreat of Holgrave, and reveal all he knew respecting the lost child; but threats availed not. In the midst of these adjurations, the abbot received a paper from a messenger, who burst breathless into the room, with the intelligence that the Lady Isabella had fallen down in a swoon in her own chamber.

While perusing this document, and more especially an enclosure it contained, he looked first amazed and then enraged, casting ever and anon a look of much meaning upon the monk, who stood cold and calm by his side.

"Read!" thundered the abbot suddenly, as, after a moment's hesitation, he thrust the parchment into the monk's hand. "This paper was found on the dressing-table of the Baroness of Sudley!"

Father John read aloud as follows: —

"Thy child is not dead, but sleepeth. At thy bidding he shall awaken, and make the desolate heart rejoice. Let Roland de Boteler, Baron of Sudley, swear, at the altar of St. Peter's, that, on the day on which his lost child shall be restored, he will release for ever those whom, under the law of villeinage, he can claim as his property. Let him swear this, and, as the Lord liveth, the child shall be restored!"

"Now what think you of this?" demanded the abbot, when he had finished.

"The sentiments," replied Father John, calmly, "resemble, in part, those that I have publicly avowed."

"And this is all! — you refuse explanation! you do not even deny the authorship! Are you not aware, that he who could obtain access to the chamber now must necessarily be considered the robber of the child?"

"And what is that to me?" coldly demanded the monk.

"Hence, sir! away, unworthy son of the church! away for the present — we shall soon find a means of bending your stubborn heart!"

Father John's situation from this period became every day more irksome. He was forbidden to approach the sacraments, and strictly interdicted from administering them. His brethren passed without noticing him, and he was not permitted to eat at the board common to all. A small table was set apart, on which his bowl and platter stood, and hints were given that if his obstinacy continued, he would, ere long, be confined to his cell.

It was reported that the Lady Isabella had been in a state of great excitement from the moment of perusing the parchment — that she had urged De Boteler to make the required vow, alleging that if the contract was not fulfilled, the engagement would, of course, be void — and, it was added, that De Boteler himself had at first appeared disposed to comply; but on farther consideration, had resolved to wait till something further should transpire.

There lived, at this time, at the distance of nearly a mile beyond the town, a man named Giles Gray; and about ten years previous to the time of which we write, there were few round Winchcombe of whom it might with more reason be imagined that his days would pass amidst peace and plenty. Possessed of a farm, which, if not the most extensive in the parish, was well cultivated and fruitful, and sufficiently ample to place him among the class of respectable yeomen; with a little gentle wife, two fine rosy children, and an exuberance of animal spirits, he seemed placed above the chances of fortune. But his wife fell into a consumptive illness, which, rendering her incapable of attending to the domestic affairs, her sister, a pretty, active young woman, kindly left her home, at Campden, to take charge of the family. In less than a twelvemonth the wife died, and Jane, the sister, still continued to superintend, and much was she praised for her management and for the attention she paid the little orphans. However, many months had not elapsed, ere strange whisperings went through the neighbourhood; — groups might be seen conversing earnestly together; — and if it chanced that Gray's sister-in-law passed, every eye was turned up, and every head significantly shook, and Gray was at length compelled, in vindication of Jane, to produce a certificate, setting forth that they were married at St. Crypt's Church, in the city of Gloucester, about six months previously.

But it would have been better for Giles to have left his wife to the mercy of uncharitable whisperers than to have adopted this mode of justification. The first intimation of his indiscretion was signified by an order from the

parish priest instantly to separate, and by public penance to merit absolution from the church. A month was allowed them. The four weeks elapsed, and the incorrigible pair were still living beneath the same roof; and, on the fifth Sunday, at St. Peter's, the parish church of Winchcombe, the congregation were assembled, the tapers lighted, and the missal opened. Some words were then said, acquainting the people of the crime of Giles and Jane, and cautioning them against holding any communication with such obdurate sinners. The bell was next rung — the book closed, — the tapers were extinguished, and the incestuous pair pronounced accursed of God and man. This ceremony was performed thrice; and when the unfortunate Jane was seized with the pangs of child-birth, Gray, after having the doors of fifty houses shut in his face, as he implored assistance for his wife, was compelled to go to Campden, a distance of thirteen miles, to try what the force of nature might effect. There his application was not rejected; the aged mother, although her heart was breaking at the lost and degraded state of her youngest child, yet consented to accompany Gray; and disguising herself, that none might recognise her, hastened to Winchcombe.

Jane had been delivered of a dead child about two hours previous to the arrival of her mother, and lay trembling and exhausted, in a January evening, without light or fire. A fever, with violent periodical shiverings, was the consequence. She slowly recovered; but the two little children, fondling over their sick mother (as they called the unfortunate woman), caught the fever, and in a few days, probably through want of care, expired.

Things had been getting worse and worse ever since. No labourer would work for them — no neighbour would purchase from, or sell them any necessaries, and all the produce of Gray's individual industry was carried to Gloucester; for at the populous market of that city, he sold and bought without it being known that the ban of excommunication cut him off from all social intercourse with his kind.

It would have been still worse if Gray had rented his farm of one whose religious principles were more defined than De Boteler's; but even he, though he would not drive them from the soil, refused to take recompense for the small portion of land that the man himself could attend to, and even this portion, small as it was, presented little of the healthy and cultivated appearance that his broad fields had formerly exhibited. Sickness often came; and there was the enervating consciousness of being a shunned and solitary man. Then, too, there were domestic bitterness and mutual upbraidings and reproaches; and often did the once industrious and lighthearted Giles, instead of saving his hay or cutting down his slender crop, lie the whole day beneath the shadow of a tree, brooding in gloomy discontent over the dark prospect before him.

"Father John, who, for obvious reasons, had not been forbidden to leave the abbey, was, one evening, in the course of a solitary walk, accosted by the wife of this man.

"Holy Father," said she, sinking on her knees before him, and raising up a countenance which exhibited the traces of deep mental suffering: "Holy Father, hear me?" This entire day have I been watching for you. — Oh, do not leave me!" she continued in agony, as the monk, disengaging his habit from her grasp, with a shudder of disgust, would have hurried on. "Oh! do not leave me!" she repeated, clinging to his dress. "Have I not heard, when it was permitted me to enter the house of prayer, that the blessed Lord hath suffered a sinful woman to kneel at his feet and wash them with her tears! Alas! she could not be as sinful as I, but —" she bent down her face upon her hands —

"Unhappy woman!" said the monk, in a tone that seemed to encourage her to proceed — "what would you of me?"

"Oh, father!" said she, raising up her eyes, that were filled with tears; "it is not for myself — it is for *him*."

Again the monk looked stern, and strove to loosen her hold, but she held with too firm a grasp to be shaken off, and the trembling diffidence of her speech changed into the eager and fervent supplication of one who would not be denied.

"Oh, father! he is dying — the death-sweats are upon him! and can I, who brought him into sin, see him die under the curse of God? Oh, mercy, holy father! have pity upon him! — his soul is repentant — indeed it is! We have vowed, if he should recover, to part for ever — oh, come to him!"

"I dare not — let me go! Is he not excommunicated? has he not lived on in sin? Let me go."

"Never! never!" replied the woman, with a convulsive scream. "No one but you dare I ask — and I will not leave my hold, unless you force me! You know not what is in the heart: even in the last hour there may be — there is mercy. Let him not die with the curse upon him — and, by all your hopes in this life, and by the blessedness that will gladden you hereafter, do not deny the last hope of the wretched!" The woman again bent down her head, as if exhausted by the intensity of her feelings.

Father John gazed upon her with a look of compassion; and, though aware of the danger he should incur, he said, after a short struggle,

"I will go. Can we measure the mercy of the Lord?"

"Will you?" said the rejoiced creature, starting on her feet, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven — "may the Lord grant the prayer that you pray!"

It so happened, that no one passed during this interview; and, as the monk followed the rapid steps of the woman, he often looked anxiously around, hoping he might not be observed.

As they entered the dwelling, a child came running forward to meet its mother: Father John shrank from the little one, as if its touch would have been pollution, and approached the sick man. His dim eyes brightened as they fell upon the monk, and he strove to rise in his bed, but sank back on the pillow.

"Do not disturb yourself," said the father, in a soothing tone; and, as the wretched wife left the room, he prepared himself to listen to the dark catalogue of long-growing crime. Father John exhorted and encouraged, and with all the fervour of his soul joined the dying man's prayer for mercy. It seemed as if the spirit had lingered for the parting consolations of religion; for scarcely were the last prayers said, ere a slight tremor was preceptible through the whole frame; the eyes fixed, the jaw fell, and the soul went forth to judgment.

Father John, rejoicing that he had listened to the woman's prayer, knelt a few minutes in earnest supplication for the departed, and then rose; but ere he left the cottage, he gently informed the unfortunate Jane of the event.

It would be a vain task to attempt a description of what followed — of the agony with which she threw herself by the bed, and kissed the cold hand and cold cheek, and upbraided herself as the cause of his sins, and sorrows, and early death; of the desolation that filled her heart as she looked on the dead, and felt that there was no one now, except the little child, with whom she dare claim affinity; of the feeling with which, on the following evening, assisted by a singularly charitable neighbour, she deposited the body of him she had loved in an unhallowed grave, at the bottom of the garden, and went forth in the darkness of that night, with the child in her arms, to seek, as a wandering mendicant, the charity of strangers.

It is said, that charity covers a multitude of sins; but how often does an

uncharitable spirit convert that into sin which may in reality be an act of benevolence; or, at worst, nothing more than the weakness of humanity? Father John's attention to the dying man was thus distorted. He was unfortunately perceived parleying with the woman, and followed to Gray's cottage, by a person employed to watch his motions. The information was instantly conveyed to Calverley; and as Father John left the cottage, he started at beholding two officers from the abbey, standing at a sufficient distance to avoid the contamination of the dwelling, but near enough to prevent the egress of any one without their observation. Concealment was impossible; so he stepped boldly forward, and with the brothers one on each side, proceeded in silence to the abbey, where he was instantly conducted to his cell, and the door closed and bolted upon him.

His heart swelled for an instant as the brothers retired; but the indignant flash presently passed from his eyes, and he rejoiced that no selfish consideration had prevented him from, as far as in him lay, saving the guilty soul of the deceased.

The next morning the monk was summoned before the abbot; and with the same calm and dignified demeanour that generally characterized him, he obeyed the summons. The two brethren who had conducted him from Gray's cottage, stood at the table, and the abbot proceeded to say, that upon the oath of a respectable witness, he had been observed conversing with an excommunicated woman, and accompanying her to her house, and that those two brethren (pointing to the officers) were ready to avow they had beheld him leave it. "Now," continued Sudbury, "what have you to say? Did you converse with the woman?"

"My lord," replied the monk, "I listened to her earnest prayers."

"Did you accompany her home?"

"I did, my lord."

"For what purpose?"

"To calm the last moments of a sinner."

"Did you not know that his crime had shut him out from the aid of religion?"

"Yes, my lord; but I was assured, that if he survived, their sinful intercourse would cease, and that by public penance they would strive to obtain forgiveness."

"Have you never heard of the fallacy of death-bed promises?" The monk was silent.

"Did you administer the sacrament of penance to the incestuous wretch?"

"I did, my lord," returned the monk firmly.

"A most obedient son of the church, truly," said the abbot, (the calmness with which he had before spoken, changing into a quicker and harsher tone.) You have read that obedience is better than sacrifice; and yet, though suspended from the exercise of the priestly functions, you have presumed of your own will to absolve a sinner, who, setting at naught the voice of the church, has lived in sin — a scandal to his neighbours, and a dreadful example of hardness of heart."

"My lord, I was unwilling that a soul should be lost——"

"Rebellious son! Do you dare to justify your conduct? But this comes of admitting base blood to the privileges of the gentle. What better could be expected of a man who held your principles? Now hear me! You have sinned against the authority of the holy church, and violated your vow of obedience. You have also exhibited a most contumacious spirit in refusing to recant those pernicious opinions you professed, and to answer the questions I before put to you. Retire now to your cell, and there remain solitary for eight days, that grace may have power to operate on your soul; and then, if you still remain incorrigible, you shall be degraded from your

order. Retire," he added, waving his hand, and pointing to the officers to lead him away.

Father John raised his eyes as Sudbury repeated the threat of degradation. He had expected censure; but he was not prepared for this extremity of punishment; and the wounded feelings of a high spirit spoke in the silent glance he cast upon the abbot, as he turned proudly away, and followed his conductors to the cell.

In eight days he was again brought before Sudbury; but solitude had effected no change in his sentiments. Three days more were granted, and on the fourth, all the members of the community were assembled, and the monk was led from his cell to the chapel. There, in the presence of the brethren, he was once more asked whether he would publicly confess his fault in administering a sacrament to an excommunicated man, and profess his desire to perform public penance for the scandal he had given; and when he made no reply, he was asked if he would disclose the place of concealment of the bondman Holgrave. To this, also, no reply was given; and finally he was promised, that if he knew aught of the stolen child of the Lord de Boteler, and would unreservedly declare all he knew — if he had not actually assisted in the abduction — all his past errors should be forgiven, in consideration of this act of justice. But Father John knew, that although by a disclosure he might avert his own fate, yet he would assuredly draw down inevitable ruin on Holgrave, and that the hopes he had himself cherished — for the reader cannot be ignorant that it was he who was the author of the mysterious document — would utterly fall to the ground; and with that noble-mindedness, that would rather sacrifice self than betray the confidence of another, he still refused to answer.

Sudbury scarcely expected such firmness; and there was a minute or two of breathless excitement and profound silence through the chapel, as the abbot ordered two brothers to approach the obdurate monk, and strip off the habit he had rendered himself unworthy longer to wear.

Father John's lips grew pale and quivered; and there was a slight tremor perceptible through his whole frame, as the monks reluctantly proceeded to obey the command of their superior. His eyes were fixed upon the ground; he dared not raise them, for the chequers of the pavement seemed indistinct and trembling; and yet for twelve days he had been preparing himself to meet this catastrophe with firmness. The outer garments were removed; their place was supplied by a coarse woollen jerkin and cloak, and then the monk, for a moment resuming the energy that was more natural to his character than the subdued spirit he had as yet evinced, stood forth from the brothers who had been the unwilling instruments in the act of degradation, and fixing his eyes upon the abbot, who stood upon the topmost step of the altar, with his face turned towards the brotherhood, said in a tone that filled the whole chapel — "My lord abbot, I shall appeal against this severity. It is not because I administered a sacrament to a sinner that I am thus degraded — it is because the Lord de Boteler desires to humble me — because he foolishly imagines, that a spirit conscious of its own strength would bend beneath injustice and oppression, that I am thus dealt with. But remember, my lord, that 'with what measure you mete to others, the same shall be meted to you again.'" So saying, without waiting for the ceremony of being driven from the gates, he turned and with a quick step left the abbey.

But here his firmness again forsook him; he had stepped from his home — from the quiet seclusion that was endeared to him by years of residence and holy recollections, into a strange world, to struggle and contend — to sin, and be sinned against; and he leaned against the abbey wall with such a feeling of desolation as a child may be supposed to feel, as he bends over the grave of his last surviving parent. A few bitter drops of wounded

pride, and deep regret, forced their way down his cheeks, and it was not until he became conscious that a group of persons of different ages and sexes were silently and sympathizingly gazing upon him, that it occurred to him he ought to remove to a less conspicuous situation.

CHAPTER III.

De Boteler and his lady had left Sudley to be present at some festival in London, the day previous to that on which Father John was degraded; but, from the firmness he had hitherto shown, the result was anticipated, and Calverley had received orders to arrest the monk on his being dismissed the abbey, and to confine him in the castle, until the baron's return.

The degraded priest proceeded slowly amidst the sympathizing crowd that attended his steps. Several times he stopped, with the intention of requesting the people to return home and leave him to pursue his journey as he might, but he could not collect that firmness of demeanour which had been wont to distinguish him; and ashamed further to betray his weakness, he each time passed on without uttering a word. They had cleared the town, and were crossing the bridge on the left, over the Isborne, when Calverley, and about half-a-dozen retainers well mounted, darted from the bridge into the high road. Four of the men, springing from their horses, surrounded the monk, and were about placing him on the back of one of the steeds, when the faculties, which had been for the moment chained by astonishment and indignation, burst forth with unexpected energy, and, with a form expanded to its full height, and an eye flashing fire, he shook off their rude grasp, and stepping back, demanded by what authority he was thus molested.

"By the authority of the Baron de Boteler," replied Calverley, as the monk fixed his eyes sternly upon him.

"It is false!" he replied, "no human law have I violated, and to no man's capricious tyranny will I submit."

"It becomes the bondman to speak thus of his lord," said Calverley with a sneer.

"I am not a bondman — nor is the Baron de Boteler my lord," said Father John, in a deep, collected voice.

"O, I crave your pardon, good father," returned Calverley, smiling; "I mistook you for one John Ball, the son of a bondman of this barony."

"My name is John Ball, and I have been the son of a bondman, insulting craven," replied the father, indignantly; — "but I owe the Baron de Boteler no allegiance — you well know that the priest can be servant to none save he who created the bond and the free."

"And this is the habit of some new order, that is to be honoured by being adopted by the unpriestly son of a bondman!" said Calverley, pointing, in derision, at the coarse woollen dress of the monk. Something burst from the lips of the latter, but it was lost in Calverley's sudden command to seize him. The men again approached, but the first who caught the monk's arm fell to the ground, stunned and bleeding.

Another succeeded, and met the same fate — then another, and another; — but at length, overpowered by numbers, the gallant priest was bound, and placed before one of the retainers on horseback.

There was now a simultaneous rush made to the bridge by the crowd, who stood watching the horsemen till they entered the castle; when they formed into groups, wondering at what they had just beheld — at what might be the fate of the monk, and at their own supineness in suffering

half-a-dozen men, even though armed and mounted, to carry him off without a blow.

That evening, Wat Turner, who had been liberated from the keep, after a short confinement, was leaning on his folded arms, which rested for support on the sill of the aperture in his shed, that served the purpose of a window. The forge fire had died away; the servitor and the journeyman had been dismissed; but Wat still lingered, as if he could there indulge his reflections more freely than in his own house. His eyes were bent on the ground, and so far was he lost in some waking dream, that, until his name was repeated in rather a loud tone, he was not conscious of any one's approach.

"Ah, Tom Merritt!" said the smith, raising his head and recognising in the dusk a stout active young man, a mason, who resided at Winchcombe.

"Have you heard the news, Wat?" asked the mason.

"No — I have enough to think of, without troubling my head about news!"

"Aye, aye, true — but did n't you hear of Father John?"

"Yes, I heard they dealt badly enough with him, because he would not betray poor Stephen — and for giving the sacrament to that unfortunate scape-grace. They told me he was to be turned from the abbey to-day, so I sent Dick with a few groats to help him on a little — but I do n't know yet, whether the lad is come back, for I have not seen him."

"O, he is among the group that stands looking at the castle walls, I dare say," said Merritt. "Did you not hear he was thrown into prison?"

"What! my Dick," asked the smith, eagerly, starting up from his posture at the window, and his listless countenance suddenly becoming animated.

"No, no, not the boy," replied Merritt, rather impatiently.

"Oh," said the smith, again sinking upon the window frame; and then, as if perfectly comprehending what had been said, he added, as a bitter smile passed across his lips, "In prison did you say? What had he done that he should be caged? Refused to say where Stephen is hid?"

"Maybe so; but I can only tell you this — that when the poor monk was turned out of the abbey, Calverley seized upon him like a dog, or a thief."

"Calverley, the fiend!" interrupted the smith, fiercely. "If I could only give that beggar's vagabond a sample of what this hand could do, I think I should take a good night's rest — and that 's what I have not done since the night they gave *me* a lodging in the castle dungeon; and you say that Calverley has put him in prison? Now, I tell you what, Tom Merritt," continued Turner, "if there be a drop of man's blood in your body, they shan't keep him there."

"Will you help?" asked the young mason, eagerly.

"Will I help, man! Aye, that I will, with a good stomach — Why, if they shut up a dog that I cared for within those four stone walls, I would help him out! — But that monk is a holy man — and they think to frighten him as they thought to frighten me. Tom," added Turner, leaning through the aperture, and laying his hand upon the young man's shoulder, "I have never held up my head like a man since that night. To be set upon like a fox! To be dragged and hauled, and thrown into a prison — Tom! (grasping the arm of the other with a force that made him shrink) when I think of this in the day when I am at work, I throw down the hammer, for my blood boils, and I could not strike a sure blow for hours after, if a king's ransom was offered me. But, by St. Nicholas! 't is little work that Wat Turner has done ever since — all has gone wrong — but I shall soon leave the parish altogether — and then, maybe, things will go on better. For

here, if a man looks at me, it seems as if he would say, 'Turner, you have been in jail!' Tom Merritt, never boast or brag of anything!"

"Indeed, master Turner, I have as little as any man to brag of; for — if — it had n't been for the watching and the advice of poor Father John, my old mother might have been this day hanging her head with shame, instead of looking up as bold as any of them, and saying, 'my son,' or 'my Tom,' as well as the best."

"That 's all very well; but, Tom, as I just said, never boast. I used to brag that there never was a woman dishonest, nor a man a rogue, in my family; and that none of the name of Turner ever had a key turned upon him. And you see what it 's come to."

"Aye, aye, master Turner," replied Merritt (impatient of a long speech, yet knowing the smith's irascible temper too well to interrupt him), I do n't know what will come next! Here were you, who paid scot and lot, and cared for no one — see how you were treated! And now here is the holy father (with whom, though he got into disgrace at the abbey, one would have thought, for the sake of their own souls, they would n't meddle), dragged off like a common thief; and if we do not go to the rescue, the saints preserve us! who can tell if he will ever come out again? for there is none but poor Stephen akin to him."

"Enough! Tom Merritt, this is no place for an honest man. I was to have gone in a few days, but when this night's job is done, I shall just pack up all I can get together into a cart, and let the black fiend, or his imp Calverley, take the rest. Aye! with my wife, the boy, and Will, I shall be out of Gloucester before sunrise — and the sooner the better. But now let us talk of the rescue. How many honest hands can you get among the town's folks?"

"Why," replied Merritt, every mother's soul who could grasp an axe; but I have seen a dozen lads who have sworn to free Father John, or lose their lives. And knowing that you would give a helping hand, I told them so, though without your leave. We have provided paint for our faces. The retainers in the castle are few; and while myself and the men keep guard over them, you, as a smith, know best how to manage the lock of the keep."

"Give me your hand, for a brave fellow," answered Turner, grasping cordially the conceded member. "There are yet a few bold spirits in this manor. I shall seek them, and I 'll warrant they will not leave Wat Turner in the lurch for this bout at least. And as for the lock, the foul fiend himself could not scheme or forge a spring that could keep me out for five minutes. Have your friends together in the field at the back of the town. The nights are dark now; and when I hear the clock strike eight, I shall be with you with all the hands I can gather."

Merritt presently departed; and at eight the two confederates again met. Soon a compact and resolute body of more than twenty men slowly and cautiously proceeded to the castle, and, in double file, ensconced themselves close to the walls, and so contiguous to the gate of usual egress as to be ready to rush in at the first opening. They had stood thus, scarcely drawing breath, for about half an hour; and Merritt, who, with the smith, was at the head of the little band, was about to propose that they should attempt to force an entrance, when the gate opened, and John Byles, who had been engaged upon some business with Calverley, unsuspectingly issued forth.

The smith caught him in his iron grasp ere he closed the gate, and, placing his broad hand over his mouth, held him till a bandage could be properly fastened; then flinging him on the ground, secured him hand and foot, bound him to a tree a few steps distant, and, with the two men who had assisted, rushed after Merritt and the others, who were by this time in the court-yard.

No sound escaped them, and it was only the quick footsteps on the pavement that attracted attention. But ere the alarm was given, the intruders had reached the keep. The smith, with astonishing celerity, picked the huge lock of the lower dungeon, in which, by virtue of former experience, he imagined the father was confined; and beheld, by a torch, which they had now lighted, what fired even the most sluggish soul among them. The monk lay stretched on the ground, nearly divested of covering, with his arms and legs drawn by cords attached to iron rings in the four corners of the cell, and with iron weights pressing upon his chest.

"By St. Nicholas!" said the smith, as he stooped to remove the pressure, while the tears started to his eyes, "this is too bad. 'T is enough to make a heathen sick to see a Christian man served in this manner. Here, Father John, (assisting him to rise,) take my jerkin, and wrap this about you, (snatching a cloak from the shoulders of one of the men.) And now, good father, tell me who did this?"

But the exhausting punishment he had endured for above four hours, together with the cold that penetrated his whole frame, from lying so long exposed on the damp earth, so much impeded his speech, that he could not utter an intelligible word.

"And thus they could serve the Lord's anointed!" said Turner, compassionately, as he looked on the livid and swollen face and trembling limbs of him, whom he had ever, till now, seen with the beauty of holiness giving dignity to his fine countenance, and with the vigour of manhood exhibited in every motion of his muscular form. "Hark!" added the smith, starting — "there is a scuffle outside! Tom Merritt will have enough of them." For an instant he paused, and then, snatching up one of the cords that had tied the monk, he severed it with his axe from the ring in the wall, and passing one end round the monk's arms, fastened the other round his own waist. "Now you will have no trouble in holding by me — keep close. Here, father, could you not hold this? it might keep off some scurvy knave," drawing a sharp wood-knife from his belt, and placing it in the monk's tremulous hand. Turner then ordering the few who were with him to cover the retreat, to keep compact as they followed, and to strike at all within reach, with a keen-edged battle-axe in his right hand, and a formidable club, pointed with steel and firmly bound with iron, in his left, he hurried from the dungeon.

Turner had not been above five minutes in releasing the monk; but, when he came to the entrance of the keep, Merritt and the remainder of the band were sharply engaged with the domestics and the few tenants who kept guard about the castle. The smith pushed on with the monk; passed Merritt and the others, who closed in his rear; and, with that boldness, which often effects what more prudent courage would fail to accomplish, rushed into the midst of the assailants, brandishing his weapons, and shouting defiance at the top of his stentorian lungs.

"Stand aside, ye graceless carles! Shame to ye, cursed cravens, to serve a Christian priest like an infidel! Stand back, or by St. Nicholas! you will never die on your beds!" dealing sturdy blows as he spoke, and pressing forward to a postern beside the principal gate, which was not many paces from the keep.

"'T is the smith! — 't is Wat Turner," shouted a dozen voices.

"Aye, it is Wat Turner," swinging round his club, and levelling a couple of those who were nearest; "and tell the doomed Calverley, if ever Wat Turner sets eyes upon him, we shall not part so easily as I now do from you!"

The weapons wielded by the powerful arm of the smith were not such as those who had little interest in the detention of the monk would care to encounter. The attacks of the castle people relaxed, the energy of the

rescuers increased; the smith, with the skill of a practised workman, loosed the fastenings of the postern gate, and the band, rushing through and forcibly closing it after them, Father John was again a free man.

"Now, lads, to your homes," cried Turner, as they hurried on, "every man of ye. Go by different roads, and you will not be suspected. There is not a man they can swear to but myself. Now, brave hearts, farewell! We may not meet together again: but all the harm I wish ye is, that Calverley and I may soon meet; and if ever he plagues free man or bond among ye after that, say Wat Turner is a coward — Away! Tom Merritt," said he, drawing the mason aside, "do you think of leaving Winchcombe? — you know there are always busy tongues."

"Thank ye, master Turner, but I think I shall wait and see how matters go."

"As you like, Tom — only mind they do n't coop you up. To my mind, there is not a man in the parish safe; — but things will not always go on so. Now, good father, we must be gone."

Merritt bent his knee to the monk, who pronounced a tremulous, but fervent benediction, on the brave fellow, who, bidding a friendly farewell to Turner, and being assured that Father John should remain under his protection as long as he desired, bounded, with the spring of a deer, in the direction of his home.

On the fifteenth of July, 1377, about six months after Father John was liberated by the sturdy smith, the city of London was arrayed with a costliness, and adorned throughout with a radiance in which it was befitting it should appear on the day when the royal diadem was to be placed on the brow of a young and blooming sovereign. Father John was literally borne along in the current that streamed from the adjacent villages to witness the reception of the young king as he passed over the city-bridge from his palace at Sheen.

The day was favourable for the pageant, and the houses seemed to vie with each other in the variety of their silken colours and tinselled ornaments, glowing and glittering in the morning sun. At Cornhill, indeed, the meretricious adornments of art were superseded for a brief space by the simple beauty of nature, and the eye felt a momentary relief in resting on the green grass, and the few shaded trees that covered the open ground. But this green spot was succeeded by a dense mass of dwellings covered with hangings of a richness suitable to the reputed wealth of the city merchants; here the scene was animated in the extreme, — the motions of the crowd became unsteady and irregular, as they were actuated at once by eagerness to hurry on, and a desire to linger among the rainbow diversity of hues around them, and the glowing beauty, which, arrayed with costly elegance, and smiling with anticipated enjoyment, graced every open window.

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed a solitary wanderer among the multitude, as he turned away sorrowfully from the gaudy display, "alas, for this great city, which was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearl — for in one hour will she be made desolate: and, instead of a stomacher, have only a girding of sackcloth, and burning instead of beauty." But he had hardly repeated these words, ere a full stream of music, swelling in the air, overpowered the hum that arose from the multitude, and John Ball — for it was the degraded priest who had spoken — imagining this to be a prelude to the appearance of the young king, mounted upon a door-step, and, from this slight elevation, and favoured by his stature, he obtained a full view of the procession, which almost immediately passed.

First came the band of musicians, mounted on gayly caparisoned horses, and clad in jacks of crimson-damasked satin, laced round with gold; the arms of the city richly emblazoned on the back and front, and the white

velvet sleeves of their jerkins so closely laced and interlaced with gold, as almost to conceal the material on which it was wrought. Then two heralds in white-damasked velvet tabards, worked with gold in a variety of fanciful patterns, and with the city arms also emblazoned on the back. Then the sword-bearer of the chief magistrate, in a suit of polished scale armour, and on a steed accoutred in all the panoply of war. Then the lord mayor himself, in a flowing mantle of rich crimson velvet trimmed with ermine, and with a collar of fine gold adorned with gems, and mounted on a stately horse, whose velvet housing, fringed with gold, almost touched the ground. Two pages suitably attired walked on either side. Next appeared the two sheriffs in their scarlet mantles and gold chains. Then rode the four-and-twenty alderman, two abreast, in loose gowns or robes of damasked velvet or brocaded silk ; and finally, the members of the common council closed the train.

"And is this the apparel and the bravery of merchants?" said the wandering monk within himself, as the splendid cavalcade passed by ; "surely the pomp of royalty cannot surpass this." And John Ball did not draw a wrong conclusion — for when, in about half an hour, the citizens repassed, escorting their youthful sovereign, although there certainly was more cost and elegance, there was less of gorgeous display in the royal than in the civic train.

Richard, then a well-grown boy of eleven, with a countenance the early bloom of which was brightened by an eye of singular intelligence, sat with the ease of a practised rider on a beautiful white palfrey. A cap of purple velvet, trimmed with vair, shaded his fair open forehead and thick bright curls, and a purple mantle, lined and edged with the same costly fur, and confined at the throat with a jewelled clasp, fell back from his shoulders over the housings of the animal. His tunic was of damasked satin, of a bright pink colour, and round the waist was a purple belt, on which a variety of fanciful devices were wrought with pearls. The housings of the palfrey were of velvet, as soft and rich as the royal mantle, and of a similar hue, but enlivened with a profusion of goldsmiths' work, and bordered round with a heavy gold fringe.

Richard looked upon the pomp and circumstance around him with all the pleasure and vanity of a boy, turning every moment with some laughing sally addressed to his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, who rode by his side, or, more frequently, to the young Earl of Arundel, the newly-installed marshal of England. These were followed by Percy, Earl of Northumberland, who had so recently resigned the office of lord marshal, Sir John Burleigh, lord chamberlain, the Earls of Oxford, Kent, Buckingham, &c.

The procession moved on, and the monk followed amidst the mass ; but if he looked wistfully at the pageant, it was only in the hope that some opportunity might offer of publicly addressing the young king, or, rather his uncle, and appealing for justice ; but no opportunity did offer. Indeed, at such a moment, when the good citizens were displaying their taste and munificence, it seemed little less than folly to expect it.

Next to the considerate hospitality (if it may be so termed) of allowing the water-conduit in Cheapside to spout wine, nothing elicited more unqualified approbation from the lower classes than a temporary building erected at the extremity of the before-mentioned place. This building, coloured so as to give an idea of firmly-cemented stone, presented the appearance of a castle with four circular towers and a spacious gateway midway between. The arch stretched across nearly the whole extent of the horse-road, so that the towers terminating the four angles of the gateway stood parallel with the verge of the footpath. In each of the towers, at about five feet from the ground, was an arched doorway, in which stood a young maiden about sixteen, attired in a white flowing robe, with a chaplet

of white roses encircling her hair, and holding a gold cup in her right hand, and a crystal vase in her left. On the castellated summit of the arch, which was about four feet in depth, and just in the centre between the towers, was placed a figure of equal height with the maidens, apparently of gold, representing an angel holding a beautifully wrought crown in its right hand, which, as the procession approached, the angel bent down, and presented to the young king. At the same instant, the two maidens, in the two towers at the east side, filled their cups with wine from a crystal fountain at their right hand, and each, with a graceful smile, proffered the draught to Richard. They then took, from the vase on their left, a handful of golden leaves, which they wafted towards the young king, and concluded by showering a number of counterfeit gold florences on his head.

Richard, after tasting of the cups, presented the first to his uncle, and the other to Arundel; and then each noble, as he passed, took the replenished cup from the hands of the Hebes, and drank health and prosperity to the youthful sovereign.

The monk mingled with the multitude, and saw the merry citizens escort their sovereign to Temple-bar; and then the royal train proceeded, with somewhat less applause than had as yet attended their route. Indeed, after passing the few houses in the suburbs, the solitary dwellings of the nobles stood along the Strand, few and far between — those on the left with their spacious gardens sloping to the river, and the three or four on the right occupying a space as extended as the wall which enclosed the capacious garden attached to the convent of the abbot of Westminster would permit. So large, indeed, was this garden, as to cover the whole space between the gardens of the Strand houses and the site of what is now Long-acre, and eastward and westward the space between Saint Martin's and Drury-lane. When they had passed the pretty village of Charing, with its cross, the procession turned to the left, leaving behind an ample extent of open country, intersected by the Oxford and Reading roads on the west, and bounded on the north by the bold and picturesque range of the Hampstead and Highgate hills.

John Ball pressed on with the multitude; but the immediate proximity of the palace, where all was splendour and motion, was not to the liking of one who till that day had never even dreamed of such things as had now met his sight. His nerves were weak, and he felt irritated at the insolence with which the royal guards, and the pages of the nobles, drove back the populace. His body, too, was weak, and he felt exhausted with his long and fatiguing walk: slowly and sadly he at length retraced his steps to his humble dwelling in the Minories.

The next morning he repaired again to Westminster. The hall of the palace was open for all who chose to enter, and in the midst, elevated on three circular marble steps, was a hollow marble pillar, surmounted by a large gilt eagle, from beneath whose talons flowed wine into four marble basins, of which all who entered were permitted to drink at pleasure. But the monk was no wine drinker; and with the feelings of one unaccustomed to behold extravagance, he turned away from the pillar with an inward reproach to the donor, for not applying the money to a better purpose. He left the hall, and seeing that a path was formed from the gate of the palace to the north-west entrance of the abbey, by a slightly elevated platform, covered with fine crimson cloth of tapestry, he naturally concluded that the king would pass that way to hear mass, and accordingly took his stand as near as possible to the platform. Inexperienced as the monk was in the etiquette of courts, he augured ill for his suit when he saw the royal retainers, with all the insolence of office, range themselves along the platform, and the nobles and their pages, and the officers of the royal household in their splendid dresses, issue from the palace. But when he beheld the young

king himself, with Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, on his right hand, and the Bishop of London on his left, he started back with an exclamation of surprise (for wrapt up in himself, and heedless of the passing gossip of the day, he had not heard of Sudbury's elevation;) and forcing a passage through the assembled crowd, hopeless and despondent, he pursued his journey eastward.

On the sixth morning from the coronation, Richard, satisfied with shows and revelry, left Westminster, and retired with his mother, the fair Joan of Kent, to Kensington, to rest, as it were, his young head upon the maternal bosom. But even here the officious loyalty of his good subjects intruded; for a gorgeous mummery was to be played that night by a hundred and thirty of the wealthiest citizens of London.

A little after night-fall, the beautiful widow of the Black Prince sat in the oriel window of the hall, alternately looking with a mother's eyes upon her son, who was sporting with some of the young nobles, and then again turning to the window to listen for the approach of the citizens. She wore a small conical cap of gold tissue, terminated by a narrow band of purple velvet, closely studded with diamonds, beneath which her hair, soft and glossy as in her girlhood, was parted on her forehead, and fell back on her shoulders in rather a waving mass than distinct curls. Her dress was composed of a petticoat and boddice of saffron-coloured damasked satin, with long hanging sleeves. The boddice sat close to the bust, and was confined up the front by twelve gold studs. A girdle of purple and gold, fastened by a buckle radiant with gems, encircled her waist; and the full long-trained petticoat, beneath which the sharp points of the poleyn, or gold-embroidered shoe, was just visible, was clasped in the front at equal distances by two rose-jewels. A mantle of purple velvet, confined on each shoulder by a diamond brooch, fell in rich folds at her back.

While she was listening and wondering at the lateness of the hour, the hall door was suddenly thrown open, and a blaze of light, and a strain of melody, burst simultaneously upon her senses. A dozen minstrels gayly attired, with timbrels, cornets, sackbuts, and other instruments, preceded by as many youths, carrying large wax tapers or torchlights, formed into a double rank in the hall; in the middle of which passed the city pageant. The lord mayor was at its head, habited as an emperor, in a tunic of cloth of gold, tastefully embroidered with black eagles, and the sleeves, which hung full, confined at the wrist and just below the elbow, by bands of black velvet, on which eagles were represented by small pearls. A mantle of black velvet lined with minever, or powdered ermine, floated from his shoulder. On his right hand was a citizen attired as the pope. Then followed the twenty-four aldermen in the dress of cardinals; then forty-eight in the gowns of say and red cloaks of esquires; — others in the purple robe, lined with fur, peculiar to the knight: while some, still more ambitious, wore the emblazoned surcoat of a baron.

The lord mayor approached the table at which Richard had seated himself, and presenting a box of dice, challenged the young monarch to play. At the same instant, one esquire placed on the table a bowl of gold, another a box containing jewels, and a third a golden cup, as pledges for the civic gambler. Richard accepted the challenge, and of course was permitted to win; and Father John, who stood among the group looking on, seized the favourable moment of royal exultation to prefer his suit. He stepped forward, and kneeling before the young king, to the surprise of all, and to the particular annoyance of the ostentatious citizens, exclaimed —

"Thou art set over the people, and to the Lord's anointed I come to seek for justice."

"Who are you, bold man?" inquired the Duke of Lancaster, impatiently, "who thus break in upon his grace's sport?"

"I am one," replied the monk, rising, and turning calmly to Lancaster, "whom injustice has thus forced ——"

"Hah!" interrupted Sudbury, advancing, and who had hitherto sat apart looking on at the mummery; "is it thou who presumest to approach the presence? Please your grace, and you, noble duke," looking first at Richard and then addressing Lancaster, "he is a monk of our late abbey at Winchcombe, whom, for certain acts of rebellion to our authority, we expelled."

"Why, monk," asked Richard quickly, "why dost thou appeal to us?"

"Pardon me, my liege," interposed Sudbury, "but it becomes not your grace to parley with a degraded monk — a bondman's son! one who would fain excite a spirit of insubordination among the class from which he sprung — who would sow the seeds of disobedience and disorder, and inculcate the absurd doctrine that *all* should be free!"

"Does he indeed hold such opinions, my Lord of Canterbury?" asked Lancaster.

"He does, my lord, and that was one of the causes of his suspension."

"Indeed!" said Lancaster; "next then, I suppose, we shall have the villeins of the soil dictating to their lords, when they hear that a base-born priest has had the audacity to enter the royal presence! Ho! attendants! Away with this serf-sprung shaveling! who holds that all should be free!"

"Triumph not, John of Lancaster, for I say unto you, *all* SHALL be free! You, and it may be that the proudest of you all, may yet quail before the base-born!" and the monk fixed a glance first upon the duke, and then upon Sudbury. The archbishop turned away, while Lancaster, laughing scornfully at the threat, commanded the royal attendants instantly to eject him: and, amidst the jeers of the nobles and citizens, the monk was, without farther parley, hurried away from the hall.

It was something more than a year from the flight of Holgrave, when business called Calverley to Gloucester; and, on passing along Silver Girdle-street, his eye encountered Black Jack, whom he had not before seen since Edith's trial. The foreman accosted him after his usual manner, and whispered that he had something of moment to communicate, if he would accompany him to the Mitre. After some hesitation, Calverley consented, more especially as Black Jack hinted something about news of Holgrave; and, when seated in the room, in which their former interview had taken place, Oakley inquired if the Lord de Boteler, some twelve months ago, did not offer a reward for the apprehension of a certain bondman named — "

"Stephen Holgrave!" eagerly interrupted Calverley. "Have you heard or seen anything of him?"

"By the green wax! steward, one would think the man was your property, you seem so anxious — but now tell *me* has any thing been ever heard of him?"

"No, not a syllable;" replied Calverley in almost a fever of excitement, "but be quick, and say what you know."

"Not so fast, Master Calverley. Did you ever send in the direction of Dean Forest?"

"Yes, yes, many times," answered the impatient steward; "and we offered a large reward to any one who would give information of his retreat?"

"A very pretty method, truly! You know not the miners and forgers of Dean Forest! — why I would stake a noble to a silver penny, that if you

had discovered he was hidden there, and legally demanded him, he would be popped down in a bucket, to the bottom of some mine, where even the art of Master Calverley could not have dragged him to the light of day until the Forest was clear of the pack: — but, however, to speak to the point," perceiving that the steward's patience was well nigh exhausted — "I saw Stephen Holgrave yesterday, in the Forest."

"And did you not arrest him?"

"No, no, steward — Black Jack is not so sick of his life as to throw himself into a furnace. There were not less than one hundred smiths and miners about him; and wo be to the man who should stir their ire."

"I shall back to Sudley," cried the steward, hastily, "and my lord will reclaim him."

"But, steward, surely it is more than a year and a day since I heard the shouting of the hue and cry; and you know the Forest of Dean is privileged. I 'll warrant he knows too much of the bondage of Sudley to venture beyond its precincts."

Calverley did not reply to the interrogatory or allusion, but persisted in saying that the baron would claim the bondman, and that the ranger of the Forest durst not dispute the demand: and, besides, should it be necessary, a royal mandate could be procured.

Black Jack was for an instant vexed, that Calverley did not require his assistance; but, shrewdly guessing that the steward wished to have as little to do with him as possible, and also conscious how small chance there was of succeeding by the direct mode, he laughed within himself at the probability that, after failing to accomplish the object he seemed so much to desire, Calverley would, ultimately, be compelled to apply to him. Indeed, had not the steward's mind been so entirely engrossed by the thoughts of Holgrave, he could not have failed to remark how quickly the foreman, from offering the strongest objections to the plan he proposed adopting, agreed with him that it was the wisest and best.

"But, Master Calverley," said Black Jack, as the former abruptly rose to depart, "is my intelligence worth nothing, setting aside the actual loss I have sustained by sitting for four hours spending my money in this room, when I ought to have been fishing about for jobs?"

"O yes, I had forgotten," (drawing out his purse, and presenting a mark to the foreman;) — "I could not expect you could have troubled yourself in this affair without payment; — are you satisfied?"

"Yes, yes," he replied grumblingly, as he pocketed the coin, "Black Jack is easily satisfied."

"And so is the cormorant," muttered Calverley, as he closed the door after him, and hastened to remount his horse.

Supper was served up in the hall ere Calverley had returned to the castle, and he paused a few moments to consider whether he should immediately impart what he had heard, or defer the communication until the banquet were ended; but this hesitation did not arise from any delicacy he felt in disturbing the social enjoyment of the hour, but guests had arrived that morning, and Calverley, ever since the loss of his ear, had been very reluctant to appear before strangers. But the recollection of his mutilation, thus forced upon his mind, instantly decided him. The delay of a single hour might enable Holgrave to leave the forest; for who could say that it was his intention to make the place a permanent residence? He, therefore, instantly changed his riding dress for one more adapted for the occasion, and placing a black velvet cap on his head (for we have before observed it was his peculiar privilege to remain always covered), without a moment's delay he proceeded to the hall, and entering it through the upper door, stood at a little distance behind De Boteler's chair, awaiting until the baron's eye should fall upon him. De Boteler presently turning to give

some order to a page, Calverley took the opportunity to approach, and, bowing, said softly, "My lord, I have heard tidings of Stephen Holgrave."

De Boteler's colour deepened as he made some hasty exclamation in reply, but the duties of hospitality were paramount at that moment, and shortly saying he would attend to him another time, Calverley retired.

Isabella's quick eye had observed the action of Calverley and the momentary embarrassment of De Boteler; and as the idea of her lost child was connected with every thing strange or doubtful that she saw, her mind was instantly filled with a thousand surmises. — Had any trace of Holgrave been discovered? Had the obstinate monk made any disclosure that Calverley, by some fortunate chance, might have become acquainted with? These, and a variety of other conjectures, possessing less colour of reason, so much engrossed her thoughts, that she could scarcely command her feelings sufficiently to pay that graceful and courteous attention to her guests, for which she was in general so much distinguished. No opportunity, however, offered of satisfying her curiosity until the guests had retired for the night; and then, upon entering the ante-room of her chamber, De Boteler was sitting listening to the steward's statement.

"Isabella," said the baron, as she entered, "Calverley has ascertained the retreat of Stephen Holgrave." She had anticipated something of the kind; but the effect it produced was singular. An electrical thrill seemed to vibrate through her frame, and a sudden coldness chilled her brow; but ere it could have been *said* that her cheek was pale, the whole countenance was suffused with a deepened glow, and rallying her energies, she asked, with assumed composure, "where he was hidden?"

"In the Forest of Dean," replied De Boteler; "and Calverley has every reason to suppose he has been concealed there since he left Sudley."

"Did not the hue and cry pass through the forest?"

"Yes, Isabella; but, by my faith, it seems they are such sturdy knaves in that forest, that even the promise of reward has no effect upon them."

"Then they must be compelled to surrender the bondman. — Calverley," continued the lady, turning to the steward, "can you rely on your information?"

Calverley replied in the affirmative: and then, on a motion from Isabella, withdrew.

"My lord, you will give proper instructions," resumed Isabella, in a tone that seemed to imply she expected the most rigorous measures to be adopted.

"I am afraid, Isabella," replied De Boteler, "that the knave has escaped us. Dean Forest is a royal demesne, and a bondman, remaining unclaimed, in such a place, for a year and a day, can claim the privilege of a king's villein."

"Roland de Boteler, do you intend to submit? — but you have not a mother's feelings!"

"There can be no reasons for the suspicions you still entertain," replied the baron, with more seriousness than he had spoken before. "The knave has been punished enough. There was no great matter of crime after all in burning the house — it was his own — aye, as much as this castle is mine. And do you think that any chance would ever make me consider that another had a better right to this building than I? — If I could have got hold of him at the time I would — but now, let it pass — an obstinate spirit like his is better away. You see what we obtained by imprisoning the monk — the whole barony up in arms in a rescue! and the bravest retainer in my castle killed by the club of the audacious smith! But that shall not pass so easily — for, by my faith, if I light upon that meddling varlet ten years hence, he shall hang as high as gibbet can raise him. I

repeat," continued he, in a determined tone, "that I will not interfere," and, rising hastily, as if he meant to escape from the argument, he left the room.

There might be one reason found for the more merciful feelings De Boteler evinced on this occasion, when it is said that he was on the eve of departing for London to join the Duke of Gloucester, who was preparing to make an incursion into France. The idea, no doubt, of again treading the French soil, recalled to his mind the service which the fugitive Holgrave had performed. The baroness, however, did not appear to heed the decisive tone of her lord; for, with the wilfulness of her sex, she determined that his departure should be the signal for commencing operations.

Immediately upon De Boteler's departure, which occurred in a few days, measures were taken to procure a royal grant of the villein to his late lord; and upon the instant of its being obtained, Calverley, attended by about a score of retainers, left the castle, without the slightest apprehension for his personal safety, or the most distant fear that his application would fail.

On arrival, his errand was made known to Neville, the deputy constable of St. Briavel's, who readily attended him with his men. As they rode towards the foundry, which had been indicated as the place of Holgrave's employment, a suppressed murmur from the trees by the road side attracted the constable's attention, and it was said by those nearest, that he gave a significant smile as he passed. The party dismounted at the foundry, and on entering, Holgrave was observed standing close to the forge, surrounded by about a dozen smiths. Neville smiled as he addressed Holgrave.

"I am commanded," said he, "by King Edward, to deliver you to the Lord de Boteler's steward. Here is the royal mandate;" and he drew from his pocket a parchment bearing the privy signature.

"And here," said Calverley, unfolding the royal grant, "is the deed that transfers the king's villein to his late and rightful lord."

"Master Neville," said Holgrave, "can the king's grant make a freeman a slave? or can the king's order give you authority to molest a man who has committed no crime? I owe no fealty to King Edward, except as a freeman, and as you yourself are bound to do. I stand here as free as any man of you, and no one shall compel me to become a slave. — But it is to you, foul murderer!" glancing fiercely on Calverley, who shrank from his gaze — "it is to you I owe this! Were my poor mother's death, my own ruin, and the loss of my farm and my home, not enough, that you continue to hunt me down like a wild beast?"

"Honest man," said Neville, mildly, "you are described in the king's writ as a bondman of his grace; and two men have this day deposed that you acknowledged yourself as Lord de Boteler's villein, and swore fealty to him in his own court."

"They lie, Master Neville! Bring them here, and I will maintain, in combat against them both, that they have sworn falsely."

"It was not to parley you came here, Sir Constable," said Calverley, "but to fulfil the king's command. This bondman, you must have been aware beforehand, would attempt to deny his bondage, like any other of his class who break their bonds."

"The king's order shall be obeyed to the letter, sir," replied Neville, as he looked somewhat contemptuously at Calverley, from whom he did not expect so abrupt an address; and then, gently taking the unresisting hand of Holgrave, placed it in that of the steward. A shout of pain from Calverley declared the cordiality of the gripe with which he was favoured by his enemy, and he withdrew his crushed fingers, amidst the cheers and shouts of the spectators."

"Now, steward," resumed the constable, "Mark Neville has performed

the king's commands as a loyal subject, and it remains with you to do the rest."

"And do you not intend to give me safe conduct through the forest, Master Neville?" asked Calverley, with some alarm — "this is a part of your duty. You are bound to convey this bondman to the verge of the forest, and you are also bound to prevent any inhabitant of it from abetting his cause."

"Read this warrant," replied Neville: "is there a syllable there of safe conduct? I am ordered to deliver up the man — I have done so; and now I wish you good even, and a pleasant ride back."

A loud laugh from the smiths followed this speech; and Calverley, now overcome by personal apprehensions, caught the constable's arm as he was passing through the doorway, and inquired, if he really imagined he was complying with the royal mandate by such a mockery.

"It is no mockery, steward — I have done my duty; and if you cannot do yours, is it my fault?" And then, shaking off Calverley's grasp, he mounted his horse, and with his attendants, amidst deafening cheers, took the road to the castle.

Calverley's eyes turned in the direction of the shout, and a mass of living beings, variously armed, were seen swarming from the adjacent wood, and rushing on to the foundry. He remembered that he had not more than twenty to oppose to this multitude; and his heart died within him as he saw the glowing cheek and derisive smile of Holgrave, and thought that now was the moment for *his* revenge. In an instant, not only was the foundry filled with men, but the window and doorway were darkened with their black heads without.

Calverley was now forced to assume a courage which he did not feel; and looking sternly around, he asked, in as firm a voice as he could command, why he was thus surrounded? or whether they intended to make him a prisoner?

"No, steward," said the spokesman of the smiths, "you are no prisoner — you are at liberty to go as soon as you like; and I would advise you, as a friend, to go quickly, for we men of the forest are not like your Sudley folk." Calverley, in some measure reassured by the unexpected mildness of this reply, quickly said,

"I have no wish to remain longer — give me free passage with this bondman, and I shall instantly depart."

"Bondman!" exclaimed Holgrave, raising his clenched hand, but he did not strike — "lying craven!"

"I tell you, steward," said the smith who had before spoken, and stepping so near Calverley that he involuntarily drew back, "if you prize your life, you will call no man here a bondman. I am free — that man is free —" pointing to Holgrave, "and we are all free — all sworn brothers; and no one shall dare," raising his voice, "to brand, with such a name, a mother's son among us! You have received fair warning, and leave to go: retire now — instantly, if you are wise! Clear a passage there for my Lord de Boteler's steward! There is now room for you to pass — your retainers are waiting without — and now take the man you call a bondman, and away with you all. What! you will not lay hold of him? Take him, I say!" elevating his voice — "seize the villein, and drag him back to his bondage! What! not a finger, after all the trouble you have taken? — then, away with you alone! — away!" And Calverley, from the mere instinct of obedience to a superior power, moved towards the door. "And if ever," continued the smith, "you are found hunting in this forest again for bondmen, as you call them, we may chance to give you a lodging where you will have little reason to complain that the sun shines too brightly!"

Calverley made no reply; but, without looking either at Holgrave or the

man who had so fiercely and tauntingly addressed him, took the advantage offered — passed through the door of the foundry, and through the yielding ranks of sneerers and jibers outside; and mounting his horse, galloped rapidly away from the scene of his defeat, with the shout of a hue and cry following his track as far as the foresters considered their legitimate domain.

CHAPTER IV.

The tenth evening after this exploit closed in heavily, and the wind blew chill and gusty, loaded with drizzling rain. Oakley felt little inconvenience from the night, as, wrapped in a large cloak, and with an unusually broad-brimmed hat, he cautiously approached the low-roofed dwelling of Holgrave, in the forest of Dean. He had little difficulty in distinguishing it, Harvey having a few days previously, though without the least intimation of the reason, watched Holgrave from the foundry to his home. The blaze of a bright wood fire was streaming through the casement. Black Jack stepped near enough to obtain a view of the interior, in order to assure himself that he was not mistaken, although, from the description he had received, he had little doubt; and a single glance convinced him it was the dwelling he sought. Holgrave was lying along a bench in the opposite chimney corner, his right elbow resting on the form, and his right cheek reposing on the upraised palm. He was looking with a smile at Margaret, who was sitting with her back to the window, and, by the motion of her right hand, was apparently engaged in sewing. The gazer conjectured that Holgrave had been asking her to sing, for, as he stood, she commenced a strain of such sweet and touching melody, that even Oakley (who, spite of his being so admirably "fit for treason," *had* "music in his soul") listened with such breathless attention that one would have been tempted to conclude he might "be trusted." The ballad concluded, and Oakley still looked on, until Holgrave, after a few moments of apparently cheerful conversation, arose from the bench, in all probability with the intention of proparing for rest.

Oakley stepped back from the window, and stood an instant apparently irresolute. "Plague on this Holgrave!" he muttered—"I wish I had sent Harvey; he could have managed it as well as I; but one don't like giving these fellows half the profit, besides making them as wise as one's self; — but what is the knave to me?" And then, as if his slight scruples were dissipated by the consideration of the little sympathy that ought to exist between one circumstanced like Holgrave and himself, he drew his hat more over his brow, and folding his cloak closer around him, approached, although, it must be admitted, with rather an indecisive step, the door of the cottage, and gave a slight tap. "I will go to the door, Stephen," he heard Margaret say, with a quickness which seemed to imply that the simple circumstance of a summons to the door at a somewhat late hour was sufficient to awaken her fears.

No reply was given, but the door was instantly unclosed by Holgrave. Black Jack stood in the shade, just beyond the light that streamed from within, but so close that Holgrave, without crossing the threshold, merely leaned his head forward, and heard him say, "Stephen Holgrave, do you remember the cross-roads and Hailes church-yard?"

Holgrave started. "Hailes church-yard!" he repeated, bending nearer to the speaker.

"Aye; and do you remember what you promised the men in the vizors,

when the craven fled, leaving his ear where perhaps his carcass may not find a resting place, and when the abbey folk were rushing on with torch and cudgel?"

"Yes," replied Holgrave, in a voice which told that the abrupt questions had called up all the painful events of that night — "yes, I remember well, I said that if any of those who helped me then ever wanted a friend, they were not to forget Stephen Holgrave."

"You did; and do you not recognise me, as he who gave the alarm when the fellows had peeped above the wall at the cross-roads, and whose hat was pierced by an arrow as he stood beneath the tree that overshadowed the grave at Hailes?"

"Yes, yes," said Holgrave, grasping his hand, "I remember all" — convinced, not by the voice, for on both occasions the voice had been disguised, but by the presumptive proofs.

"Stephen Holgrave," continued the foreman, still speaking in a low tone, but slowly and distinctly, "you can now return the service of that night. I want your aid immediately; — it is not in a matter that will hazard your life. I have given a promise, and you are the only man that can aid me to keep it. Will you assist me?"

"I will," replied Holgrave, firmly — "Do you want me now?"

"Yes, instantly. You shall know the business in less than half an hour."

"Stop one moment," returned Holgrave, and stepping into the cottage, he took a warm frieze cloak from a peg in the wall, and throwing it over his shoulders, was reaching for a kind of short-handled spear that lay on a shelf above the fireplace, when Margaret, clasping his left hand, looked up in his face, and asked with a pale and trembling lip, "Stephen, where are you going? Who is that man?"

"Do not be alarmed, Margaret. I must go with the man who spoke to me, but I shall not be long."

"Go with him! Who is he? His purpose cannot be an honest one, or he would not conceal himself. Who is he, Stephen?" she repeated in a loud voice, and clinging more closely to the hand he was striving to disengage.

"He is an honest man, Margaret," replied Holgrave, snatching away his hand, vexed that one who had befriended him should hear his wife's suspicions. But, as he fastened his cloak, he added, in a more soothing tone, "Do not fear. It is one of those who helped to give my poor mother a Christian's grave, and he wants me to do some little turn for him now."

"Are you sure, Stephen? — are you quite sure it is the same man?"

"Yes, yes, Margaret, quite sure," replied Holgrave in a tone that told her all farther remonstrances would be useless. "Did I not return safe from Gloucester?" asked he, lingering an instant, as he saw her heart was sinking with dread.

"But you did not go there in the dark night, and with only one man; and even then, where would you have been now only for our good friends in the forest. Oh, Stephen!" she continued, starting up and throwing her arms round his neck, as she imagined she saw something of irresolution in his countenance, — "do not go this night."

"I must go," he said, as he disengaged himself, and, without venturing another look or word, rushed from the cottage, and joined Black Jack.

They walked on rapidly through the forest, but neither spoke. Black Jack, hardened as he was, was not altogether at ease in thus betraying a confiding man; and this feeling was not lessened by the suspicions Margaret had expressed, and he endeavoured to deceive even himself into a belief that he should have been better pleased if the yeoman had taken his wife's advice. However, he resolved, as he hurried on, that he would be

well paid for so troublesome an affair. Holgrave was not more composed. In despite of what he considered his better judgment, he could not help being, in some measure, imbued with the fears of his wife; and, as he followed his silent conductor, a thousand indistinct apprehensions floated in his mind.

Their route was a lonely one. Scarcely a light was visible in the numerous dwellings they passed, and they reached the verge of the forest without encountering a single human being. They now walked along the high road, which, with a tract of unenclosed pasture land stretching to the right, and a scanty neglected hedge skirting the left, had a wild and dreary aspect, which however might, perhaps, with more justice be attributed to the darkness and gloom of the night, than to anything particularly cheerless in the road itself. They had proceeded about a dozen paces beyond a narrow lane, turning to the left, when Oakley, without assigning a reason, stepped back; and, as Holgrave turned to inquire the cause, he saw some men close behind him; and ere, in the surprise of the moment, he could raise his weapon to defend himself in case of need, a blow from a club felled him to the ground. The blow did not deprive him of consciousness, and now, convinced of treachery, he sprang on his feet determined not to yield with life. But it was not possible for one arm, even though that arm was nerved by an indomitable soul, to hold out long in so unequal a strife. It was in vain that he strove to attack or grapple with one — a host appeared to encompass him. Incessant blows from staves and clubs, although more annoying than really dangerous, wearied him out, and one, descending on his already swollen right hand, finally decided the contest. The arm dropped, and the weapon, that had as yet, in some measure, protected him, was easily wrested from his relaxed grasp; and the impotent fury of an almost frantic resistance availed but for a short space. He was gagged, bound hand and foot, and thrown into a cart that drew up for the purpose from the adjacent lane.

Black Jack and his retainers accompanied the vehicle on foot, none choosing to trust himself with one, who, though now to all appearance firmly secured, had shown such an untractable spirit, and in this manner proceeded, without interruption, to Sudley.

On the second morning after Holgrave's capture, the baroness, upon Calverley's entering the room in which she sat, inquired if he had seen the wife of Holgrave? "I hear," continued she, without noticing the surprise which the question created, "that she is in the court-yard, and has had the insolence to ask one of the varlets if she might speak with me! Go, Calverley, and desire her to leave the castle instantly."

Calverley withdrew and repeated the order to a domestic.

"No," said Margaret, as the command was delivered, "I shall not leave this court-yard, except by force, till I have seen my husband. Surely the favour that is granted to the wife of a common drawlatch, will not be denied to me!"

The steward, although vexed at what he considered her obstinacy, yet delayed to enforce her removal until he had tried what his personal remonstrance might effect; — but no man approaches a woman, whom he has once, to the fullest extent of the word, loved, with that calm and business-like feeling with which he can discourse with another. The colour deepened, too, on Margaret's cheek, as she saw him advance, and when, in an authoritative, though somewhat embarrassed tone, he asked why she had not obeyed the order that had been given, she raised her eyes, flashing with a spirit that perhaps had never before animated them, and replied —

"Thomas Calverley, I told him who delivered the message, that I would not quit the castle till I had seen Stephen; and I tell *you* now, that I shall not go till I know what you have done with him."

"Nothing has been done to him but what he merited," answered Calverley, haughtily, surprised at her firmness, and by a singular feeling annoyed that solicitude for her husband should have called forth such an unusual demonstration.

Margaret felt the falsehood of his reply, but she had not the spirit or language of Edith to reprove it.

"Then you must choose to submit voluntarily to my lady's wishes," he added.

"I do not," returned Margaret; "I shall sit here till the Lady de Boteler thinks better of what she has said, and suffers me to see my husband." Calverley turned away with a frown, but, ere he had retired a dozen steps, he turned again. "Margaret," said he, as he approached, "you are only harming yourself by this obstinacy. The baroness will not grant you permission to visit the dungeon, and, if you persist, there are servitors enough about to compel obedience. But if you go now, I promise to obtain what you ask. Rather than the kernes should lay a rude hand upon you — I would — gratify even *him*. Come at six," he added, as he turned abruptly away, forgetful, at this moment, of all the evil of which he had been the author, and only remembering, with hate and bitterness, that Holgrave possessed the love which had been denied to him.

He had spoken with an earnestness that induced Margaret to believe him sincere. At all events there seemed no better alternative than to trust him; so she rose and retired from the court-yard. Punctually at six she appeared again at the castle, and the confidence with which she crossed over to the keep, showed the reliance she had placed on Calverley's word. The keeper had received the order to admit her, and she ascended the spiral steps and entered the prison that had been previously occupied by Edith. As Holgrave raised his head when the door opened, Margaret saw that his face was swollen and livid, and, when he kissed her cheek as she threw herself upon his neck, his lips were parched and burning.

"Do not look on me so wildly, Margaret," said he; "these bruises are nothing. Aye, even that," as she was examining, with the apprehensions of a tender wife, the black and almost shapeless appearance of his right hand and arm; "even that would be as well as ever in less than a month — but it is their triumph and their treachery I feel: it is this that gnaws my very soul — and all because I thought myself too wise to take a woman's counsel, — and in the very prison, too, where they thrust my poor mother! I have not tasted meat or drink since I entered. There stand the water and the bread — though the burning in my throat almost drives me mad: not a drop will I taste, though the leech told me to drink as much as I could — nor a morsel will I eat."

"No, not of theirs," eagerly interrupted Margaret, drawing a bottle from beneath her cloak, and pouring into a wooden cup, which she took from her pocket, some diluted wine; "but drink this, Stephen: do drink it — it will cool your mouth."

"No, Margaret, I have sworn!" and no persuasion could induce him to alter his purpose.

"Steward," said the Lady Isabella on the following morning, "Holgrave rejects his food — I fear I must release him!"

"Pardon me, lady, it is only a stratagem to get free."

"Do you think so, Calverley? — but the varlet has the obstinate spirit of his mother — and you know I do not desire his death!"

"Holgrave," resumed the steward, with an incredulous smile, "has no intention of shortening his life:" and then he strove, with all his eloquence, to persuade her it was a mere feint.

"However," returned Isabella, "I will send the leech to him."

The leech was sent, and reported that the prisoner was in a state of extreme exhaustion, arising, it would seem, from inanition, as there was no evidence of bodily illness sufficient to have reduced him to so low a state.

Calverley's specious arguments availed no longer, and, muttering curses upon the jailer, whose officiousness had prevented the possibility of that consummation he so devoutly wished, he received the command to set Holgrave at liberty.

That evening Calverley summoned every bondman of the barony to assemble in the hall. Innumerable were the conjectures respecting this summons as the villeins hastened to obey the call; and, when all were collected, a strong sensation of sympathy was excited when they beheld Stephen Holgrave led into the midst; his countenance still discoloured, and so pale and attenuated, that it was difficult to recognise the hale, robust yeoman of former days, in the subdued and exhausted bondman who now took his stand among his fellows.

When all were assembled, Calverley stated that Stephen Holgrave having refused to swear that he would not again take advantage of his liberty to flee from bondage, the baroness, not wishing, from a feeling of clemency, to punish his obstinacy farther, had desired him to declare that she should hold each bondman responsible for the appearance of Holgrave, and should consider their moveables and crops forfeited in the event of his absconding.

A murmur ran through the hall as the steward spoke; and Holgrave, exerting a momentary energy, stepped forward, and, looking scornfully at his enemy —

"Lead me back to prison!" said he; "no man shall be answerable for me."

But Calverley, without appearing to heed his address, resumed —

"You are all now publicly warned; and it will behoove you, at your peril, to look to that bondman!" and then, without deigning farther parley, he left the hall.

There was much discontent among the bondmen as they withdrew from the castle, conversing on the arbitrary decision just pronounced, and on the probability that, before the expiration of three months, that decision would be enforced in consequence of Holgrave's flight; for they could not conceive the idea of the self-sacrifice of a generous spirit, which would rather endure, than that the oppressed should suffer farther oppression. Certainly, according to the letter of the law of villeinage, the bondmen of Sudley had no just cause for discontent; but then, because it was unusual, at least on that manor, to exercise the prerogative to its fullest extent, they almost forgot that this threatened appropriation of their effects was nothing more than the assertion of a right. But there was one novel feature in the announcement of which they had some colour for complaining; — their being considered responsible for one of their own class. However, as in all similar cases where power gives the law to weakness, though there might be a little useless murmuring, there was no alternative but to submit.

Holgrave, as his offer to continue a prisoner was not accepted, left Sudley among the bondmen, and walked slowly towards his old abode. Margaret had returned, and had been suffered to take possession of the dwelling that had remained unoccupied during their absence — which had stood just as she had left it on the night of her departure; and Holgrave, with all the bitterness and gloom of the past, and with considerably more of physical weakness than he had ever experienced, threw himself again into his mother's chair in the chimney-corner, and silently partook of the refreshment that the rejoicing Margaret set before him.

CHAPTER V.

We have as yet confined our observations to the bondmen ; but in 1381, an act of ill-judged policy of the nine nobles and prelates who formed the council of young Richard gave rise to a sort of coalition among the lower classes. This act was the famous tax of three groats upon every individual who had attained the age of fifteen. The hearth-money, which had been enforced by the Black Prince upon the inhabitants of Guienne, and which had probably formed the precedent for this tax, had not worked well, and there appeared little chance that the present exaction, framed as it was by those who directed the royal councils, would work better. Certain wealthy individuals contracted with the government for the collection of the tax, and private rapacity thus rendered the imposition more obnoxious that it otherwise might have been.

It was on the evening of a feast day, and the day labourers and villeins around Saint Alban's were enjoying the repose that, even in that period of bondage, was never infringed upon, and which, from the frequent recurrence of the festivals, afforded a sufficient relaxation from manual exertion to recruit their strength ; when suddenly, amidst a group in the market-place, who were discoursing upon the severity of the poll tax, then collecting, appeared John Ball.

" Men and brethren, are ye bond or free ?" he abruptly asked, in a deep, solemn voice.

" It matters little, good father," replied a gloomy looking peasant, as he started from the earth where he had been reclining ; " the freeman has little to boast of now beyond the villein."

" The freeman shall be righted, and the bondman freed — and then will the mission that has made John Ball for thrice twelve months a homeless wanderer, never resting under the same roof a second night — then will that mission be accomplished — and even if he lay his head upon the block, he will have executed the task allotted to him — will have finished the work he was inspired to begin !"

" The bondman may be freed," replied the man who had before spoken ; " but when shall the freeman be righted ? I took little heed of these things when I heard you preach freedom to the villeins two years ago : but my children have been sick ; my wife has been struck with the palsy ; and I, who had not a penny to call my own, gave eleven groats yesterday for myself, my wife, and the two boys ; and to-morrow must I sell the last blanket that covers her, to pay the twelfth."

The man turned away as he spoke, and John Ball, whose mission was rather to the serf than the freeman, commenced an harangue to the gathering crowd. His figure, as we have before observed, was imposing ; and as his eyes, flashing with an enthusiasm perhaps too ardent to be compatible with sound reason, fell on the numbers who now encompassed him, he looked like one fitted to become the apostle of those who had none to help them.

" The dew of heaven is not for you," he began ; " nor is the fat of the land your portion : but I am sent to pour a stream of light into the dark chambers — even to enlighten the soul of the weary bondman. I will sing to them of fearful heart, Be strong and fear not ; for the high ones of authority shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall lick the dust like serpents. The proud lords among us buy up the dastard hirelings with gold and silver, and they clothe them in their livery ! They wear the badge of cruelty and oppression in their hats ; but we shall tread them down like the mire in

the streets. Our king, too, is in bondage, and heareth not the groans of them that are in fetters! — for he is encompassed by the cold and the cruel — but the cold and the cruel shall be swept away. As the gathering of locusts shall we run upon them. Tithes shall cease; — the bondman shall be enfranchised; and the lands apportioned at an easy rent. The proud and rich prelates shall give up their wealth to the sick and the poor, and we will have no clergy henceforth but the order of mendicant priests to administer the sacraments." Thus, and with much more of the doctrine of general enfranchisement and equalization of property, harangued the monk; and we need scarcely add, that his words were listened to with breathless eagerness. In fact, so much was he regarded as a prophet, that more than one life had been sacrificed since the commencement of his wanderings, in resisting his capture by the civil authorities.

It was about a fortnight subsequent to this harangue at St. Alban's, that John Ball, who had passed on through London, preaching and gaining proselytes in his journey, inhaled, once again, the air of his native valley. His heart bounded, and then sank coldly in his breast, as, on ascending a hill, Winchcombe, with its church, its habitations, and the abbey, that had once been his home, burst upon his sight. It was rather singular, that though the enfranchisement of the bondmen of Sudley had been his darling wish, nay, that even the thought of personal freedom beyond that barony had never crossed his mind until the night of his rude expulsion from Kennington, those very villeins should be the last into whose sluggish veins he should strive to infuse a portion of the warmth that inflamed his own. And yet it was not that the enfranchisement of Sudley was less dear to his heart than it had been; but it was because that little spot of earth was dear to him, that he shrunk from visiting it. He had been there respected and beloved; there, too, had he been degraded and insulted; and that degradation, and that insult, had not been wiped away; and he cared not to appear before his own people thus morally cast down. But the hour had now come. Leicester, the dyer of Norwich, had been appointed king of the commons of Norfolk. Other leaders, too, had been named; and his own native barony must not slumber inert while the rest were running the race.

The shadows of evening were deepening, and the monk still stood gazing upon the town, and living over again the past, when a female with an infant in her arms, and leading a child by the hand, passed by. But she again turned to look upon him, first timidly, then more confidently, till, snatching her hand from the slight grasp of the child, she sprung towards him, and sinking at his feet, caught his right hand in both hers, and pressed it to her bosom.

"My sister!" said the monk, bending over her, and blessing her; and after a moment, during which he calmed the agitation of his feelings, he added — "How has it fared with you? Where is Stephen?"

But Margaret was many minutes ere she could do more than kiss his hand, and wet it with her tears. At length, when her emotions of joy and surprise had in some degree subsided, she replied, that Holgrave was still living a villein at Sudley.

"What!" exclaimed the monk — "the smith was indeed told that treachery had betrayed him into the baron's power; but is he chained to the spot — that for three long years he should bear the oppressor's rod?"

"No," replied Margaret; "he would have found some means of getting to the forest; but they hold the villeins bound for him — if he flies, all they possess of crops or cattle will be seized. But here is Stephen. I was just going over the hill to meet him, when I saw you."

Holgrave approached, and was scarcely less surprised than Margaret

had been; and when he spoke of the report current, that it was the monk who had gone about striving to burst the chains of bondage, John Ball replied —

"Listen to me, Stephen Holgrave! I went in before the great ones of the land; before him who is appointed ruler of the people, to demand justice; and because I was of the blood of the bond, my prayer was rejected! — because I was born in bondage I was unworthy of the privilege of the free. The finger pointed, the lip scorned, and the tongue derided; and I was driven, amidst the jeers of the scoffer, from the palace of the king. But as I went forth, the spirit came upon me, and I vowed that I would not give rest to my feet until the bondman's fetters should be broken! And they shall be broken! A spirit has been roused that they reck not of — a spirit that will neither slumber nor sleep until he, whose first breath was drawn beneath the thatch of the villein-hut, shall be as free to come and to go as he whose first pillow was of the cygnet's down! — and no man shall say to him, What dost thou?"

But it was not merely Holgrave that the monk was now addressing; two or three passers-by had been attracted. The monk was recognised, and these were commissioned to whisper secretly in the bondmen's ear, that he who had baptized their children, and breathed the prayer of faith over their sick beds, and who had wandered through the land, gladdening with the bright promises of hope the soul of the weary and the oppressed, had come once more among them to speak of personal enfranchisement, and of rent, instead of the accustomed service for the land they might hold. Father John then withdrew with Holgrave by a private path, to avoid any farther interruption.

At an early hour the next morning, it was intimated to Calverley that the barony was all in motion — that the bondmen, and, indeed, all of the labouring class, were gathering, and whispering to each other, and evincing any thing but a disposition to commence their customary toil. These things certainly gave evidence of some extraordinary sensation; and Calverley's first inquiry was, "Had any one seen the prophet?" — for such was the appellation by which John Ball was distinguished. No positive information could be obtained; the fact could be merely inferred, and the steward, who was not one to hesitate when an idea struck him, ordering a few retainers to attend him, proceeded to Holgrave's abode. But Holgrave was absent from home; there was no trace of the monk; and Calverley, knowing that it would be to little purpose to question Margaret, bethought him that the inquisitive Mary Byles might probably be the most proper person to apply to. From those who had crossed his path, he had merely been able to extract a sullen negative: but so well had the secret been kept, that the steward's interrogatory was the first intimation she had received of the probability of John Ball's being in the neighbourhood. However, Mary volunteered, provided Calverley would remain a few minutes, to collect some information. Presently, she returned — John Ball was indeed at Sudley! She had herself seen him come out of a cottage; she had beheld him harangue some bondmen who were awaiting his appearance, and after many impassioned words, he had gone on publicly through Winchcombe, with the blessings of the enthusiastic peasantry accompanying him. Calverley started at this information.

"Did you see Holgrave?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes," replied Mary; "he was by the monk when he stood at the door of the villein's hut, and I dare say he is with him now."

Calverley paused an instant. De Boteler and the baroness were in London — De Boteler, assisting in the councils of Richard, and Isabella, by reason of a vow, that, should there be again a probability of her becoming a mother, she would not trust the life of her child within the walls of Sud-

ley Castle; — and he remembered the strict injunction his lord had given him in the case of the disinterment of Edith, not to presume to act again without his authority. He remembered also that he had been much dissatisfied with the result of Father John's imprisonment, and also with the mode adopted for recovering Holgrave: but the present was a moment that would warrant decisive measures — so he proceeded to the door, and desired the retainers to follow on to Winchcombe, and seize the monk. But there was an evident unwillingness to obey: the name of John Ball had spread through the land, and there was so much of misty brightness encircling it — so many strange stories were told of him — so mysterious were often his appearings and disappearings — and so high was the veneration his novel doctrines inspired — that even the lawless retainer shrank from perilling his soul by molesting so sanctified a being. Besides, the former assault was not forgotten, with all the strange exaggerations which had seemed to render miraculous the circumstances of a handful of men liberating a prisoner.

"My lord has little to expect from the faith of those who are fed and clothed at his hand," said Calverley, indignantly, as he saw, by the hesitation of the retainers, that the capture of the monk was hopeless.

"I would fight for my lord any day," muttered one; "but I don't like meddling with a priest."

"And one, too, who prophesies," said another.

"Peace, babblers!" interrupted Calverley: "my lord shall hear how his retainers act when a seditious shaveling is inciting the villeins to revolt. Are you afraid of meddling with Stephen Holgrave?" he added, looking, with a sneer, at the first speaker.

"I am afraid of no man!" he replied, doggedly.

"Come on then? Let us at least secure *him*," cried Calverley, bounding forward and followed by the retainers. They hastened on through Winchcombe, and, a little beyond the town, descried the prophet surrounded by a multitude, consisting not only of the men of Winchcombe, who took an interest in the subject, but of numbers residing far beyond.

Calverley pressed forward towards the crowd, and so powerful is the influence of habitual obedience, that he was actually in the midst of them before any disposition to arrest his progress was manifested. But then arose the cry of "The holy father! — the prophet!" and the retainer who had replied to Calverley, perceiving from the popular movement the error into which the people had fallen, shouted out "Stand back, men! we will not harm a hair of the prophet's head! — it is Stephen Holgrave we want."

"And will you allow Stephen Holgrave, who has tarried a willing prisoner — "

"No! no! no!" from a hundred voices, overpowered the address of John Ball.

"Away, Holgrave, away! we hold you free!" And Holgrave, taking advantage of the opportunity, withdrew from the side of John Ball, and springing on the back of an offered steed, was presently beyond reach of pursuit, even had pursuit been attempted.

But Calverley was so mortified on being thus baffled, and so thoroughly convinced of the inutility of opposing the popular feeling, that he made no attempt to force a passage through the clubs and staves that were marshalled before him; he turned away towards Sudley, vowing, however, within himself, that the villeins generally, but more particularly those whom his quick glance had identified, should suffer for that morning's contumacy.

The excitement and enthusiasm, which had freed Holgrave, was still glowing in the breasts of the crowd, when a single horseman was observed

on the summit of the hill at a short distance, galloping on with the fleetness of the wind. He was scarcely heeded at first, but when another and another, following with the same headlong speed, successively appeared, the attention of the people was arrested ; and when the horse of the first rider, reeking with foam and sweat, sunk down, within a few yards of the mass, and the man, after struggling an instant, disengaged his legs and leaped in among them, exclaiming in a voice scarcely audible from agitation, "Save me! save me! save a poor debtor from prison! — from selling himself to pay his debts! — save me to work as a free man and pay all!" — the fever of excitement seemed to have reached its climax. Without considering an instant what manner of man he might be, they closed around him, and pressing the exhausted wretch towards the monk, vowed to resist to the death any attempts to arrest him. It was in vain that the pursuers, who had now come up, stated that the fugitive was not a debtor, but a notorious perjurer, who had fled from Gloucester to avoid his trial: their assertions were not attended to. The populace felt, that in their united strength, they could protect as well as free; and it is almost a question if they would, at the moment, have given up the man had his guilt been proved to a demonstration. However, as it was merely a matter of opinion which to believe, the pursuers or the pursued, the result need scarcely be told; the fugitive was hedged round with men and weapons, and the horsemen, after uttering many an idle threat, rode on to Sudley Castle to call upon the steward to assist in his recapture. The accused marked their course; and, after breathing out the most fervent gratitude to his preservers, he approached John Ball, and, bending his head, said, in a subdued tone,

"How have I desired to behold the prophet — who hath risen up to be the champion of the oppressed. My breast burned within me when I saw the poor man trampled on. I sheltered a bondman — I was vexed with the law — stripped of my all — beggared, and nothing left me but bondage or a jail! — I am weary of the hard hand that presses down the poor! Holy father, let me join the good cause."

John Ball saw at a glance that the man was above the vulgar, and rejoicing that he could add one intelligent being to the illiterate mass who had become converts to his doctrines, he gladly accepted the offer of an ally who promised to be so serviceable; and, apprehensive that as the hour for a simultaneous rising had not yet come, a farther display might rather injure than benefit the cause, pronounced a benediction over the multitude, and promising to appear soon among them again, desired each man to go to his regular business, and remain quiet till the appointed hour. He then took the arm of his new colleague, and hurried him to a secret opening in an adjacent quarry.

In the individual thus opportunely rescued, the reader will probably recognise Black Jack. He had been detected in a conspiracy, from which, had his character been already taintless, there would have been but little chance of escape. But as matters really stood, the slightest shadow of guilt would have been made to assume a form sufficiently tangible to convict *him*.

On the second evening after, when Calverley was in his private sitting room, the door was thrown suddenly open.

"Hist! Master Calverley," said Black Jack, entering abruptly, yet noiselessly. "Don't be frightened, it is only Jack Oakley; — nay, nay, we don't part so" (springing between Calverley and the door, as the steward, upon recognising the intruder, made an effort to pass from the room); — "nay, nay, steward, we don't part company so soon;" and drawing a dagger from his bosom, and seizing Calverley in his muscular grasp, he forced him back to his seat. "You had more relish," continued he, "for

an interview yesterday morning, when you led on the pack to hunt for poor Black Jack! but *he* had escaped you — yes, *he* had escaped you," (speaking between his set teeth, and looking as if it would do his heart good to plunge the weapon he was fingering in Calverley's bosom.) "Did you think," he added, after a moment's pause, during which he had replaced the dagger within his vest — "did you think Black Jack knew so little of you as to trust his life in your hands, when he saw the blood-hounds making for Sudley? No, no — I knew too well that Thomas Calverley, instead of whispering to the retainers that I was a hireling of the Lord of Sudley, would give the assistance my enemies asked — and you did! — yes, you did;" and his hand, as if instinctively, was again upon the hilt of his dagger, as he looked for a moment at Calverley with the glaring eye, set teeth, and suppressed breath of one who has resolved upon some bloody deed. But the temptation passed away, the rigid features relaxed, and withdrawing his hand from his bosom, and humming a snatch from some popular air, he walked up to the window.

The reader will readily imagine that this was a relief to Calverley. Even a dagger in the hands of a man possessing the physical strength of Black Jack, was not a weapon to be looked upon with indifference, especially by an unarmed and surprised man. But Calverley, adroitly availing himself of the evident change of purpose in Black Jack, said, in as stern a voice as he could command, "This is strange conduct, Master Oakley!"

"'T is so, steward," returned Black Jack, speaking in his usually self-confident tone; — "I dare say you do think it strange that a man should steal into this castle, and hide himself for two or three hours, on purpose to scare you out of your wits; but it was not to threaten or frighten you either, I have come."

"For what purpose, then?"

"For money; and for what money will buy — drink. Have you any wine in the room?"

"No, but I will fetch you some directly."

"Thank you, steward," replied Oakley, smiling, "but I would rather wait a few minutes. To be sure, it is a hard thing to be fasting from drink for two whole days! but then it is better than being a prisoner. We will be good friends, Master Calverley, but we will not put too much faith in one another. And, as for taking your life — an idea which did occur to me just now — by the green wax! I do n't think I could do it. To be sure, sometimes an odd fit comes upon me, but I believe, after all, the pen suits my hand better than the sword; nevertheless, to come to the point, steward, I must have money. I am going to turn an honest man; to gain the bondman his freedom, and the free man justice. You need not smile, for I have sworn to be a leader of the people."

"And I suppose Holgrave has sworn, too," sneered Calverley.

"I believe not; I have heard nothing as yet of his being a leader: but I left the monk this morning under pretence of rousing the villeins about Cotswold hills, and so managed to get here."

"Do you know any thing of Holgrave's rout?"

"He is gone to London."

"To London!"

"Yes — will you let his wife follow him?"

"Let his wife follow him!" repeated Calverley, looking at Oakley with unaffected astonishment; but instantly recollecting himself, he added — "I do n't know;" and again, after pausing a moment, continued — "You, of course, do not mean to keep faith with that seditious monk?" looking with a scrutinizing glance at Oakley.

"By the green wax, but I do! I can never practise my own calling again; and at any rate, have tried cheating, and lying, and so on, long enough —

and what have I got by them? — the honestest blockhead in England cannot be worse off than John Oakley! So, as I have said, I shall e'en try what honesty will do! Besides, I owe them something for saving me from the gallows. But I cannot do without drink! — and drink, except a beggarly cup of ale or so, is not to be had among them — and so, steward, you must give me money."

"Yes, yes, you shall have money, Oakley, and I tell you, that if you could manage to send me intimation, from time to time, of the plots they are forming, you shall have as much as you desire."

Oakley, as Calverley ceased speaking, looked at him for a moment very earnestly, and an intelligence passed across his face, as if some new light had broken in upon him; but suddenly, with a sort of smile, —

"By the green wax!" said he, "you seem to think lightly of Black Jack's promises! What! you would bribe me to betray their secrets, would you? One never thinks of doing well, but some temptation is sure to come across. — Come, come, give me the money — I shall think of what you have said another time. — Come, come, I can hardly speak for very drought!"

Calverley had no alternative but compliance: but it was provoking almost beyond endurance to have a creature who annoyed him so much, completely, as it were, in his power, and yet be unable to avail himself of the circumstance. There was no alternative, however; for, as we have said before, he was unarmed, and, withal, no fighting man. His chamber was retired, and the extortioner a desperate, unprincipled being, and so Calverley doled out a few pieces of silver, and a piece of gold, which Black Jack snatching up, departed; but as he closed the door, a chuckling laugh, and a drawn bolt, told Calverley that he was overreached by his wily confederate.

The signs of strong excitement became every day more general and more evident, especially in the counties of Kent, Essex, Hertford, and Norfolk. The furnishing of weapons; the whetting and sharpening of hand-bills, wood-knives, and other offensive implements of husbandry; and the general relaxation, and in many places total suspension of labour, were like the heavings and the tremblings which betokened an approaching shock. Indeed, in many places, partial risings had already commenced; but these had originated rather with the free than the bond: rather in resisting the obnoxious tax than in asserting a right to freedom; and the more timid and least influential of the gentry, unable to control the popular movement, had already shut themselves up in their mansions or castles, leaving to the government the task of stemming the storm. Even Richard and his council became alarmed; and after issuing a few proclamations, and a commission of trail baron to try the rioters, awaited the event, trusting to the want of organization among the people for a successful termination of the outbreak.

Affairs had put on this gloomy aspect, the frown of contemptuous suspicion being met by the glance of sullen defiance, and each man of the commonalty either in league with his neighbour or regarding him with distrust, when a meeting of those who, under the powerful influence of John Ball, had fomented all this disorder, took place at Maidstone. It was on a June evening, and just as the twilight had thrown a kind of indistinctness over every object, that Wat Turner, who had been lying for the last hour along a bench in the chimney-corner, to all outward appearance soundly asleep, suddenly started up —

"Is the room ready, Bridget?" he abruptly asked his wife.

"To be sure it is," replied Bridget, who was sitting at the open casement of the large apartment, decked out in all her Sunday finery; "but see, Wat, I declare you have upset my beautiful flowers," as Turner, without heeding the variegated sweets that graced the fireless hearth, brushed past them, and stood upon the earthen floor.

"Confound you, and your flowers!—you are sure every thing is in order?"

"Yes—did n't I tell you so this moment?" answered Bridget, rising somewhat indignantly, and replacing the flower-pot in its original position. "And trouble enough I have had," she continued, "to get in the table, and the chairs, and the benches, and the stools, and put the place so that it might be fit to be seen, all by myself. A fine holyday the wench has got!—but she shall work for this next week!—How many are coming?"

"Question me not, Bridget," replied Turner, in a very serious tone; "but for once in your life try if you can hold your tongue; or, at any rate, say only what is wanted. Do you remember what I told you? Keep the door bolted; and when you hear a knock, say, 'With whom hold you;' and if they answer, 'With King Richard and the true Commons,' open the door; but mind you open it to none else."

"Yes, yes, I will mind: but I verily believe you think me a fool, or a woman who do n't know when to hold her tongue!—you tell me one thing so many times over! Wat—is that John Leicester coming?"

"Yes."

"How I hate the sight of that man! he is so full of consequence, and has so many airs, and talks so much about what he will do when he is king of Norfolk;—just as if an honest black smith was not as good as a dyer any day! Or, as if Wat Turner (Wat Tyler, I mean)—I declare I often catch myself going to call you Turner in the shop,—aye, as if Wat Tyler was n't as good a name as John Leicester! And then he talks about his wife, too. I 'll let him see when you are king of Kent."

"Silence! there is a knock." Turner went to the door: "With whom hold you?" he asked.

"With King Richard and the true Commons," was the reply; and the door was instantly unclosed, and John Leicester, a tall pale-complexioned man, with an aquiline visage and sharp black eyes, accompanied by Ralph Rugge, John Kirkby, and Allan Theoder, entered the apartment.

"Ye are the first, my friends," said Turner, cordially grasping the extended hand of Leicester, "and, by St. Nicholas! it is now getting fast on for ten o'clock."

He then strode across the room, and, throwing open a door, ushered his colleagues into a place probably used by Bridget as a sort of store-room, of moderate size, with clay walls, and an earthen floor. A large iron lamp was burning on an oblong table of considerable dimensions that stood in the centre. At the upper end of the table was a chair and stools, and benches were arranged round in proper order.

"Bridget," said Turner, stepping back, "where is the wine?"

"Oh! here—I forgot the wine," said Bridget, handing in a large jug, and then again returning with a number of drinking cups and another measure of wine. Turner placed the liquor on the table, and was just filling some of the cups, when Stephen Holgrave, Thomas Sack, and three others, pushed open the door, and, after a brief salutation, took their seats at the table.

"Here is a health to King Richard and the true Commons!" said Holgrave, taking up his cup.

"We have had enough of kings," said Kirkby, "and lords too—I will drink to none but the true Commons!"

"Why, as for kings," said Turner, "I am not sure; Richard is but a boy yet, and his father was a——"

"I say we will have no Richard, and no king but King of the Commons, and these we will have in every shire in England!" interrupted John Leicester.

Turner looked as if he thought he had as much right to deliver his sen-

timents as the dyer of Norwich, and was about to vindicate his opinions, probably in no very qualified terms, when Black Jack entering, accompanied by a few others, diverted the smith's attention.

"Hah! Jack Straw — welcome!" said Turner: "you see you are not the last. The night is waning, and our friends are not all here yet."

A horn of wine being handed to Oakley, he took his seat at the table; and when about a dozen men had joined them,

"Jack Straw," inquired Turner, "have you made out the conditions?"

"Yes," replied Black Jack, "here they are," drawing a parchment from his pocket.

"Read them! read them! let us hear!" burst from the party; and Oakley began —

"First. — The king shall be required to free all bondmen."

"Aye, aye!" shouted the confederates, "that will do — that is the first thing that must be done."

"Secondly," resumed Oakley, "to pardon all the risings."

"Pardon!" interrupted Turner — "there is no pardon wanted: let them do as they ought to do, and there will be no rising."

"Thirdly. — That all men may buy and sell in any city or town in England."

"Aye," said Rugge, "that is as it should be — I know where I could carry all the hats I could make, and sell them for a good price, if I were but free of the place."

"Fourthly. — That all lands should be rented at four-pence an acre."

"Aye, and enough too!" said Turner; "and, mind ye, nothing but rent — no service. Let every man be free to work, and get money for his work, and give money for his land, and know what he has to pay: I don't like your services — so many days' labour, or so much corn, or so many head of cattle, and so on: and then, if anything happens that he fails to the very day, though the land should have been held by his great-grandfather, why he has no claim to it! 'T is time all this should be done away with. — But now go on with the rest."

"That was all we agreed upon to ask for," replied Black Jack, looking round upon his associates.

"What!" said the overbearing Leicester, looking fiercely at the ex-foreman, — "did n't I tell you that *I* was to be the King of Norfolk, and Wat Tyler ——"

"Tush, man! — nonsense!" interrupted Turner, reddening with mingled shame and anger. "Let the bondman be freed, and the land properly parcelled out, and then we can talk about what kings there are to be besides Richard. But I 'll tell you, Master Jack Straw, or whatever your name is, that if I cannot read and write like you, I will have a word in the matter as well as yourself — I will have all the lawyers hanged, for one thing: there is so much trickery in the law, that we shall never be sure of whatever is granted, while the men of law can have a crook in it."

"And since we talk of hanging," said Turner, "there is one —" and he looked significantly at Holgrave — "but, never mind; his time will come, Stephen!"

"It will!" answered Holgrave, emphatically; and, as he acquiesced in Turner's implied threat, a smile might be detected on Oakley's lips.

"Friends," said Allan Theoder, speaking for the first time, "I do not hear you say anything about this tax."

"If we had no king," said Kirkby, "we should have no tax grinding down the poor. If that tax had not made a beggar of me, Jack Kirkby would not have been here among you this night."

"But what is it," asked Black Jack, "that I shall add to the parchment?"

"That we shall have no taxes!" said the taciturn Theoder.

"And no king!" added Kirkby.

"And that the lords shall give up their castles, and keep no retainers, and that all the lawyers shall be hanged!" said Turner.

"I tell you," said Leicester, "that when we are all kings, we can do what we like with the lords and the lawyers, and ——"

"And I will tell you, John Leicester, that if it is my will which is to decide, we will have no king but one; and that one shall be Richard. And that all lawyers and escheaters shall lose their heads — aye, by St. Nicholas! and that before four days are gone, the laws shall proceed from my mouth!" interrupted the smith, rising from his stool and striking the table violently with his clenched fist.

While Turner was thus declaiming, a singular-looking being, who sat directly opposite to him, had risen, and, evidently quite unmoved by the vehemence of the smith's manner, and equally regardless of the matter of his speech, only awaited until a pause should enable him to commence his own. The man was about five feet two in height, with thick lips and a short turned-up nose, black bushy brows, overhanging a pair of twinkling gray eyes, and a bald head, receding abruptly from the eyebrows, like those of the lower animals. The moment Turner ceased speaking, the man began, in a deep guttural voice —

"I was brought up there, Wat Tyler, and I can tell you of two places where it can be fired."

"What! Gloucester?"

"What! Sudley Castle?" asked Black Jack and Turner, at once.

"No — the city of London!"

"The city of London!" repeated Turner, in a tone that implied little approval of the suggestion.

"Yes — the city of London, friend Tyler," said Thomas Sack, in that peculiar tone of confidence which says, I know what I say is the best that can be said. — "Yes, the city of London, friend Tyler; and when the city is fired, and the Londoners are running here and there, to save their houses and goods, what will hinder us from taking the Tower, and forcing the king to grant what we ask?"

There seemed reason in this — and Black Jack's imagination instantly picturing the facility which such a thing would afford for the appropriation of the good citizens' treasures, seizing the idea, said quickly —

"By the green wax! our friend counsels well."

"He does counsel well," rejoined one at the bottom of the table. "Would it not be a fine opportunity to pay ourselves for all they have taken from us?" he added, in a lower key, and looking cunningly round upon his companions as he put the interrogatory.

"What!" said Turner, sternly, "would you make us robbers?"

"Robbers! Master Tyler, no — no — it is one thing to rob, and another to repay yourself, if the chance comes in your way, if you have been cheated."

"I do not understand your one thing or your other thing;" answered Turner — "but I know this, that we have paid the tax, and that we will pay it no more — but as for touching what belongs to the London folks — I'll tell you what, if we do set fire to London, by St. Nicholas! if I see my own son Tom taking a penny's worth, I will fling him into the flames!"

"You are are right," said Holgrave, "we want to be free men, not plunderers."

The man did not reply, and Black Jack, congratulating himself that he had prudently kept his own counsel, endeavoured to turn the attention of the leaders from the consequences to the cause. Holgrave positively refused to sanction the contemplated firing; "No man," said he, "has a right to burn what does not belong to him." But he was only one man,

and the sense of abstract justice was not sufficiently strong in those about him, to overbalance the advantages that might result from the deed. Certainly, to speak the truth, Turner hesitated some time before he assented, but the pithy language of Thomas Sack, and the covert insinuations of the lettered Oakley, overpowered his better judgment, and the thing was decided upon.

"Halloo — confederates! you have forgotten one thing, which, after all, may do us more good than all the conditions put together. What thing ye of burning all the deeds and court-rolls of manors we can lay our hands on? The knaves will find it no easy matter to prove their title to the land, or to the rent or to the bondmen either."

Twenty brawny hands grasped successively that of the spokesman, and an applauding murmur ran through the meeting.

"Aye, aye, burn the court-rolls — burn the court-rolls!" ran from mouth to mouth. "We defy the lords to claim rent or service then."

"Yes," cried Holgrave, starting up eagerly, "if the court-rolls are burned, who can claim the bondman?"

"Aye, or, as you said just now, Jack Straw, who can say to his vassal 'You owe me this service or that service,'" added the smith.

This proposition was then eagerly adopted and decided upon without a dissentient voice.

The reader may, perhaps, be surprised that all this should pass without eliciting either opposition or remark from the king of Norfolk; but the fact was, that Leicester, although in general a very temperate man, had been so much pleased with the flavour of Wat Turner's wine, and had so often replenished his cup, that he had not been, for the last half hour, precisely in a situation either to combat or agree to any proposition. Indeed, had any of the members been bold enough to submit a motion, depriving him of his kingship elect, it is a question if he would have resisted, so much was the natural arrogance and asperity of his temper softened by the genial beverage.

The wine, too, began to exhibit many other of the confederates in colours very different from such as they had at first shown, but the change generally was not such as was wrought in Leicester; — for vindictive cruelty and selfish rapacity might now be detected in many of those who, at the outset, had spoken only of justice and right. Then, too, were put forth the claims which each fancied he possessed of ranking above his fellows. "Did not I provide so many clubs or spears — or, did not I, or my father, or uncle," as the case might be, "give so much corn to make bread — or so much silk to make a banner — or so much leather to make jacks?" &c.

"And have not I," said Turner, whom an extra cup had made more than usually a braggart; "Have not I forged as many spear-heads as ye can find handles for? and has not John Tickle, the London doublet-maker, made me sixty as stout leathern doublets as man could wish to wear? and can I not bring the tough sinews of the brave Kentish men to strike down the hirelings of that foul council which has brought all this misery on the people? — and will ye talk of your pitiful gifts? Am not I the right hand of the prophet? ——"

"The prophet disdains the aid of the boaster!" said John Ball, walking up to the chair which had stood so long empty, and looking sternly round upon the confederates. "Is it thus ye talk when ye assemble? Are wine-bibbers, and railers, and boasters, to lead the people to justice? Is the bondman to put off his yoke by means of those who contend for the highest places? Shame! — shame to ye!" and his eye rested upon Turner.

For an instant, as the monk spoke, the smith's cheek glowed, and he thought it was not kindly done to reprove, in so marked a manner, one who, through rescuing him, had been compelled to fly like a felon, and

assume a name that did not belong to his father. However, he had been accustomed to pay implicit obedience to the monk.

"Father John," said he, "it was not for the sake of boasting I spoke: what Wat Turner does, he does because he thinks it is right. I ought to have said Wat Tyler," he added, recollecting himself and looking round; "but the truth will out, and there's no use in making a secret. Some of ye do know the truth already, and some do not: but, however, I 'll now tell ye, that because in a quarrel I happened to kill one of Lord de Boteler's retainers, I came here to Maidstone and took the name of poor old Wat Tyler, my mother's brother — peace to his soul! and made the folks believe that I was a sort of runaway son."

"And if you had never known me," said Holgrave, starting up and grasping Turner's hand, "you need not have changed your name: but you are an honest man, let you be called what you may — and Stephen Holgrave will never forget what you have done for him and his."

John Ball, whatever he may have felt, had too much good sense to weaken his ascendancy by making any acknowledgment. If he was the soul of the confederacy — Wat Turner, or Tyler, as we shall henceforward call him, was the body; — he might inspire the thought, but Tyler must direct the physical movement: and, therefore, it was absolutely requisite that the smith should in himself set the wholesome example of being amenable to discipline. The monk, therefore, without farther comment, began to ask of their capabilities, their resources, and arrangements; and it was finally agreed upon, after much deliberation, that Tyler should command the Kentish division, and Jack Oakley, or, as he now chose to style himself, Jack Straw (probably from the then custom of bailiffs wearing straws in their hats,) the bodies that were to march upon London from Essex.

"But — remember!" added John Ball, impressively, and, rising from his seat, as did all who were assembled; "remember that ye do not slay except in self-defence; and that, above all things, ye hold sacred the Lord's anointed. And may *He*," elevating his eyes and hands, "who inspired the thought — bless the deed! The first hour of the sabbath-morn has just struck,— let us not trespass farther on the holy day. — Depart in peace."

The monk then left the apartment, and the confederates presently retired.

CHAPTER VI.

But, despite the prophet's injunction, the tumultuary rising commenced with blood. The courts of trail baron were dispersed, and at Stamford the jurors beheaded, and their heads borne on lances to overawe those who might be inclined to arrest the progress of the insurgents. Every building suspected of containing court-rolls was searched; all the documents found were destroyed, and the villeins met with, in the line of march, pronounced free, and incited to join the popular insurrection. Their numbers were thus increased every mile of ground they passed over, till, at length, the whole mass amounted to one hundred thousand able-bodied men. It is impossible to say what such a force might not have effected, had there been a proper degree of subordination kept up among the led, or a proper degree of confidence and understanding among the leaders: but, as is usual in popular commotions, the reverse of this was the case. No one chose to occupy the lowest place, and each thought he could direct movements and affairs much better than the actual leader. Hence arose endless contentions and secessions, till at length from want of the grand principle of adhesion — unanimity, the vast body threatened to fall asunder, as if crushed by its own weight.

These things, however, gave little concern to the worthy who commanded the Kentish division. Tyler, though an excellent blacksmith, possessed few of the qualities requisite for forming a good general. Provided there was no very sensible diminution in the number of his followers, he cared not a straw for the score or two who, after quarrelling, or perhaps fighting, withdrew in such disgust, that they vowed rather to pay the full tax for ever than submit to the insolence of the rebels. One man could fight as well as another, reasoned he; and, provided *he* was obeyed, what mattered it by whom. Dick went and Tom came — it was sure to be all one in the end.

Oakley, on the other hand, although, perhaps, equally arrogant when invested with this novel and temporary power, was more plausible, and managed to keep up a better understanding among his followers than Tyler. This sort of conciliatory conduct was, in a great measure, forced upon him by the circumstance of Leicester being immediately next him in command, and by the wish he had that no ill feelings against himself might weaken his authority when any favourable opportunity offered of reaping a golden harvest.

He knew that he had little co-operation to expect from Leicester, for independently of the personal enmity of the latter, which would rather induce opposition than support, the chief of Norfolk had not a particle of rapacity in his composition. Indeed, it is not often that he whose gaze is fixed upon some bold elevation, will stoop to rake in mire, even when sure of discovering gold. Leicester was very indignant at thus becoming a subordinate, but the election of the prophet was decisive, and he was compelled to submit; for John Ball, seeing that one so rash and haughty was not adapted to possess the unlimited control to which his influence, and the sacrifices he had made, seemed to entitle him, resolved that his indiscretion should be kept in check by the prudence and intelligence of Oakley.

The Essex division had marched on until within about three miles of the city of London, and here they halted, partly through fatigue and partly to interchange communications with the Kentish men; it having been determined, that while the latter where forcing a passage over London Bridge, the men of Essex should, at the same moment, effect an entrance by the east gate, and thus distract the attention of the citizens.

In the motley crowd, of nearly sixty thousand men, the most conspicuous figure was, perhaps, John Leicester himself, cased in a complete suit of steel armour, (taken as lawful spoil from some castle in the route) waving in the sun a bright Damascus scimitar, while he gave directions, in an authoritative tone, to a peasant who was unloosing the trappings of a large black horse, from which Leicester had just alighted. Standing at a short distance from him, John Oakley, otherwise Jack Straw, formed an adjunct little less important in the picturesque of the scene. Unwilling to encumber himself with armour, his portly person was defended by a leathern jack, covered over with a thick quilting of crimson silk, dagger proof; and in this guise, he contrasted well with the monk clad in dark woollen, with whom he was engaged in conversation — although turning every now and then his large blue eyes towards a tempting display of eatables and wine profusely spread under the shade of a tree. A cluster of formidable-looking men in tough leathern jacks, were laying aside their hand-bills and swords, and dividing the contents of a large satchel. There was a group variously armed and accoutred, some wearing the shirt of mail with the yew-tree bow in their hands and quivers of arrows at their backs; and others in doublets of leather or frieze, with swords, some rusty and some bright, or staves, or sharp-pointed clubs, or reaping hooks, or wood-knives.

The arrival of such a body as the Essex men, so near the city, and the approach of the Kentish men, was, of course, no secret to those who inhab-

ited the Tower, but there was no standing army ready, at a moment's notice, to march out and oppose their progress. They had, indeed, six hundred archers within the Tower, but it was considered the most prudent course not to send them forth, lest, while they were attacking one division, another might come on and make themselves masters of the strong hold. Many of the nobles who resided beyond the city walls fled from their dwellings to seek a refuge in the Tower, and among these Roland de Boteler, at his lady's earnest entreaty, withdrew with her, from his mansion just beyond Bishopgate, and sought a temporary shelter within the fortress.

Isabella was sitting in an apartment with the fair Joan of Kent, expatiating upon the insolence of the common people, and detailing a solitary instance of the evil that the family of a bondman might work to his lord, when the door was thrown open, and Richard, with his beautiful countenance flushed with excitement, and followed by the archbishop of Canterbury, abruptly entered.

"We are resolved, my lord bishop," said Richard, as he threw himself on a seat by his mother; and, turning to an attendant, commanded that the royal barge should be instantly in readiness.

"You surely do not intend leaving the Tower," asked the queen-mother apprehensively.

"Madam," said Sudbury, with some heat, "his grace has so determined; and, moreover, contrary to the advice of his noble cousins and counsellors, he will go down the river and parley with the villeins!"

The impetuosity of sixteen was not to be turned aside from its purpose by the remonstrances of the archbishop, or even the entreaties of a mother. Isabella, too, ventured to expostulate, but without effect; and accompanied by Thomas of Woodstock, his uncle, Sir Robert Hales, the treasurer, the Earl of Oxford, De Boteler, and Simon Sudbury, who, though reprobating his majesty's conduct, generously resolved to share its consequences. Richard stepped into the royal barge with the most sanguine hopes of quelling the insurrection.

The order had been so suddenly given that there was no intimation of the sovereign's excursion until the royal barge met the eye, consequently there was none of that excitement usual upon the most simple movements of royalty. Indeed, at any rate, the attention of all classes was, at this moment, so occupied by the commons, that the king was scarcely thought of.

They had rowed about a mile down the river, when the chancellor, who was gazing with vacant eyes, but an occupied mind, upon the water, had his attention suddenly fixed.

"Does your grace see that little boat just before us?"

"Yes," replied Richard.

"I am much mistaken," resumed Sudbury, quickly, "if that figure in the dark cloak is not he whose evil counsel has spread like a pestilence through the land."

"What! the audacious monk who intruded upon us at Kennington?"

"The same, your grace, if my judgment be correct."

"Let him be instantly seized!" replied the impetuous Richard. The boat was, accordingly, hailed, and John Ball dragged into the barge, and at once indentified by Sudbury and De Boteler. The monk did not resist either the capture or the bands that were bound around him; neither did he reply to the reproaches that were showered upon him; but silently and unresistingly suffered himself to be thrown into the bottom of the barge.

In a few minutes after this was effected, Richard's quick eye was suddenly attracted by an appearance on the beach.

"By my faith, cousin," said he, addressing Thomas of Woodstock, "yonder are the varlets! Do you see how bravely their pennons are waving,

and how, here and there, among their black heads, something bright glitters in the sun?"

"That is their weapons, my liege," said Woodstock.

"Stolen from the castles and houses they have plundered," added Sudbury.

"Put to shore quickly," said Richard; "and let us see if those rebels will dare to appear in harness before their king!"

"You would not venture your sacred person among them, my liege!" cried Sir Robert Hales the treasurer, in alarm.

"What! think you, Sir Treasurer," asked De Boteler, "that the knaves, vile as they are, would harm his grace?"

"My Lord Baron," said Sudbury, sternly, "it is not well than a man of your experience should speak thus. Give not your countenance to an act that may yet lie heavy upon your soul?" Richard's cheek kindled as the baron stood rebuked; and with the generous indignation of youth, he said, in a tone of evident displeasure —

"My Lord Bishop, the Baron de Boteler did not counsel us to land: he was only doubting how far the impudence of those commons might go." Sudbury, knowing that soft words might turn away wrath, and perceiving that little good would be effected in the present case by pursuing a different course, suffered Sir Robert Hales to entreat, even as a father would entreat his only son, that the young king should not peril his life by venturing his royal person among those who were up in arms against his authority. But when he saw that Richard's ingenuous mind was touched by the earnest manner of the treasurer, he then prudently put his own weight into the balance, and the scale turned as he desired.

"Go you, then, my lord of Oxford," said Richard, "since it does not appear wise that we, ourselves, should land, and ask those men why they thus disturb the peace of their sovereign lord the king."

Robert de Vere accordingly, accompanied only by three men-at-arms, one to act as herald, and two as a sort of body guard, quitted the barge to hold parlance with the rebels.

"Why we are thus up in arms?" said Leicester, without circumlocution, as the herald proclaimed the king's interrogatory, — "why, because those who should command are thought nothing of, and those who do command ought to have their heads struck off."

"This is no meet answer, *Sir Knight*," said Oxford, glancing ironically at Leicester's armour. "You must consider of something more to the matter of his grace's demand, or Robert de Vere can be no messenger."

"Yes, yes, we will consider of some more fitting answer," said Leicester fiercely; — and after consulting earnestly for a few minutes with Jack Straw, Thomas Sack, and other leaders, he returned to De Vere, and said —

"Hear you, Robert de Vere, we demand that all whose names are in that parchment shall be beheaded, because they are enemies to the true commons, and evil counsellors to the king. And when this is done we will let his grace know what else we demand."

Robert de Vere took the scroll from Leicester with a haughty air, and glancing over the contents, without vouchsafing a word, turned away and rejoined the king.

"These knaves wish to carry things with a strong hand, my liege," said the Earl of Oxford, bending his knee as he presented the scroll.

"What!" said Richard, as his eye ran over the characters, "John, duke of Lancaster; Simon Sudbury, lord chancellor; John Fordham, clerk of the privy seal; Sir Robert Hales, treasurer; the bishop of London; Sir Robert Belknap, the chief justice; Sir Ralph Ferrers, and Sir Robert Blessinton. What! is this all the noble blood they wish to spill? By

my faith!" he added, trampling the parchment under his foot, "we will listen to nothing more the knaves have to say; and ye may tell them that as they are bondmen so shall they remain; and that as my fathers ruled them with a rod of iron, so shall I rule them with a rod of scorpions."

But this burst of indignation soon passed away, and upon the suggestion of the prudent Sir Robert Hales, he sent an evasive answer, with a command that the commons should attend him at Windsor on the Sunday following.

The royal barge then returned to the Tower, and John Ball was again the tenant of a dungeon.

Tyler and his Kentish men were at this time upon Blackheath, awaiting the monk impatiently, who had strictly enjoined that no attack should be made upon London till the word was received from him. The day, however, wore away, and John Ball did not appear. The men grew impatient, but Tyler, though brooking the delay as ill as the most ardent among them, hesitated to take any decided step until the sanction of the prophet should warrant the deed.

"By St. Nicholas!" cried he at last, "something ill has befallen the holy man, or he would have been here before now. We will march on directly and find him, or the London folks shall look to it."

This resolution was received with acclamation, and the whole mass moved forward with a quick step. Their direct way would have been to keep as far as was possible the banks of the Thames in view, until they arrived at London Bridge, but Sudbury's palace was at Lambeth, and Tyler, suspecting that the archbishop had some hand in the detention of the monk, vowed that his residence should be burned to the ground if some tidings were not gained of him. On they went, therefore, to Southwark; and with shouts and execrations, and torches flaming in their hands, approached the walls of the episcopal edifice. The gates were forced; the affrighted domestics and retainers fled; and it was well that Tyler, as he rushed on through room and corridor, did not encounter Sudbury; but the prelate being fortunately in the Tower, escaped the rage of the vindictive smith.

"He has been an ill friend to him," said Tyler, "even if he should not have harmed him now," (as a trembling domestic assured him that no prisoner had entered the palace,) "and he deserves that his head should be carried on a pole before us to London Bridge."

And when, at length, the intruders were satisfied that the palace contained neither bishop nor monk, the search commenced for the documents and records. Cabinets were broken open, drawers and boxes forced, and the contents thrown carelessly about; jewels, silk damasks, and gold embroidery, were trampled under foot with as much loss of value through wantonness as if the spoilers had enriched themselves — a thing which, if done at all, was done to so small an extent, that he only who snatched up a gem or a piece of gold could have said that a theft had been committed.

In each apartment the writings found were thrown in a heap, and blazing torches flung upon them. These igniting the flooring and furniture, the building was presently in a blaze in a dozen different directions, and the Kentish men, with as rapid a step as they had approached, marched away, vowing vengeance to all the enemies of their prophet.

It was midnight when they arrived within view of London, but the red tinge in the southern horizon, and the glare of their thousand torches, had warned the citizens of their approach; the gates were shut, and the bridge itself crowded with aroused citizens. Tyler's first command was that they should rush on and set fire to the gates; but Holgrave had seen more of warfare than he, and he knew that, even though they might succeed in

passing the bridge, if the citizens were thoroughly provoked, they might, in their narrow streets, occasion much annoyance; he, therefore, counselled Tyler to remain with the men marshalled before the bridge, while three or four, who had some knowledge of the city, and whom he would himself accompany, should pass stealthily over the river, and ascertain if their friends on the other side were ready to assist them. Tyler reluctantly agreed to this proposal.

Holgrave and two others then departed from the main body, unloosed a small boat from its moorings, and, in less than five minutes, they were walking, in the twilight of a starry midsummer's night, down the rough stone pathway of Thames-street.

While the guide paused for a moment to recollect the way to the head-quarters of the insurgents, some one who passed was heard speaking in a tone which fell upon Stephen's ear like a sound he ought to remember; he sprang from the side of his comrades, and, standing before the strangers, demanded, "With whom hold you?"

"With King Richard and the true Commons!" was the reply. "Is it not Stephen Holgrave?" continued the galleyman, holding out his hand.

"Yes," replied Holgrave, giving it a friendly pressure; "I thought I knew your voice."

"Do you know *my* voice?" asked one of Wells's companions.

"Ah! Merritt, you are the man I wanted — when did you see Father John? can you tell anything of him?"

"Is not the father with Tyler?" asked Merritt. Holgrave then knew that some mishap must have befallen the monk; and the possibility of his being in the Tower occurred to all.

"Hollo!" cried the galleyman, as, at this moment, a party of men approached — "with whom hold ye, mates?"

"With whom should we hold," said the foremost, "but with King Richard and the true Commons?"

"Well met, then," said Wells; "for the true commons are up — no time is to be lost — the prophet is in prison. Let each man steer his own course, muster all the hands he can, and meet on Tower-hill. Hark! that stroke tells one — remember we meet at two, and we will see if the Londoners and men of Kent cannot shake hands before the clock has tolled three."

The galleyman then hurried Holgrave up a narrow dark street, where, tapping gently at a door, it was instantly opened, to Stephen's great surprise, by old Hartwell.

"Is that you, Robin!" said a soft voice; and a female face was seen peeping half way down the stairs.

"Yes, yes; but go, Lucy, and tell that Stephen Holgrave is here."

"What! Stephen Holgrave!" said the warm-hearted Lucy, springing down the stairs; but, light and quick as was her step, another reached the bottom before her, and, with a faint shriek, Margaret Holgrave fell on her husband's neck.

"Father," resumed Wells, "take up that lamp, and we 'll get a flask of the best, to drink a health to the rising; and do you, Holgrave, go up and just take a look at your children, and then we must be gone."

"And the strife will begin this night!" said Margaret fearfully, as Holgrave, bending over the bed, where lay two sleeping children, glanced for an instant at a dark-haired boy of five or six, and then, taking a little rosy infant of about a twelve-month in his arms, kissed, and gazed upon its face with all the delight of a father.

"There will be no strife, Margaret, to-night, or to-morrow. The commons of London are rising to help us, and the king will not hold out when he sees —— but no matter. Tell me how you have fared. When I left

Sudley, to join the commons, you were taken charge of by your brother, who, no doubt, placed you here with your friend Lucy, on her marriage with Wells ——"

"Stephen!" said the galleyman, from below.

"Good heavens! I must go. Bless you, Margaret! — bless you! I will see you again soon! May God keep ye both!" Gently laying down the still sleeping babe, he tore himself from the arms of his weeping wife, and rushed down the stairs.

Holgrave had never much reason to boast of the gift of speech, more especially when his feelings were in any wise affected. Even the galleyman was not as eloquent now as upon former occasions, and the two issued forth, and walked on for about five minutes, without exchanging a word. Wells, at length, stopped at a house in the vicinity of St. Bartholomew's Priory, with a heavy gothic stone arch, enclosing an iron studded door, and the windows of the first, and still more the second, story projecting so as to cast a strong shadow over the casement of the ground-floor. Wells tapped twice with the hilt of his dagger at the oaken door, which was softly opened, and he and Holgrave entered.

A low stone passage conducted them into a spacious wainscoted room well lighted, and so full of company that it was not possible, at a glance, to guess at their number; and here, at the head of a long, narrow table, was Black Jack standing erect on the seat which he should have occupied in a different manner, and, with his eyes dancing, and his nose and cheeks glowing, haranguing the crowd in a style of familiar eloquence.

"What, my old friend! what do *you* do here?" said the galleyman aloud, but evidently speaking to himself.

"Why," replied Holgrave, imagining the exclamation addressed to him, "I suppose he has left the Essex men to try what can be done among the bondmen!"

"But what has *he* to do with the Essex men or the bondmen?" asked the galleyman.

"Why, do you not know that that is Jack Straw, the Essex captain?"

"He Jack Straw!" cried Wells, with such a look as if his eyes rested on a spectre. "Have I not heard John Ball say that he wished Wat Tyler were like Jack Straw?"

"Yes; Father John thinks better of him than of any who leads: but to tell you the truth," added Holgrave, in a whisper, "though he can read and write, and is, as Father John says, a prudent man — I do n't like him."

"Do you know him?" emphatically asked the galleyman.

"To be sure I do!"

"But I mean," impatiently resumed Wells, "did you ever see him before he was with those Essex men?"

"No."

"Then, Stephen Holgrave, a word in your ear: — *I* know him; and let that man hoist what colours he may, steer clear of him — you understand me!"

Holgrave had no time to reply, when Wells, suddenly, in a gay careless tone, accosted a man who was approaching the spot where they stood.

"Hah! Harvey! who thought of seeing you among the true commons?"

Harvey looked at the speaker an instant, and then, recognising him as poor Beauchamp's successor in the jury, was about to joke him upon his long fast, when his eyes gleaming upon Holgrave, he thought it the most prudent course to make no allusion to the matter, but directly to reply to Well's salutation.

"Why my business in the country," said he, "fell off a little; and so I was trying to make out a living here, and Tom Merritt coming across me, it took little to persuade me to hold with the commons."

"In hopes of being well paid," thought the galleyman, though he said nothing; he merely smiled an answer, and then, drawing Harvey a little aside, whispered him —

"But what gale drove our worthy foreman here?"

"Oh! you know, I suppose, that he is a sworn brother among the leaders, though I did n't know it till this very evening, when it happened that I was sent to the Essex men to know when they thought of marching. You know Black Jack gets on badly without a drop, and, as he could hardly obtain enough among them to wet his lips, he took the opportunity, as he said, of my coming to raise a good spirit among the bondmen — but in truth to ——" and he put an empty wine-cup, that he held in his hands, to his mouth.

The apartment was so densely filled, that the door had opened, while this conversation passed, without attracting the least attention; but Wells, who bethought him that the minutes were flitting, found a passage for himself, and, approaching the table, placed a stool that he took from behind one who had relinquished it in order that not a word that fell from Jack Straw should escape him, and, mounting upon it, shouted out at the top of his voice —

"With whom hold ye, friends?"

There was a sudden hush at this abrupt interrogatory, and Jack Straw was about to answer in no very gentle manner, when, fixing his penetrating eyes upon Wells, a significant glance informed the galleyman that he was recognised, and, suppressing the epithet he was about to use, Oakley merely replied —

"We hold, as all honest men ought — with King Richard and the true Commons!"

"It is of little use holding with them," returned Wells, "if you stand talking there all night: — the time is now come for action, not speech — at two, the commons of London meet on Tower-hill — that is my message." He then turned away, and was hurrying with Holgrave from the room, when Jack Straw, stepping round from his post of orator, intercepted him, and, seizing him by the arm, whispered in his ear —

"Are you leaders too? By the green wax! I suppose I shall see the ghost of the ferret among the good commons next! But mind ye, galleyman — not a syllable that we ever met!" glancing his eyes at Holgrave.

"Not a word," replied Wells, breaking from the foreman's hold, and effecting a precipitate retreat.

At the appointed hour the commons of London mustered in strong force on Tower-hill; and, headed by Wells, passed on to London Bridge. Here they halted, and, upon a blazing brand being affixed to a long spear, and elevated in the air, a sudden shout from the thousands occupying the southern bank, was re-echoed by the Londoners, and caused, as might be expected, a strong sensation among the citizens, inducing a disposition rather to concede than to provoke. The elevation of a second torch was the signal that a parley had been demanded by the loyalists; and then the sudden silence was almost as startling as had been the previous tumult. The horn of the lord mayor's herald again sounded the parley: those who styled themselves the commons demanded that the gates should be opened, and their brethren of Kent permitted to pass. There was some scruple as to the propriety of acceding to this demand, which, however, was soon got over by the unequivocal assurance that the commons *would* pass at any rate; and that, if farther opposition was offered, their first act, upon entering the city, would be to tear down the houses and demolish the bridge. This argument was forcible; and, as there appeared no alternative, the mayor, first stipulating that the houses and stalls on the bridge should remain unharmed, and that free passage should be granted to the citizens to return to their dwellings, passed, with the civic force, between the opening

ranks of the dictating commonalty. Those of the latter, who had arrows, rested meanwhile on their bows, and those who were armed with swords and spears on their cross-hilts and handles; — and thus, in the attitude of submission, and in the silence of peace, stood the confederates until the last citizen had gone by. Then the close and the rush, and the simultaneous shout, came upon the eye and ear like the gathering of mighty waters; and, ere five minutes elapsed from the departure of the mayor, the bridge groaned with the hurried tread of the insurgents, and Tyler planted midway the banner of St. George on the highest house-top.

Shouting for the prophet, Tyler and the galleyman led on the multitude to Tower-hill; but when here, it was to little purpose that the former and Holgrave went rapidly along the verge of the moat, from one extremity to the other, and to as little purpose did the smith's practised eye run over every bar and fastening that came within his ken — he could detect nothing in the massive walls but the strong work of a skilful artizan.

"The ditch is deep," said Holgrave; "but a part could easily be filled up; and if we had ladders, the wall is not high."

"Aye, or if you had a score or two of hempen ropes, with good grappling irons, it would be but boy's play to get aloft," said the galleyman.

Unfortunately, however, they were provided neither with ladders nor ropes; but even had they been so, it is doubtful whether they would have been put in requisition — for now arose the question as to what part of the building they ought to attack, and where lay the prison of the prophet, admitting that he was a prisoner. A thousand suppositions and conjectures were afloat, but no one was sufficiently well acquainted with the building to give a decisive answer. Indeed, it appeared that scarcely a single individual among them had ever crossed the drawbridge.

An angry debate now ensued among the leaders. Some, confiding in their numerical force, and zealous for the liberation of the prophet, were for storming the fortress at any point, and for effecting their object more speedily, proposed razing to the foundation some of the neighbouring houses, and filling up the ditch with the materials. Others thought such an attack might rather militate against themselves than turn to any account in redress of grievances, and after all might fail to advantage the monk: these proposed that a parley should be demanded, and their resolutions submitted to the king, with a requisition for the prophet's release.

"Men of Kent!" shouted Tyler, indignant at the pacific proposal, "what, do you suppose King Richard and his counsel, cooped up yonder, will think of us while we stand talking and gaping here? Think ye they will take off the poll tax, or free the bondman? or open the prison door of our holy prophet, while they see us waiting like so many beggars, for them to read what is written on the sheepskins? I hold, that leaving half our brave fellows here, to let them know that if we do not mount their walls, we have an eye upon them, the rest should go on and see what is to be done in other parts of London. Who knows but we might get hold of that mortal fiend, John of Gaunt; if we once had him, by St. Nicholas! we might ask for what we liked. Stephen Holgrave, do you keep watch here, and let no one come or go: should there be anything to be said, you know what to say — that is enough." And then, marshalling off a strong and picked body from among his followers, the smith hurried forward, accompanied by the galleyman and Kirkby, through the city, injuring neither person nor property, but only exacting from every one they encountered in their progress, a shout and a God-speed for the true commons.

The barred gates of the Fleet prison flew open before the assailants, and the wretched inmates felt their feverish temples once more cooled by the pure breath of liberty. At about a hundred paces from the Fleet, they passed a house, having the bush suspended in front, indicating its posses-

sor to be a vintner; and the host himself, with singular fool-hardiness, stood looking out from the open casement of the first story.

"With whom hold ye, friend?" said Tyler, as he passed, imagining, from the dauntless manner of the man, that he was a friend.

"Not with such traitors and rebels as ye, with whomever else I may hold!" returned the man.

At the instant, a bow was drawn, an arrow whizzed, and the imprudent vintner fell back from the casement.

"Break in the door!" said Tyler, "and let us see if the cellars of this unmannerly knave have any thing more to our liking than their master's speech."

There was no need to repeat the order — the door was smashed to splinters, and, in the rush to get at the cellars, several were thrown down, and trampled on. A large can, filled with wine, was handed to Tyler, and another to the galleyman, who, each quaffing a long draught, permitted the like indulgence to their followers; and then the word to march on was shouted by the chief. But now the smith perceived evidence of the folly he had been guilty of: the wine was too tempting to be left so soon — the vintner's house rang with execrations and tumult — and even among those who kept their station in the street, the dangerous liquid continued to circulate.

"This comes," said Tyler, enraged at such sudden disorder, "of letting folks taste of what they're not used to; but let them tipple on. By St. Nicholas! they may: I will wait for no man;" and snatching the banner of St. George from its half stupified bearer, and waving it in the air, he applied a small bugle to his lips, and at the blast, all whose reason was not entirely lost in their thirst, followed the smith from the scene of inebriety.

Their next halt was at the beginning of the Strand, opposite the princely mansion of the bishop of Chester. The gates were forced in, and the garden encircling the building filled with the commons, who, hissing and shouting, bade John Fordham come forth. When it was discovered that the bishop was not within its walls, the house was presently glowing in one bright sheet of flame. It was told to Tyler, while this was going on, that a body of the Essex men had marched on from Mile-end, and taking a northerly direction, had pillaged and destroyed many dwellings, and among others, that of the prior of Saint John of Jerusalem, at Highbury; while another division was rapidly advancing by the way of Holborn, to attack the palace of John of Gaunt at the Savoy.

"By St. Nicholas!" said Tyler, "they shan't have it all their own way there;" and the Kentish men made all haste to be the first to commence the work of destruction; but ere they had left the burning house, the dark body of the division of the Essex men was seen pouring into the Strand by the wall of the Convent garden.

Tyler and the other leaders, followed by hundreds, now rushed on to the palace; — the massive gates yielded to their blows, and the assailants, pouring in through the arched passages, ran along gallery and window, and through seemingly countless apartments. Yet, even amidst their eagerness to capture Lancaster, they paused a moment, casting glances of astonishment and pleasure at the beautifully inlaid cabinets, rich tapestries, and embroidered cushions, which everywhere met their gaze. The galleyman, however, was perhaps the only one among all the gazers who knew the value of the things he looked upon; and he could not repress a feeling of regret, as he glanced at the damask hangings, and the gold cords and fringes, and remembered that all these would be speedily feeding the flames. As he was thus occupied, and thinking what a fortune these articles would be to a peddling merchant, he saw Jack Straw in the act of whis-

pering in Harvey's ear (who, by some strange sort of moral attraction, was standing by his side), and he noticed them linger until the group they had accompanied passed on to the inspection of other apartments. Oakley then opened a door in a recess in the corridor, which, when they entered, they closed hastily after them.

"Master Tyler," said Wells, springing up to the chief, "they are boarding a prize yonder;" and he pointed to the half-concealed door.

"Have they got John of Gaunt?" vociferated the smith; but as he turned his eyes from the spot to which his attention had been directed, to his informant, the galleyman could not be distinguished among the group —for, in truth, he was rather solicitous to avoid any kind of contact with his old associates.

"Confound the unmannerly carle," muttered Tyler, as he rushed forward with his men to seek an explanation in the room itself. The door, however, resisted all their efforts; and this only strengthening their hasty suspicions respecting Lancaster, the stout polished oak was presently split asunder by their axes, and they forced an entrance into a small light apartment, furnished in a style of eastern luxury. From the carved ceiling were hanging the broken links of a gold chain; and on the soft crimson cushions of an ebony couch, and on the floor, were scattered the miscellaneous contents of an exquisite ivory cabinet.

"He has escaped us!" shouted Tyler and the others, as, after casting a rapid glance around the empty apartment, they darted through an open door on the other side. This led into a luxurious dressing-room, and this again into a sumptuous dormitory. If there were any outlet from this room, it was concealed by the splendid hangings, and the pursuers, after assuring themselves that no human being was within, returned to the dressing-room. The door of egress from this apartment was secured on the outside, and so, without a moment's delay, they had recourse to their former expedient, and the door was instantly hewn to splinters. On creeping through the aperture, and passing through a short passage, they found themselves in the gallery that ran round the hall. Here, chafing with disappointment, the pursuers had only to hope that they might, by chance, take the right scent, and were rushing along the gallery, when Tyler, casting his eyes below, and observing the galleyman cross the hall, hallooed to him; and then springing along the gallery, and down the spiral stairs, seized Wells rather unceremoniously, and upbraided him with conniving at the escape of Lancaster.

"Avast there! Master Tyler," said Wells, shaking off the gripe of the smith; "I know no more of Lancaster than yourself: I told you this morning he was on the borders — and so, how, in the name of all the saints, could he be here? — but I tell ye, there are some here who would rather lay hand upon John of Gaunt's gold than upon John of Gaunt's body!"

"They had better not come across me," replied the smith, comprehending the galleyman's hint; but still persisting in his skepticism, he resumed his search. But even the smith was, at length, compelled to admit that, whether Lancaster had escaped or not, it did not appear likely that he would be found; — and the order was given for firing the palace. At the same instant a leathern jack, covered all over with a thick quilting of blue satin, was held upon the point of a lance, and as many arrows shot at it as they would more willingly have aimed at the breast of its owner. The building was already smoking in fifty different places, and at some points the flames were already rising. Tyler, who had determined not to believe in Lancaster's absence, after lingering about the palace with the hope that the devouring element might force him from some hiding-place, accidentally found himself in the chapel close to the sanctuary, and just at the opportune mo-

ment to detect a sacrilegious hand removing a massive gold candlestick from the altar.

"Infidel! devil!" shouted Tyler, springing over the railing of the sanctuary, and raising his clenched fist: the candlestick fell from the grasp of the delinquent, and he reeled against the altar with the force of the blow. "What!" continued Tyler, aghast, "can it be Jack Straw!"

"Yes, it is," replied Oakley, fiercely, in some measure recovering from his confusion, and from the effects of the blow, "and, by the green-wax! a strange way you have of claiming acquaintance — what did you think, Tyler, I was going to do with the candlestick? Will not the commons have churches of their own, when they obtain their rights, and would it not be a triumph over Lancaster, to have these brave candlesticks gracing our altars."

Tyler had turned away while Black Jack was speaking, but suddenly stopping, turned abruptly round, and looking full at him —

"I'll tell you, Jack Straw," said he, "were it not for my respect for Father John, I would have every door of this chapel fastened up, and then the flames that are already crackling the painted windows yonder, would just give you time to say a paternoster and an ave, before they cheated the gibbet of its due! but, as it is, let *him* who put you over the Essex men look to you, but, by my faith," he added, stamping his foot against the pavement, and speaking quicker, "if you do not instantly leave this place, all the monks that ever told a bead shall not save you!"

It was yet possible for Oakley to feel shame, and it was not entirely with rage that his whole body at this moment trembled. He looked at the smith as he spoke, and half drew a dagger from his bosom, and an indifferent spectator, regarding the two — Oakley still standing on the upper step of the altar, and Tyler at a dozen paces down the centre aisle — would have thought that there could have existed but little odds between the physical power of the men; but Oakley, although he ground his teeth, and felt almost suffocated, had too much prudence to expose his gross enervated body to the muscular arm of the vigorous smith. Therefore, assuming an indignation of a very different character from his real feelings, he said, as he stepped from the altar into the nave of the chapel,

"I do n't understand your language, Master Tyler — am not I a leader? — does not the prophet know me and trust me?"

"By St. Nicholas! the prophet does *not* know you! Do you think he would have trusted you, if he had thought you would have skulked into a chapel to steal the very candlesticks from the holy altar!"

An execration passed between Oakley's teeth — he sprang upon Tyler, and had not the smith dexterously raised his left arm and arrested the blow, Black Jack's dagger would have been buried in his bosom.

"That for ye, coward," said Tyler, striking him with the flat side of his bared weapon. Oakley aimed another thrust which was again turned aside, and the smith, now flinging down his sword, seized upon his right hand and wrenched the dagger from its grasp. After a short struggle, Oakley fell heavily on the pavement, with the blood streaming from his mouth and nostrils.

"Lie there, for a dog — to strike at a man with a dagger!" said Tyler, as he took up his sword, and muttering something about "if it was not for the sake of the prophet," strode hastily away. And there was little time for delay; the atmosphere of the place was becoming quite insupportable, and the flames were spreading with such rapidity, that the smith, half stupified and scorching, had enough to do to escape from the mischief he had kindled.

That afternoon, Richard was standing on a turret of the fortress, looking at the column of flame which still rose brightly from Lancaster palace, even

above the heavy smoke and occasional sparklings which told elsewhere of the whereabout of the incendiaries.

"Our cousin will have to crave hospitality, when he returns home," said Richard, addressing the Earl of Oxford, who stood beside him.

"The knaves have been merry on their march," replied Oxford. "Does your grace see the bonfires they have lit yonder?" and he pointed towards the north.

"By my faith, it is more than provoking to see the audacity of the kerns. Think you not," added Richard, after pausing a moment, "that if that monk was brought forth, and his head laid on a block, some terms might be made with the rebels. Do you see," continued the king, as they descended to the battlements, "they are bringing huge beams towards the drawbridge."

It indeed seemed evident that some bold measure was contemplated, and Richard's suggestion respecting the monk was about to be acted upon, with only a prudent hint from Sir Robert Hales not to provoke the commons to desperation, when De Boteler's page approached his master.

The baron was standing apart from the other nobles, scanning, with a gloomy countenance, the dark undulating mass below. Once he could have sworn that Stephen Holgrave stood upon the verge of the ditch before him, but if it was he, he stood but an instant, and then was lost amidst the multitude. This circumstance gave a new turn to De Boteler's meditations; he thought too of the monk of Winchcombe Abbey — this John Ball, who was styled the prophet; and it seemed to be no less true than strange, that the germ of all this wide-spreading disorder had sprung from his own soil. So much, in fact, was he absorbed in these ideas, that he actually started when his page, who had been for the space of a minute endeavouring to draw his attention by repeated obeisances, ventured to pronounce his name in rather a high key, as he presented to him an arrow which had been found sticking in the door-post of the building in which Father John was confined.

"And this was shot from the river?" asked De Boteler, as he received the arrow and unrolled a parchment wrapped around it.

"Yes, my lord."

"Tell Calverley to come hither directly."

The page withdrew, and De Boteler, after perusing the parchment, presented it to Richard. It ran thus: "A retainer of the Lord de Boteler will come, unarmed and alone, beneath the southern battlements, at ten o'clock. He is a leader of the commons, but, being touched with remorse, he will, if admitted before the king in council, disclose all the secrets of the rebels."

"Know you any retainer of yours who could have written this?"

"My steward, who approaches, can better answer the question, your highness," returned the baron.

The parchment being handed to Calverley, he instantly recognised the hand, and, in answer to De Boteler's question, replied —

"This is the handwriting of a retainer called Oakley."

"Do you know the man?"

"Yes, my lord."

Calverley then retired, and those whom the matter concerned withdrew to an apartment, and gave their opinions according to the view in which the thing appeared to them.

That it was a stratagem to gain entrance to the Tower, was the opinion of several, but, after much discussion, it was decided that the man should be admitted, and that the monk should be exhibited merely to intimidate the rebels, until the result of this promised communication should be known.

About ten, a small boat was observed to approach the southern walls of the fortress. A man stepped from it, and was permitted to ascend the terrace, and Calverley, who was standing there, challenged the stranger.

The steward clapped his hands, and immediately the bows of a hundred archers stationed around were unbent, and he addressed Oakley as follows:

"It was you who shot the arrow?"

"Yes."

"Are you a leader, Oakley?"

"I was a leader," returned Oakley, gloomily.

"It was well that I was here to recognise your writing."

"Where there is a will there is a way, steward, and I should have found means of getting revenge even if you had kept safe at Sudley."

"Is it for revenge, Oakley, or for gold?"

"I tell you Master Calverley, it is revenge," said Black Jack, stopping short, as they were crossing the court-yard, "it is revenge! When I joined the commons, I swore I would not betray them, and I would not — betray them for gold did you say? — listen — I had gold — aye gold enough, to have kept me an honest man all the days of my life, after this rising, and that — that blacksmith, who killed the baron's retainer —

"Turner! what of him?"

But Oakley went on without heeding the interruption. "What was it to the knave whether I or the flames had them — and to be cuffed and threatened! — but the gibbet shall not be cheated of *him*. Do you know they threw Harvey into the flames — I heard the shrieks of the wretch, but I could not help him, though I knew my treasure was burning with him! for I was crawling, all but suffocated, and seeking for an outlet towards the river. I heard the cry, but for an instant, and then nothing, through the long passage, but the rush and the roar of the flames."

"Then the gold you speak of was lost?"

"Yes, by the green wax! it was. If I had only been wise enough to have kept the bag myself, poor Harvey might have been alive, and I should not have done what I am going to do this night. No; — I should only have cursed the smith and forsworn the commons, and made the best of my way to where I could have turned the gold and the gems into hard coin. Is my Lord de Boteler here?"

"Yes."

"Then, Master Calverley, although, as I have said before, it is to revenge myself, you must tell the baron that the king must not expect to have my assistance in betraying the commons without paying for it."

"My lord will not see you but in the presence of the council."

"Not see me! then, by the green wax! I may be cheated; for one can hardly ask the king for money to his face."

"The baron has pledged himself that, if your intelligence and services are such as you hinted at, you may claim your own reward."

"May I? — then John Oakley will be no niggard," his countenance losing much of the gloomy ferocity it had been marked with. "But, steward," he added, as they walked through the building, "the smoke and the flame are even now in my throat; — you must give me wine, or I shall not be able to speak a word."

De Boteler was instantly acquainted with Oakley's arrival, and the council assembled, impressed with the importance of detaching so influential a leader from the commons. Indeed, energy had given place to indecision, at a moment that required prompt measures. Tyler had, but an hour before, sent an intimation, that, if the prophet was not released in twenty-four hours, the city would be fired, and the Tower assaulted: and, even at the moment when the members of the council were entering the chamber, the air was rent with the shouts of the commons on Tower-hill and Smithfield, as some skilful artizans among their body had nearly matured some machines for facilitating the attack. Symptoms of panic or indifference had

been also manifested among those who guarded the Tower. The strange stories whispered of Ball, his prophecies, and his calm bearing while confined in his dungeon, with his oft repeated assertions of being liberated by the commons, were calculated, in such an age, to fill their minds with the belief that he was, in truth, a prophet, and one whom it would be impiety to meddle with.

After Richard, surrounded by the lords, had taken his seat at the table, Black Jack was introduced by De Boteler as the writer of the scroll.

"You are a leader of the rebels?" interrogated Sudbury.

"I am, your grace," replied Oakley.

"Which division of the kerns do you command?"

"The commons of Essex."

"What! all?" interrupted Richard.

"My liege, I am leader of fifty thousand men."

"Then what is the design of this rising?" again asked Sudbury.

"To free the bond — to acquire land at a low rent — to be at liberty to buy and sell in all cities and towns, without toll or interruption; — and lastly, to obtain a pardon for this insurrection."

"By my faith!" said Sir Robert Hales, "these are bold demands, which the sword alone must decide."

"Peace! Sir Robert," said Sudbury. — "What have you to suggest which may benefit the realm, Sir Leader?" he continued.

"Ere I say more," said Oakley, falling on his knees before Richard, "I crave a general pardon, not only for myself as a leader in this rising, but for all other trespasses by me committed."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Richard, "the knave is wisely valiant! He has an especial care of his own neck. Rise — thou art pardoned."

"But my liege," continued Oakley, still kneeling, "there is one confined in this fortress for whom I would solicit freedom."

"To whom do you allude, knave?" asked Sudbury, with some surprise.

"To father John Ball."

"To father John Ball! to that son of Satan — that vile author of all this confusion. Be content with saving your own head."

"Then, my lord archbishop," said Oakley, rising, "if a hair of that monk's head is touched, I will not answer for the result. Wat Tyler, my lords, is a man of desperate purpose. He has sworn before the multitude, that, if the prophet is not freed before the twenty-four hours, the heads of all these noble peers around me shall answer for it. — Nay more ——"

"Hold, kern," interrupted Richard, fiercely; "we despise the threat."

"But, my liege," persisted Jack Straw, "let the council consider the danger of the delay. I have reason to know, that those you reckon upon to oppose an entrance here are not to be trusted: the prophet has worked wonders, even within the fortress."

"How know *you* that?" asked Richard, with surprise.

"My liege, there are disciples of John Ball in the Tower — aye, even among the royal household!"

"T is false!" returned Richard, angrily — "who are they? — confess! confess!"

"No, my liege — though I have renounced the confederates, I cannot betray them; but if the monk is freed, I will, at the risk of my head, quell the rising, without blood."

"How? — speak!" said Sudbury.

"My lord, you have heard the conditions, which have been drawn up by John Ball himself. I would humbly suggest, that charters of freedom should be granted under the royal hand and seal: if it so please you — they can be revoked at leisure. The Essex men will be content with these char-

ters and a general pardon — but the prophet must be first set at liberty: he abhors bloodshed, will curb this Tyler, and thus this formidable array may be dispersed. I would further suggest, that your highness, attended by a slight retinue, and unarmed, should repair to-morrow to Mile-end, where I shall have assembled the leaders, and will sound them on these points. The charters may then be read, and, my lords, you are aware, that even the royal franchise cannot destroy your right over the bondmen, without an act of parliament."

While Oakley was speaking, all eyes were fixed upon him with something of astonishment at advice that would not come amiss from the sagest among them.

"Retire," said Sudbury! "we shall consider the matter."

"My lords," said the wily prelate, in a solemn tone, "this man has anticipated my counsel. It may not be safe to meddle with this Ball for the present. The charters may be made out, and of course revoked hereafter; but I like not your grace perilling your person, alone and unguarded, among the kerns."

"My lord," said Richard, "we are resolved to meet these bold men, and hear what they have to say. Shall you attend us, my Lord of Canterbury?"

"I would fain be excused, with your highness's leave. A dignitary of holy church should not degrade his calling by communing with the scum of the land!"

"Then, my lord bishop, let who will stay, we go. My lords, will you attend your king?"

"To death, my liege," said De Boteler and the rest.

"'T is well — let this man be recalled."

"Tell the commons, that King Richard will see them to-morrow," said De Boteler.

"Then, my lord, the monk is to be freed?" asked Oakley.

"His life is spared till after the conference," said the treasurer; "his freedom depends upon the disbanding of the Essex men."

Oakley was then led forth from the council by De Boteler, who pledged himself that the monk should not be harmed; and, after receiving, from Calverley, a part of the stipulated reward, he retired from the fortress by the way he had entered.

CHAPTER VII.

The Tower clock had just struck ten, and Father John was reading a Latin manuscript by the light of a small lamp, when the door of his prison opened, and the glare of a large wax-light, preceding a lady, almost dazzled his eyes. The torchbearer, placing the torch in a convenient position against the wall, retired, leaving the monk and the lady alone.

There was but one seat in the dungeon, so John Ball arose, and presenting his stool to his visiter, seated himself on the bundle of straw which composed his bed.

Isabella de Boteler placed the stool so that her own face might be in the shade, at the same time that the light played full upon that of the monk. They sat an instant silent; and as the baroness bent her eyes upon the father, she saw, in the deep marks on the forehead, and in the changed hue of his circling hair, that he had paid the price of strong excitement; but yet she almost marvelled if the placid countenance she now gazed upon could belong to one who had dared and done so much. At length she spoke.

"You know me, Father John?"

"Yes, lady."

"Know you why I have visited this cell?"

"It is not for me to speak of what is passing in the heart of another."

"Tell me, monk," asked Isabella, "did you see the multitude who filled the open space when you were led upon the battlements this afternoon?"

"I did, lady, and my heart rejoiced — even as a father at sight of his children!" a slight tinge passing over his cheek.

"You speak too boldly," said Isabella, with some impatience; "but if your eyes were gladdened with what they saw on Tower-hill to-day, they will not be gladdened at the things that will meet their glance to-morrow!" She hesitated, and then went on rather hurriedly: "When you are led forth again, the rebellious commons will be dispersed, and the block will be standing ready for your head!"

"Man is but dust, and a breath may blow him away. I was born, Lady de Boteler, but to die; and there is not a morning, since I have abided in this dungeon, but, as I have watched the first rays of light stream through yonder grating, I have thought, Shall my eyes behold the departing day! and, as well as a sinner may do, I prepared for my end. But, lady, are the thousands but as one man? — and think you that the spirit which has gone forth ——"

"I tell you, Father John," interrupted Isabella, "that even at this moment a leader of the rebels is before the council — and ere to-morrow's sun shall set, the turbulent villeins will be either hanged or driven back — and *you* will be beheaded!"

"Is the betrayer a captive?" asked the monk; and he fixed an anxious searching glance on the baroness.

"No, the man came voluntarily ——"

Isabella paused. The monk, however, did not reply; but she inferred, from a sort of quivering of the upper lip, that her information affected him more deeply than he chose to tell. She passed one hand across her forehead, and then, clasping them both, and resting them upon her knees, looked earnestly at John Ball, and said, impresively —

"The rebels are betrayed, and you are condemned; but, if you will hearken to my request, this hour shall free you from prison: — Will you, will you tell me of my lost child?"

"Lady," said the monk in a stern voice, "think you so meanly of John Ball, that he would do for a bribe what he would not do for justice' sake? The time was when ye might have known, but ye took not counsel ——"

"Then he lives!" said Isabella, in a suppressed shriek; and she bent her head on her bosom, and covered her face with her hands.

For a minute she sat thus, and then slowly removing her hands, and raising up her pale and tearful face, said tremulously, and in so low a tone as to be scarcely audible, "My child, then, does live?"

"Baroness de Boteler, I said not that your child lives."

"Oh, Father John, torture me not so," said she, with hysterical eagerness. "Oh, tell me not that I have a living son, and then bid me look upon the grave. Oh, lead me to my child, or even give assurance that he lives, and you shall be freed; and if he whom I suspect did the deed, he shall be pardoned and enriched."

"The Baroness of Sudley," replied Father John, "does not know the poor Cistercian monk. Were the bolts withdrawn, and that door left swinging upon its hinges, I would not leave my prison until the voice of the people bade me come forth. And know ye not, lady, that with what measure ye mete to others, the same shall be meted to you again. Did ye deal out mercy to Edith Holgrave? Did ye deal mercifully by Stephen, when ye gave him bondage as a reward for true faith — and then stripes and a

prison? And, as for me, — and ye expect that the bondman's son is to set a pattern of mercy and forgiveness to the noble and the free?"

"I was right, then," said the baroness, in a more composed tone — "it was Stephen Holgrave who did the deed; but father, if you spurn my offers, at least answer me yes or no to one question — Am I the mother of a living son?"

It was in vain, however, that Isabella promised, implored, and even threatened; John Ball would not vouchsafe another reply, and the baroness, at length, wearied and indignant, arose, turned abruptly from the monk, and summoning her attendants, hastened forth to her own apartment, and there, throwing herself in a chair, wept and sobbed until her heart was in a measure relieved.

That night was a period of strong excitement within and without the Tower. Without, the moonlight displayed an immense mass of dark bodies stretched on the ground, and slumbering in the open air; while others, of more active minds, moved to and fro, like evil spirits in the night. Beyond, in the adjacent streets, occasionally rose the drunken shouts of rioters, or the shrieks of some unhappy foreigner, who was slaughtered by the ignorant and ferocious multitude for the crime of being unable to speak English. Within the Tower there was as little of repose; there were the fears of many noble hearts, lest the renegade leader might not be as influential as he vaunted, concealed beneath the semblance of contemptuous pride or affected defiance; — then there were the sanguine hopes of the youthful Richard; — the maternal fears of his mother; — the anxious feelings of the baroness; — the troubled thoughts and misgivings of John Ball; — and the strange whisperings among the men-at-arms and archers, who all "did quail in stomach," we may suppose, at the novel combination of a prophet in prison, and an armed populace besieging the fortress.

The next morning Richard, without breastplate or helmet, but simply attired in a saffron-coloured tunic and an azure mantle lined with ermine (on which opened pea-shells were wrought in their natural green, but with the peas represented by large pearls), a cap of azure velvet, edged also with ermine, and with no other weapon but a small dagger in the girdle of his tunic, prepared himself to meet his rebellious subjects. The idea of letting down the drawbridge, and passing by it from the Tower, was too imprudent a thing to be thought of, and Richard, therefore, attended by De Boteler, Oxford, Warwick, Sir Aubrey de Vere, and a few others, were just about taking water, in order to pass a little way down the river, and then proceed to Mile-end on horseback, when the princess Joan, attended by the Lady Warwick, joined the party, and intimated her intention of accompanying her son.

It was to little purpose that Richard expostulated; the fair Joan was resolved to share in whatever perils might befall her son. As they approached Mile-end, the princess started at the deafening clamour which arose from the multitude; some shouting for Richard as they saw him advance, and others vociferating as loudly that all should hold their peace until they knew what the king would grant. When the tumult had in some degree subsided, Sir Aubrey de Vere and Sir Robert Knowles rode forward in advance of the king, and approaching Jack Straw, who was also on horseback: —

"Sir Leader," said De Vere, "we have come at the king's command to make known to these assembled commons his grace's pleasure. Are ye willing to listen to the royal clemency?"

Leicester was not among the leaders, for, disgusted with Oakley's tardiness, he had about an hour before passed the city gates with a large body, to join Tyler. Jack Straw, therefore, had not him to contend with, and a flattering plausible speech in a few minutes procured attention to the following charter: —

"Richard, king of England and of France, doth greatly thank his good commons, because they so greatly desire to see and hold him for their king; and doth pardon them all manner of trespasses, misprisons, and felonies done before this time; and willeth and commandeth, from henceforth, that every one hasten to his own dwelling, and set down all his grievances in writing, and send it unto him, and he will, by advice of his lawful lords and good council, provide such remedy as shall be profitable to him, to them, and to the whole realm."

"Ye may tell his grace," cried Rugge, "that I for one will never return to my dwelling until a charter is granted to make all cities free to buy and sell in."

"And shall we go back to our homes to be bondmen again?" burst in a wild cry from thousands.

At this moment a messenger rode up to Oakley, and, putting a letter into his hands, instantly retired.

"A message from the prophet!" cried Black Jack, as he glanced over the writing, and then read aloud, "John Ball greeteth John Straw, John Leicester, Ralph Rugge, and the other leaders, and also all the true commons assembled at Mile-end, and commandeth them that they listen to the voice of their anointed king, and hasten back to their own homes; and John Ball, who is now freed, will obtain from the royal hand the charter of freedom, for the bond, and the redress of all the grievances that weigh down the free."

There was much murmuring and discontent at the tenor of this epistle; and but little disposition manifested to obey the mandate: but the example of their principal leader, Jack Straw, who instantly, as in obedience to the prophet's command, divested himself of his sword, and presented it to Sir Aubrey de Vere, intimating his submission to the king, occasioned a sort of general panic, or rather, a distrust of their own powers. This, added to the specious and equivocal promises of Richard, who now approached, and the persuasive eloquence of Oakley, operated so far on the credulous multitude, that the king, amidst a universal shout of "Long live the king of the commons," turned his horse's head towards London, rejoicing in his heart that so far the rebels were dispersed.

But in this instance his exultation was of short duration, for one, who had leaped from the battlements of the Tower unheeded, and had swam along the river unharmed, approached Sir Robert Knowles, who was riding something in advance of the party, and with his saturated apparel bearing testimony to his assertions, announced the stunning intelligence that the Tower was at that moment in the possession of the commons. This brave defender of the fortress was Calverley.

There was a sudden halt at this intelligence, and many an exclamation at the presumption of the insolent commons. However, after some consultation, it was deemed most prudent to come as little as possible in collision with the rebels, but, under countenance of the mayor, to pass through the city, and then, as the most probable security, claim the hospitality of the worthy abbot of Westminster.

We shall leave King Richard with the fair Joan of Kent and the nobles, to pursue their journey to Westminster, while we give some idea of the means by which the commons, so soon after the departure of the king, became masters of the Tower. The galleyman had been a resident in London for some years; and it will of course be inferred, that during this time he must have formed many acquaintances, which circumstance, indeed, had been of much avail in gaining admittance into the city, and now turned to as good account in effecting an entrance into the Tower.

It was about midnight that Wells, who had been thinking a great deal of the probability of gaining access to the fortress, went to the smith's quar-

ters, and proposed to attempt an entrance. Tyler commended his devotion; and the galleyman, provided with a rope, to which an iron hook was affixed, and a flask or two of wine, dropped unobserved into the water. He swam on as softly as possible beneath the wall, and in the shadow cast by the moonlight. There was one part where he observed that an angle of the building cast a broad shade on the parapet; and here, without a moment's hesitation, he stopped, and throwing up the rope, the hook caught. Though encumbered by his wet apparel, he climbed up with the agility of a boy; but the instant his figure appeared above the wall, two men with drawn swords sprung forward.

"Hold there! I have brought ye a drop of wine."

At the first sound of his voice the weapons were lowered. "It was well that ye spoke, master vintner," said the men, taking each a flask of wine and draining its contents.

It so happened, that these men had a strong sympathy for the commons, and besides this, they had been much wrought upon by the stories, whether true or false, circulated through the Tower respecting Ball; and it did not require much persuasion to gain them over in assisting Well's project. A female domestic belonging to the lieutenant, a sweetheart of one of those men, secreted Wells in an apartment in her master's house, and contrived to purloin the keys of the gates after Richard's departure. The galleyman, aided by a few daring disciples of the prophet, with whom he found means to communicate through the same female instrumentality, surprised the few who guarded the gate and drawbridge: and the blast of a horn was the signal for the smith to advance. So suddenly was this feat accomplished, that the men-at-arms, who were scattered up and down the fortress, had not time to seize their weapons or oppose the thousands who, headed by Tyler and Holgrave, rushed forward, and entered the Tower. With exulting shouts the conquerors took possession of the building. Some made strict search for the members of the council; others, with blows and taunts, employed themselves in divesting the panic-struck soldiers of their arms; and others, the more numerous of the intruders, were intent only on forcing the wine-cellars, regardless of the threats and buffets of their leaders. But above all this wild clamour, arose the voice of Tyler, who strode rapidly on, like some demon of power, striking and reviling friend or foe who was unable to point out where the prophet was confined.

At length one of the keepers was seized, who conducted Tyler and Holgrave to his cell.

"Father John, you are free—the Tower is ours!" exclaimed Holgrave, flinging wide the massive door.

"And I am freed? and by the bond?" exclaimed the monk.

"Aye, Father John, you are free," said Tyler. "We have found you at last; but by St. Nicholas! we have had a long search. Hah!" as he glanced on the monk, "have the knaves chained you. Bear him forth, men of Kent—Wat Tyler himself will strike off those irons."

The monk was then conducted to the outer door of the prison. It would be in vain to paint the frantic joy of those without. Deafening shouts of "The prophet is free!" passed from mouth to mouth, and then came the rush to obtain a prayer or benediction.

"Back, men of Kent—back," vociferated Tyler;—and then arose the long wild shout as Tyler freed the monk from the last link of his bonds.

Just then a movement among the people was observed, and a man, hastily forcing his way through the yielding ranks, announced to the astonished smith, and yet more astonished monk, that Oakley had, by command of the prophet, made terms with the king, and that even now the Essex men had broke up their camp, and were marching homewards.

"And is this thy counsel, Father John?" said Tyler, reproachfully:

"but, by St. Nicholas! this robber of the high altar shall not depart scatheless. Kentish men! — my horse, my horse!" and he stamped his armed heels upon the pavement.

"Wat Tyler," returned the monk, sternly, "this is not my counsel — this, then, is the traitor! — but perhaps he has obtained the charters!"

"The charters, Father John," responded Tyler, with a sneer: "aye, by St. Nicholas! he has got his charters in good broad pieces, I 'll warrant! — My horse, Kentish men, I say!"

"Confound the whole rising, if he escapes me! Stephen Holgrave! as the father does n't like me to go, tell Leicester to take a chosen body of the Kentish men; and, mark ye, he must catch that fiend, and bring him to the Tower, dead or alive!"

"Stephen Holgrave," said the monk, "let not one hair of his head be meddled with! And now, Wat Tyler, I enjoin thee to clear the fortress of those who have forgotten their duty — but slay not. I now go to the chapel, where I shall remain a short time in prayer." The monk then waved his hand, and drew his cowl closely over his brow, to hide from his gaze the evidences of debauchery he encountered at every step in his way to the chapel. The gutters and kennels ran with wine, and some, for want of vessels, were lying prostrate, lapping up the flowing beverage — some, entirely overpowered, were stretched across the doorways, and in the courtyards, serving as seats to others, who were, with wild oaths, passing round the goblet.

"And this is the first-fruits of liberty," muttered the monk — "but no good can be had unalloyed with evil."

The chapel, during all the tumult, was unnoticed, probably less through respect for the place, than from neglect; and thither those who had most to fear from the people had hastened, expecting safety from the sacredness of the spot. Among the rest, or rather leading the way, went Sudbury, who was shortly afterwards joined by the constable and treasurer, on perceiving the commons in possession of the Tower.

In order to impress the place with a still greater degree of awe, Sudbury, with his attendant priests, had robed themselves, and commenced vespers.

Father John entered the chapel, and prostrating himself thrice at the door, arose, and silently advanced to the foot of the altar. Here he recognised the archbishop, and, checking his emotions, knelt in prayer, unnoticed till the service had concluded. In the midst of the sacred song, terror was depicted, more strongly than piety, in the faces of all the worshippers, save Sudbury; he seemed calm, except, indeed, when a shout from without caused an indignant frown to darken his brow.

The monk was at length perceived, for the treasurer, on raising his eyes, met the glance of Father John. "My lord bishop," said he, "yonder stands the monk, John Ball!"

"And why not, my lord treasurer?" said Father John, in a clear, full voice, his face, before so pale, glowing, and his frame trembling so much that he grasped a pillar for support; "this temple is open to all — the just as well as the unjust."

"Darest thou, rash man, to defile the holy place? — why art thou not in thy prison?" said Sudbury, whose glance fell proudly and scornfully on the monk.

"Simon Sudbury," answered Ball, with a look of equal defiance, and still deeper scorn — "my dungeon doors obeyed the spirit of the free; and God alone can judge who is defiled, or who is pure ——"

"Away, degraded priest!" answered Sudbury, fiercely, and he raised his arm, and pointed towards the door.

"Simon Sudbury," retorted the monk, "if, as thou sayest, I am degraded, to thee no authority is due — If I am still a chosen one of the Lord, me-

thinks I am free to enter and worship in his temple: but," he continued, elevating his tones to their fullest compass, "whether I am a priest or no priest, yet *here* I am powerful, and, proud prelate, *I*, in my turn, command *thee* hence!"

"And is this the way, misguided zealot?" cried Sudbury — "is this the way that *you* preach *peace?* What hast thou done with the royal Richard?"

"The royal Richard," returned Father John, exultingly, "is but king of the *commons;* but the royal Richard is well served, he added, sarcastically, "by Simon Sudbury and the nobles, who leave their prince, in his peril, to hide them in holes and sanctuaries!"

The treasurer turned pale, and hung his head.

"Aye, Sir Treasurer, thou hast reason to sink thy head! Thy odious poll-tax has mingled vengeance — nay, blood, — with the cry of the bond."

"It is thou, foul spirit!" cried Sudbury, descending a step from the altar — "It is thou who hast stimulated the thirst for blood, and hast brought the royal prerogative and holy church into contempt — away! ere, with my own hands, I drive thee hence!"

"And away, ill-starred prelate! — away (as I prophecy) to thy doom!" returned the monk, advancing a step towards Sudbury; "aye — aye — away! and ——"

The monk did not finish the sentence, for the door of the chapel was for a moment darkened with the shadows of two men, who were just entering; and Father John, wrapping his cloak around him, walked rapidly towards them, and, with a single adjuration of "Friend Tyler, spare!" issued forth from the chapel.

Tyler, in his haste to seize the archbishop, stumbled over a lance which one of those who had fled with the prelate had dropped.

"Confound the hand that dropped thee!" muttered the smith, as he sprang on his feet. "John Kirkby, is not that Sudbury yonder? It is he, by St. Nicholas! Seize that babbling old man! — he with the mitre!" They had now arrived at the altar.

"Not one step farther, kern!" cried the treasurer, seizing his sword, and placing himself in front of Sudbury.

A shriek from the women who had clustered round the treasurer, made matters worse; for, attracted by the noise, the chapel was instantly filled with armed men.

"Sir Treasurer, think you to scare him who leads the Kentish men? Kirkby, drag the antichrist from the altar!"

Kirkby advanced a few paces, but a glance from Sudbury seemed to unnerve him, and he stood for a moment irresolute.

"There, chicken-hearted carle!" cried the smith, felling Kirkby to the ground with his mailed hand — "there, dog! — Wat Tyler must be obeyed! And now, Simon Sudbury, take off that blessed mitre, which ill befits thee, and come forth; for, by my faith and the blessed St. Nicholas! in one hour hence, thy head shall be stuck on London Bridge, wrapped up in the hood of thine own mantle!" And with this, Tyler placed his foot on the first step of the altar.

Another shriek from the terrified females but seemed to augment his fury; and the treasurer, after a few vain parries, fell stunned and bleeding by a powerful blow of the smith's axe.

"Lie there, dog! — there goes one of the accursed council!" and, springing up the step with a giant grasp, he seized the mitred chancellor by the neck, and dragged him into the centre of the church.

"Hold, impious man!" said the undaunted prelate; "the noblest and gentlest heart in England lies bleeding and gasping on the high altar in defence of the Lord's anointed; but even the blood of the anointed shall stain the sanctuary ere *he* quail before man in his master's temple!"

"By St. Nicholas! then you shall be cheated of dying here," said Tyler; and, snatching the mitre from the gray locks it covered, he threw it to Holgrave. "There, Stephen, that shall soon sit upon a worthier head: and now, Sir Priest, or Sir Prelate, be quick with an ave — for the block is ready and the axe sharp. And you, Kirkby (who sullenly stood by), mind and lift up that knave yonder," pointing to the treasurer; "for, by St. Nicholas! he, too, shall die!" and the treasurer, faint, and almost lifeless, was, with Sudbury, borne away to Tower-hill.

John Ball, in the mean time, had passed on from the chapel, heedless of the greetings that met him at every step, and of the riot and confusion that would, at another time, have called forth his rebuke. At length, as he passed the royal apartment, he heard sounds that seemed to recall him to himself — they were the shrieks of women! Throwing back his cowl, and casting an indignant glance at Kirkby, who had just emerged from the building, he said —

"What dost thou here, John Kirkby, and why these screams?"

Kirkby muttered something of the council.

"And darest thou, John Kirkby, a leader of the people — darest thou be the foremost to set at naught my commands? I repent me of my endeavours to right the oppressed, for, alas! they have been like stray sheep without the care of the shepherd! — and now, that the shepherd has sought and is among them, they heed not his voice."

But the shrieks were again repeated, and Father John commanding Kirkby to follow, passed rapidly through the apartments, where every thing presented the trace of the spoiler. In many of them were stretched, or rather huddled together, peasants in the last stage of inebriety, some on the beds, and others on the carpets; and the shattered garniture of this abode of Richard and his fair mother, served but to mark its recent costliness and splendour.

The monk groaned deeply as he observed four or five men hewing with axes at a door which had resisted their first efforts to burst open; while two others were struggling with a man who seemed to be disputing their entrance; and a few paces from these lay, on a richly-worked counterpane, an infant, whose shrill cries mingled with the strife.

The flashing eye and indignant rebuke of the monk, on beholding this scene, unnerved the fear-stricken peasants.

"It is the prophet himself!" burst from the lips of the men, dropping their weapons and looking abashed.

"Aye, it is he whom you say is the prophet," cried Father John, "and accursed, say I, be the house-breakers!" his eye fell on Ralph Rugge. "What, another of the chosen!" he added, with a withering glance. "All, all are unworthy — my heart is sick!" and he turned away and covered his face with his hands.

"Father John, you have come in good time," said the galleyman, who now approached the monk, and who was he that had been contesting with the two men; "for, good father, if my ears serve me rightly, within that berth is the Lady de Boteler!"

The monk started.

"And where is her lord?"

"I know not, unless he be with the king at Mile-end."

"Lady de Boteler," cried the monk, "if thou art within, come forth!" and Isabella, at his voice, at once threw open the door.

"Lady," said Ball, who, in a low voice, had exchanged a few words with Wells, "here thou art no longer safe. Conduct this lady, my friend, to the abbey of Westminster," addressing Wells, "and encounter not those who might, unchecked by me, commit farther outrage. Take a boat from the water-side — that way is yet open. Farewell, lady, I must hence; — for

even Simon Sudbury, who made John Ball what he is now, may be in peril, and it is for the Lord alone to smite. — *I* seek not the brand to right me!"

The idea of Sudbury's danger had been confirmed by the behaviour of those whom his presence had arrested in guilt; and the monk, whose sympathies were thus awakened, hastened away, and gained the court-yard. Here his ears were assailed by a loud shout, which was repeated thrice, and which, he conjectured, proceeded from Tower-hill.

The monk hurried to the northern battlements, and stood, for an instant, gazing intently on the confusion which filled the vast area before him. At one point, and towards the centre, he observed a circle formed of some mounted commons, and he perceived a man in the midst in a kneeling posture. His voice now arose deep and startling as he exclaimed, "Wat Tyler, I adjure thee, touch not the prelate — touch not the Lord's anointed! Forbear! forbear!" and then, with an agility which, since his boyhood, he had not probably before exerted, he descended the platform, hurried through the fortress, crossed the moat, and then striding rapidly through the people, who made way as he approached, stood in the centre of that circle towards which his fears had impelled him.

A glance informed Father John that vengeance was swifter in the race than mercy, and his eye now fiercely sought for the guilty author of the drama. *He* stood a few paces to the right, leaning on the instrument of crime, and his eyes riveted on the prophet. Upon his dark countenance was marked triumph and agitation, for he feared the storm which he expected was now to burst upon him. But whether it was the spectacle which the monk's first gaze encountered, or that indignation, too deep for utterance, overpowered his energies, cannot be said; but, after regarding Tyler with a look which seemed to combine every thing of horror and disgust, Father John turned away, and was quickly lost in the multitude.

Those who witnessed this brief interview saw enough to indicate, in that glance cast on their leader, the monk's displeasure at the deed; and Tyler himself well understood the silent rebuke, for, turning to Kirkby, he said, in a bitter, though subdued tone, —

"John Kirkby, the father is angry, and this is all one gets for one's pains. Now that the mitre waits for his head, he will not put it on; — and did not that traitor Jack Straw often say the father wished for Sudbury's place; and though I hate bishops, I would not mind seeing *him* one. But, by St. Nicholas! he added fiercely, no more bishops for Wat Tyler — and ——"

The smith was here interrupted by a messenger from Richard, with a proclamation for the commons to meet him the next morning in Smithfield, when they should have every thing they required.

"Ye may tell King Richard that the commons *will* meet him; but mind ye, and tell him to have no lords, nor men of law, nor any of that brood of bishops with him, if he wishes them to wear their heads; — mind ye that, Sir Pursuivant."

Tyler then retired, but first strictly enjoining, on pain of death, that the bodies of the archbishop and treasurer should not be removed or interred.

When night came, and Father John did not return, the feeling became general that, disgusted with the spectacle of the morning, he had abandoned the cause; and it became apparent, even to Tyler himself, that some decisive step must at once be taken, before those whom the monk's eloquence had aroused and united, and his promises inspired with a confidence of success, should, deprived of his guidance, return home in despair.

The smith was as great an enthusiast for the freedom of the bond as the monk himself; but his mode of obtaining it did not coincide with the peaceful bent of the father. Tyler's plan was bold and sanguinary, — the monk's, intimidation without violence; and energetic and accustomed as

was the smith to act on his own impulses, yet, even in his fiercest moods, he willingly yielded obedience to the monk's suggestions. Indeed, he had long been accustomed to pay that deference which Father John's mildness had, as it were, extorted; and the circumstance of their first connexion, from the liberation of Ball from the dungeon of Sudley to the present period, had so increased his affection and veneration, that now, deprived of this pillar of support, he felt a loneliness and dejection which nothing around could dispel.

The morning was just breaking; and the moon shone full and bright on the surrounding buildings, on the trees, on the tents that marked the lodgment of the leaders, and on the groups that lay tentless on the ground, buried in profound sleep. All within the boundary of the rude encampment were reposing in the confidence of power, without guard or centinel, save one, whose eyelids closed not. Alone, in the corner of a tent, which stood in the centre of the encampment, sat Tyler, whom the moonbeams revealed, as they streamed through a rent in the canvass. His right hand clenched, and his elbow resting against the side of the tent, supported his head; and in his left he held a small gold crucifix, on which he was gazing, not with a countenance on which pity might be traced, but rather a look in which sorrow and despair seemed blended.

"Aye, it was *his* gift," said he. "However bad, Father John, you may think Wat Turner, he cares for this holy relic more than the life his mother gave him. And was it not because he thought to place you above them all that Sudbury lies on Tower-hill? And did he not take off that mitre with his own hands?—and did not his heart beat joyfully when he saw you come, that he might put it on your head? And now you leave him with the work half done. And the poor commons, too, must go back again to be kicked and cuffed, and to bear the load heavier than before. Ay, Father John—and did he not snatch you from the stripes and the bolt?—and were not his hands red with blood that blessed night?—and was he not forced to fly like a felon, and take this accursed name of Tyler?" Here his agitation increased, and his articulation became indistinct and husky; he started up, thrust the crucifix into his bosom, and paced the tent for a few minutes in silence; then looked upon the sleeping mass, and resumed, as he re entered the tent—

"Ay, ye may soon sleep your last sleep. They will have at ye in the morning; for the proud barons are gathering their might; but, by St. Nicholas! I may do something yet. Yes, there will be more blood—I see it;—I must have an order to behead the lords; and then, if Richard will be king of the commons, and no more lords or bondage, Father John himself could not wish for more."

He, at length, became somewhat composed, and threw himself upon the floor, to get a few hours' rest.

At an early hour, he prepared to redeem his pledge of meeting the king; and the commons, as they arrived, commenced forming in order of battle along the west side of Smithfield. When marshalled, they presented the appearance of a wedge, broad behind and gradually diminishing to the front; the banner of St. George was in the centre of the line, supported by the men-at-arms; while on either side were disposed the slingers and archers.

In this order, they awaited the king; and, in the interim, Tyler employed himself in riding up and down the ranks, exhorting the people to be firm, and to take care that they should not be cheated out of their rights by king or priest. Indeed, his whole demeanour supported the night's resolve, and vindicated a determination of purpose which imparted itself to the thousands who cheered him at every step in his progress.

We must premise, before describing the coming interview, that the Tower was again occupied by Richard. A sudden attack during the night sur-

prised those left in possession; and here the assiduity of the lords had collected a strong force, by means of the communication from the river; and they determined on giving battle to the commons, should they refuse to return home on obtaining the charters. A large body of the citizens had, by previous concert, thrown themself unobserved into the priory of Bartholomew, in order to operate, under William Walworth, with those in the Tower.

Precisely at ten o'clock, Richard, without pomp or circumstance, issued from the Tower, attended only by De Boteler, Warwick, and a few others, Sir John Newton bearing the sword of state. He was apparelled in the same manner as when he appeared at Mile-end, when he went forth to meet the Essex men, and with that unsuspecting confidence that marked his early years, entered Smithfield with as much gayety as if he were going to a banquet. Sir Robert Knowles and his men-at-arms had orders to follow at some distance, but on no account to show themselves until there might be occasion. After surveying the formidable array, which stretched far away into the fields, and listening to De Boteler's remarks on their clever arrangement, either for attack or defence, —

"By my faith! my lord," said Richard eagerly, "these knaves will not be trifled with; but lo! who have we here?" as he perceived a single horseman gallop forward from the centre.

"My liege," said Newton, as the horseman neared the royal train, "that man is Wat Tyler."

"And if my eyes do not mislead me," said De Boteler, looking searchingly on Tyler, "I know the graceless kern."

Newton then pushed forward to open the conference, and said, as he joined the smith —

"My lord, the king, wishes to hear you on the alleged grievances."

"And who are you, knave, that dare ride in presence of Wat Tyler?"

"I am Sir John Newton, the king's sword-bearer," returned Newton, proudly.

"Then, by St. Nicholas! none shall ride here but Richard and myself. Come down, braggart," and he seized the bridle of Newton's horse.

Richard now rode up, perceiving the peril of his attendant.

"And what would ye have, Wat Tyler?" asked Richard, in a conciliatory tone.

"Sir King, I would first have this knave well whipped for riding in my presence."

"But what would ye have put in your own charter, Wat?" again asked Richard, endeavouring to draw the smith's attention from Newton.

Tyler, however, was more intent on unhorsing the sword-bearer, than listening to the king, for he now grasped Newton by the shoulder, and endeavoured to drag him from his horse.

During this altercation, a small body of archers had advanced from the lines to within bow-shot of the disputants.

Richard observed the movement, and beckoned to Sir John to dismount, who, choking with mortification, surrendered the animal to a man whom Tyler had beckoned to approach.

"And that dagger, too, surly knave," said the smith. "How dare ye come here armed. Go to, thou art a knave!"

Richard could contain himself no longer. "Thou liest! Sir Leader,' said he, reining back his charger, whose bridle had come in contact with the head of the smith's horse.

"The dagger, knave," muttered Tyler, still intent on humbling the proud sword-bearer, and raising his axe in a menacing attitude.

The dagger, like the horse, was then relinquished, and Tyler, with a glance of triumph, turned to Richard, and continued —

"King Richard, I 'll now tell you what the commons want: first, I want a commission to behead all the lords, and those who began the poll-tax — I would have no more lords nor lordships, nor lawyers, nor bondage; and I would have you king of the commons — and now Sir King, be quick with the charter, for, by St. Nicholas! I shall not eat or drink till every mother's son of those yonder can go and come, when and where they will; aye, and be as proud as the proudest of ye."

"These are bold demands, Wat Tyler," returned Richard, his cheek glowing with indignation, "and mere, by my faith, than we shall listen to."

Tyler, during the colloquy, had seized his axe, and though it was not raised above his saddle-bow, yet the convulsive motion of the hand as it grasped the weapon, might seem to indicate danger to the young king. Richard was now surrounded by his retinue, among whom was William Walworth, the lord mayor, who had crossed over from the priory on perceiving his peril.

"Sir Leader," cried the mayor, boiling with rage, and approaching Tyler, "ride not so close to his grace; it ill becomes such as you to ride or speak so in the king's presence."

"Ha! and do ye say so?" returned Tyler, elevating his arm; "take ye that for your insolence:" but the blow, which would have deprived the worthy citizens of their sturdy chief, was arrested, ere it descended, by Warwick, who seized the uplifted weapon from behind, and the next moment the smith received a stunning blow from William Walworth's mace; then, as the reins dropped from his hands, a thrust from De Boteler's sword ended the cares of one who, doubtless, had he lived at a later period, might, in the cause for which he bled, have been a Tell or a Hofer.

A thousand spears, and as many shafts, prepared to avenge his fall, and an instant more of indecision, and Richard would have been spared the humiliation of after years; but a bold inspiration at this critical moment, hurried him fearlessly forward into the midst of the commons.

"What, my lieges!" he exclaimed, with a smile of confidence, "are ye angry that your leader is slain? Richard of England shall supply his place — follow me to the field, and ye shall have what ye desire!"

And, incredible as it may seem, the lances were lowered, the bows relaxed, and those who so lately had vowed to live or die with Tyler, followed the king to St. George's fields, rending the air with cries of "Long live King Richard!"

The men-at-arms, headed by Sir Robert Knowles, and the citizens, under Walworth, hurried after the commons, and when the charter had been granted, and the people were dispersing, suddenly and treacherously fell upon them.

Unprepared for such an attack, and now no longer formidable, the insurgents, panic-struck, fled on all sides; and, after a brief struggle, many of the leaders were cut down or secured. Numbers of the people perished, and Richard once more entered the Tower in triumph.

It is almost useless to add, that the charters were soon after revoked, and thus failed the first struggle of the British helots.

CHAPTER VIII.

When the commons, trusting to a deceitful promise, had lost that unity which could alone render them formidable, it was no matter of difficulty to secure Holgrave, as he rushed forward to revenge Tyler's death. Besides his being a leader, a reward from the baron was offered for his capture; and

it was to little purpose that he fought and struggled against a body which attacked him on every side; he was overpowered, and thrown into a cell in St. Bartholomew's priory, from which, when the tumult had ceased, he was removed, and, at the baron's request, delivered over to him for punishment.

This unexpected consummation wrought upon Holgrave so much, that with the sullen determination which had marked his character on previous occasions, he resolved not to answer any questions whatever. We should have premised, that the galleyman had given Holgrave a solemn promise, that if any ill befell him, Margaret should be cared for like his own wife. This was a solace to him, as he thought over his mother's death, and his own evil destiny. But there was another solace, that, strange as it may appear to some minds, arose from the thought, that whatever might befall him, the baron's heir would share in it. At first, when he had been removed to Sudley, mild measures were resorted to. He was lodged in a comfortable apartment, fed plentifully, and promised his freedom with whatever reward he might claim, if he would but speak satisfactorily as to the lost child. When this failed, he was sent to the keep, and for a week black bread and cold water were the only articles of aliment supplied; and then the *peine forte et dure* was resorted to. But though his face was swollen, and of a livid purple hue, and the eyes seemed starting from their sockets at the pressure on his chest, as he lay with his limbs extended on the earth, yet would he not speak the word which would have released him from all this suffering. The extreme punishment, however, of adding weights until nature could sustain no more, was delayed from day to day. The baroness had twice given birth to children who had survived but a few hours; the third had lived, but it was a daughter; and as she dwelt upon the approaching extinction of their noble line, she dared not permit the order to be given that might deprive her of all hope. Day after day were the weights pressing and stifling, and forcing the blood that still crept through his veins to his extremities, and distending the hands and feet with a feeling of agony. But though the pressure was each time removed when the leech pronounced the prisoner exhausted, yet it appeared that repetition, though slow, would effect the work as surely as if the punishment had been in the first instance applied in all its legal rigour.

Calverley, although he feigned to exert himself, would not in reality seek for Margaret while Holgrave lived; but Black Jack, who, after eluding the pursuit of Leicester, returned to Sudley, and domesticated himself in the castle under the hope of supplanting Calverley, had, of course, no motive for deception; and the baron's offer of gold was too tempting not to call forth all his ingenuity. But neither he, nor fifty other mercenaries who were out upon the scent, could discover the track.

Holgrave had been about a month a prisoner, when Sir Robert Knowles came to Sudley, to announce that Richard would honour the castle with his presence on the following day, and on the next proceed on to Gloucester to hold a parliament. As they were sitting at the evening banquet—

"My Lord de Boteler," said Sir Robert Knowles, "do you remember the circumstance of a certain vassal of yours being accused of shooting a buck?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"His name, I think, was Stephen Holgrave—the same Holgrave that was among the rebels, is it not?"

"The same man, Sir Robert."

"So I thought," returned the knight; "but, however, that must not weigh now. Have you a vassal named John Byles?"

Calverley, who was handing a replenished goblet to Sir Robert's page,

started so much at this interrogatory, that the wine-cup dropped from his hands.

"Yes," replied De Boteler.

"Has that man a wife named Mary?"

"He has," quickly replied Isabella, unable to divine the cause of such singular inquiries.

"Then, my lord, I request that John Byles and his wife be instantly brought before us; and with your leave, no one passes from this hall except my page, till they appear," continued Sir Robert, as he observed a movement in the steward, indicating an intention to retire.

"Martin," he added to his page, "go you to one of the servitors in the court-yard, and tell him to accompany you to this John Byles; you know how to keep your counsel, and remember, that the Baron de Boteler commands John Byles and his wife to come instantly to the castle. Do you not, my lord?"

"Yes, if it is your pleasure," said the baron, with a smile.

"I perceive," resumed Sir Robert, as the page withdrew, "that my conduct surprises you; but I cannot yet explain."

The surprise, indeed, was not confined to the individuals who sat at the upper table; gradually, as the purport of Sir Robert's words was whispered about, did the hall become hushed, and the eyes of those who sat below, and of those who were in attendance, were fixed with a kind of painful expectation upon the baron's guest. The domestics, however, were not so entirely engrossed by Sir Robert as to be wholly unmindful of Calverley; and significant nods and smiles were exchanged, as they saw, or fancied they saw, evidences of extreme agitation in the steward. After a few minutes' expectation, John Byles and his wife were ushered in by the page.

Sir Robert looked inquisitively at the yeoman and his wife, but more particularly at Mary; and, as if he read her character in her countenance, said something in a low voice to De Boteler, who instantly ordered Byles to retire into the anti-room till called for. The door being closed, the baron, at Sir Robert's request, bade Mary Byles approach. Mary, upon entering the hall, had looked a very comely sort of personage; but as misgivings gave place to the flattered confidence which had given firmness to her step as she entered, she now presented a totally different aspect.

"Come closer to the table, Mary Byles," said Sir Robert, addressing her in an authoritative, but yet in a familiar tone—"come nearer; and with my Lord de Boteler's leave, I shall ask you a few questions." Mary curtsied, and rather hesitatingly approached the foot of the table.

"Now, Mary Byles, I wish you to tell me what kind of a night it was when John Byles and your servitor, Sam, went into my Lord de Boteler's chase to kill a buck?"

Mary was of a florid complexion; but at this unexpected question, she stood before the searching look of the baron with her cheeks as colourless as if she had been struck by the angel of death.

"Are you striving to recollect?" asked Sir Robert, without any symptoms of anger.

"I don't understand your lordship," at length tremblingly articulated Mary.

"Do you not?—I think I speak plain language—however, if you forget the appearance of the night when the buck was shot, perhaps you can tell me on what day of the week your man, Sam, managed to get into Holgrave's cottage, and steal the shafts from the quiver over the fireplace?"

Up to this period the hall had been as still as if Sir Robert and Mary were its only occupants; but at this point a murmur arose, as if, by the power of magic, each was in a moment convinced of Holgrave's innocence.

"Peace!" vociferated De Boteler — "Answer, woman!" he continued, stamping his foot.

Mary saw that she had nothing to do but deny, and this she did most stoutly.

"Wretch!" said De Boteler, "why do you not tell the truth?"

But Mary was not to be intimidated, and Sir Robert, perceiving he could gain nothing from her in this way, arose, and approaching the baroness, who had been looking on with much interest, said, softly, "My Lady de Boteler, I wish to put a question or two to this woman, but as what I shall ask must be distressing to you, perhaps you had better retire."

"No — no," replied Isabella, "do not fear for me? — This is so strange, I must hear what you have to say."

"Prepare yourself, then, lady," said Sir Robert, and he resumed his seat.

"Mary Byles," he began, "I have one more question to ask you. How many drops of that fatal potion was it that Edith Holgrave told you to give my lord's infant?"

A smothered sob from Isabella now added to Mary's perplexity, her cheeks and temples became flushed, and, with a bewildered look, she said —

"I do n't know — I do n't remember anything about it!"

"Now, Mary Byles," resumed Sir Robert, speaking more decisively than he had yet spoken, "I insist upon your giving me a true answer to this — Did you not say to your husband, on the evening you returned from Gloucester, after Edith's trial, 'Edith's death lies like murder on my conscience; oh, I wish I had n't taken Calverley's advice, but had told my lady of the mistake?'"

"Calverley!" repeated De Boteler, "what did you say of Calverley? What did Calverley advise you to?"

Mary had sustained herself wonderfully well, considering how unprepared she had been, but this last interrogatory of Sir Robert, conjuring up, as it were, Edith's ghost, was too much; she struggled against nature for an instant, and then, giving an hysterical shriek, fell back in strong convulsions.

Two of the domestics were ordered to bear her from the hall; and, when there was again silence, Sir Robert said, "That woman is too artful to betray herself! Let Byles be called in?"

The yeoman re-entered, and Sir Robert began, in a voice so familiar, that Byles was thrown off his guard. "John Byles, how came you to be so foolish as to fall in the ravine the night you and Sam went to shoot the buck?"

"It was n't I who fell in, my lord — it was —"

"— Sam — who fell in," said Sir Robert, as he saw Byles hesitate to proceed farther. "You are right, yeoman, it was Sam, and you helped him out — but I desire you to tell me, if you had succeeded in conveying the buck to Holgrave's shed, how many nobles Master Calverley was to have given you?"

Byles looked at his interrogator as if he had been the evil one himself; but he had committed himself, so he thought it the wiser way to say nothing.

"Why do you not answer, man?" continued Sir Robert, at the same time giving De Boteler a glance, intimating that he wished not to be interrupted. "I know how many the steward promised you, but I desire to know how much you received."

"I neither gave nor promised him anything," said Calverley, approaching the table under the impression of giving a tone to what Byles should say.

"Thou liest, kern!" said Sir Robert, rising suddenly, and in a voice

which made Calverley start back. "My Lord de Boteler, I accuse your steward of bribing yonder caitiff to slay a buck with shafts stolen from Stephen Holgrave, and then to lay the slaughtered animal in Holgrave's barn. I also accuse him of prevailing upon that man's wife to lay the crime of murder upon an innocent woman! And, my lord, if you will hold a court to-morrow morning, one whom I found in the Tower will prove my charges, and the wronged shall be righted."

"Calverley done all this!" said the baron, in a tone of incredulity; but then, as the steward's persevering hostility to Holgrave flashed across his mind, it seemed to bring conviction.

The hall at this moment presented a strange spectacle. Every individual except Isabella and Oakley were on their feet. The domestics, though not venturing to proceed beyond their own table, were bending their heads eagerly forward, to look more particularly at Calverley than at Byles, as if this charge of crime had developed some new feature in the man. Byles, with his hale complexion, changed to the paleness of a corpse, stood trembling at the foot of the table, at the head of which was standing De Boteler, with a flushed countenance and his eyes fixed upon Calverley, with such a look, that if the glance of an eye could have killed, the steward would have been consumed on the spot. There was an instant of silence, or at least there was nothing but an indistinct murmur from the lower end of the hall; and Calverley, who seemed strangely composed, took advantage of the moment to say, though without raising his eyes —

"My lord, whatever charges Sir Robert Knowles may have against me, I am ready to meet them."

"Peace, wretch!" said De Boteler, choking with passion. "Here, let these plotters be confined separately till the morrow — and, Luke," he added, to the old steward, "let you and John Oakley go instantly to Holgrave, and see him removed from the keep, and put him into a warm bed — and take ye a flask of wine and pour some down his throat — and see that the leech attend him. He now turned to Isabella and strove to dispel from her mind the sad thoughts that the last half hour had called up, but it was not, as the baron imagined, the remembrance of her murdered child alone which had sent a paleness to her cheek, and a tremor through her frame; it was rather the thought that through judging rashly she had been an accessary to the death of one who perhaps deserved reward rather than punishment.

The next morning the hall was again converted into a court of justice. De Boteler took his seat, and the eager vassals crowded in to hear the expected justification of Stephen Holgrave. Calverley, as being a party accused, was of course incapacitated from filling the accustomed situation in the court; and as old Luke was too infirm, Oakley was selected. Black Jack had begun to be very calculating -- a portion of the money he had received in London had already disappeared in his secret debauchery. The bribe was not so large as he had been led to expect, and he had sense enough to know that his habits were not adapted for turning what remained to any account. The stewardship of Sudley was so easy and profitable! The very thought of it was delightful — and as nothing had as yet transpired to criminate him, he accepted of the temporary dignity with the most sanguine hopes that Calverley's delinquencies might fix him in it permanently.

But lo! when Calverley's prison door was opened, for the purpose of conducting him to the hall, he was not to be found! It was no purpose that the baron stormed and threatened, no trace of Calverley could be discovered; but John Byles was brought forward, and, upon being confronted with his own servitor, and promised that if he made a full disclosure, the punishment of the crime should be remitted, he confessed all with which

the reader was made acquainted in the early part of the tale. The question of poisoning was then put, but Byles had cunning enough to remember that no one was privy to this but Calverley, and as it might peril Mary's life, he stoutly denied all knowledge of the matter. Mary Byles, who had also been kept in durance, was then introduced, but she was more collected than on the preceding evening, and would admit nothing. She knew not anything of the buck — and she could say nothing more respecting the poisoning than she had already said at Gloucester, and the supposition of Edith's innocence was compelled to rest upon the servitor's oath, who swore that he had heard Mary say, on the evening she returned from Gloucester, what Sir Robert had repeated. This, coupled with the circumstance that, together with the poisoning, Mary had denied what her husband had admitted, and what could not have happened without her knowledge, brought sufficiently conclusive evidence to convince every one that Edith had died a martyr to Mary's cruelty or carelessness.

As the baron had promised not to punish, Byles and his wife were dismissed unharmed; but from that hour forward, they were regarded by all as under ban, and therefore shunned as much as possible. We should premise, however, that before Byles was permitted to leave the hall, Stephen Holgrave was led in, that he might receive a public acquittal. When Holgrave entered, supported by one of the servitors, and, appearing unable to stand, was seated on a stool, Sir Robert Knowles, who had more than once taken a strong interest in him, started up, and was about to make some observation; but recollecting himself, he resumed his seat, and remained silent. De Boteler himself felt a glow of shame and a qualm of conscience, as he looked upon the white, swollen face, and bent and shrunken form of one who had, in the moment of peril, sprung, with the vigour and ferocity of the tiger, between him and death. Holgrave had not been informed why the agonizing punishment had been remitted, nor why he had been placed in a comfortable bed, and every attention paid him: and he only suspected that, perceiving severity could effect nothing, they were unwilling to lose their victim, and wished again to try the effect of a milder treatment. His suspicions seemed confirmed, when, upon an order from De Boteler, a page approached, and presented him with a cup of wine. Although, as we have said, suspecting the motive of so much indulgence, he drank the wine, and then, looking round the hall, wondered why there had been such a gathering of the vassals, and why their looks were bent upon him with such friendly interest, and why words of pity and triumph were murmured amongst them; then he wondered why Jack Straw was sitting in Calverley's place, and what fault John Byles and his wife had committed, that they stood there like criminals. These thoughts, however, had scarcely passed through his mind, when the baron addressed him in a gentle tone.

"Stephen Holgrave," said he, "you remember, some seven years since, being accused of shooting a buck in my chase. It is not to repeat the charge that I sent for you, but, before this noble sir and these vassals, publicly to acquit you of the base deed. He who stole your arrows, and shot the animal, stands there!" and he pointed towards Byles. — "And he who bribed him to be a thief and a liar, aware of his guilt, has fled, and has for the present escaped my vengeance. And now, Holgrave, it repents me that I dealt so hardly by your mother, for, as I hope to die a Christian's death, I believe she died innocent."

Sir Robert had remarked the sudden flush, and then the death-like paleness, which had passed over Holgrave's face, as his glance fixed upon Byles; and perceiving that, as his dead mother was spoken of, he became excessively agitated, he ordered his page to carry him another cup of wine; and the two criminals being removed, De Boteler continued,

"Approach, Stephen Holgrave."

Holgrave arose, and though he trembled, excitement had lent him such strength, that he walked up to the baron without assistance. De Boteler then, taking Holgrave's right hand, pushed him, with a gentle violence, away, at the same instant repeating, in a loud voice, "Away! thou art free!" and then added, "Hear, all ye assembled, that I, Roland de Boteler, release Stephen Holgrave from his bondage, and that from henceforth, he oweth me no allegiance, except what is due as a vassal in chivalry."

And now the vassals, who had hitherto kept in tolerable order, upon seeing Holgrave again a free man, set up such a joyful shout, that the approach of the royal guest was not known until the portals were thrown open, and Richard, leaning familiarly upon the arm of the Earl of Oxford, entered the hall.

"You hold a court to-day, my Lord de Boteler," said Richard, as the baron hurried forward between the ranks of the shrinking vassals to welcome the monarch.

Words of courteous gratulation were uttered by De Boteler, as he led his visiter to a splendid chair which had been prepared for him, and presented, on his knee, a cup of spiced wine. During this, Isabella and Lady Ann Knowles had entered the hall, and, after being presented to the king, Lady Ann whispered to Sir Robert, who requested that Holgrave, who was about to depart, although no longer a prisoner, should remain in the castle, at least for that day. Holgrave promised acquiescence, and the hall being cleared of the tenantry, Richard and the attendant lords, whom he and his favourite had by half an hour outstripped, presently sat down to a splendid banquet.

During their ride, Robert de Vere had acquainted Richard with the singular disappearance of his sister's infant son, and with the suspicions she entertained respecting Holgrave. That love of the marvellous, which seems inherent in youth, was awakened in all its vigour in the young king; and, as the repast concluded, he heard, with a feeling of pleasure, De Boteler ask permission to interrogate a vassal in his presence.

"Please your highness," continued the baron, "the man is exceedingly stubborn. We suspect him of having stolen our child, but nothing has as yet been able to extract a confession, though, perhaps, your highness's presence may have some effect."

The domestics at the lower table had withdrawn, and Oakley, who was continued in his functions as steward, was ordered to see that Holgrave attended.

"Stephen Holgrave," said De Boteler, as the former approached, "I have sent for you, to certify, in this presence, that I restore to you the land you were once possessed of, with its stock and crops; and whatever you may need besides shall be given you from the stores of the castle: — it is only giving you back your own, Stephen. But it is his grace's pleasure, that now, as your late offences are forgiven, you make a full disclosure of whatever you know respecting my stolen child."

All eyes were now riveted upon Holgrave; and a mind less firm would have trembled and hesitated until the whole truth was either revealed or suspected; but Holgrave, although prepared for such interrogatories, did not appear disposed to give an immediate reply. He had lost the condence in fair speeches he once possessed. His freedom had been torn from him, and, though now pronounced free, what surety had he that the morrow might not again behold him a bond-slave? Thoughts like these could easily be detected in the contraction of the brow, and compression of the lips; and there might also have been detected, together with a resentment for the suspicions which had been cast upon his mother, a determination not to subject himself to the chances of farther persecution by acknowledging the

wrong he had done. At this moment, when the colour was receding from De Boteler's cheek, and when every respiration which Isabella drew was distinctly audible, a figure, which had stood unnoticed behind one of the statues, moved on, and, ascending one step of the elevation, threw back a cloak from his shoulders and a cowl from his head, revealing the strongly marked countenance and imposing figure of John Ball! Several of the attendants sprang forward to secure him; but a motion from De Boteler restrained their zeal, and, without noticing the action of the menials, the monk, regarding those only who sat round the table, addressed them in that deep, solemn tone peculiar to him.

"Start not," said he, "John Ball is not come to harm you;—he never harmed any to whom God gave the breath of life,—neither did he counsel the blood which has been spilt. A price is set upon his head—but think ye the homeless wanderer fears to die? Baron of Sudley, I have come thus far to tell you what I told you once before — that if ye will swear to set free the bondmen of Sudley, the child you mourn as dead shall be restored to you!"

"Oh, swear, Roland! swear!" said Isabella, starting from her seat, and, forgetful of all save her own intense feelings, she clasped her hands on her husband's shoulder.

"I do swear," said De Boteler, taking a crucifix from the monk, who extended one towards him, and kneeling before Richard; "I do swear, upon this blessed cross, and before my liege lord, that if my child is restored to me, so that I can claim him as my own, I will release every bondman within this manor, and that, from thenceforth, there shall be no more bondage in the barony of Sudley."

"Stephen, will ye restore the child?"

"I will," replied Holgrave, with softened feelings and a brightening countenance, "the child, my lord, shall be given up to you."

"He shall be given up," repeated the monk; and then, clasping his hands upon his bosom, he descended the steps, strode through the hall, and, in less than a minute, reappeared, leading in Margaret and the child, and followed by the galleyman.

Although, from the growth of the boy thus introduced, it might be judged he was about eight years, yet there was that sparkling vivacity, and that lightness of lip and eye which belong to an earlier age; and, as the wandering glance of the dark eye, and the smile of the red lip, met De Boteler's gaze, a tumultuous throbbing in his bosom told him that the child was indeed his own.

Isabella rose, and attempted to approach the boy — but the body was not able to bear the fervour of the spirit. Her heart sickened, the light faded from her eyes, and she sank back in the arms of the sympathizing Lady Knowles.

"That boy is yours, my lord," said Sir Robert Knowles, "let who will be the mother!"

"Peace, profane jester!" said the monk. "Baron of Sudley, do you believe that this is the son thy lady mourned?"

"I do believe," returned the baron, in a more subdued voice than mortal had ever heard from him before; and he approached the child, who was nestling close to Margaret, and looking around with an abashed but inquisitive countenance.

"My Lord de Boteler," said Holgrave, drawing the child almost forcibly from Margaret, "as I hope that my mother is a saint in heaven, the child is yours. I was a bondman — was motherless — childless — and I thought it would be no crime to make you, too, desolate!"

De Boteler looked at Holgrave as he spoke, but did not reply; but, plac-

ing his hand upon the full shoulder that rose above the boy's tunic, he bent his head down and kissed the child's forehead.

"The child is exceedingly like you!" remarked Richard.

"There is a resemblance, my lord," said Oxford: "but it is not likenesses nor assertions that will satisfy me — I require proof!"

"And proof you shall have," replied the monk. "Holgrave, declare how you obtained the child!"

Isabella, who had recovered her consciousness, and who now, with almost convulsive estacsy, was embracing the child, cast an angry glance at her brother, as if she feared that some discrepancy in the proof might bring her right to claim him in question. De Boteler, however, did not appear displeased, but merely said, "Holgrave, you have not declared how you obtained the child."

"If it please you, my lord, when I was a boy, I was one morning rubbing down one of the late lord's horses for the servitor, whose duty it was to do it, when, all on a sudden, as I was stooping down to wipe the horse's feet, I saw the wall at the back of one of the stalls open, and out came the old baron. He looked round, but fortunately, or it may be unfortunately for him who is now lord, he did not see me."

"And you discovered where the secret opening led?"

"Yes — with all the curiosity of a boy, I afterwards found that the secret door led by some long dark steps to the bed-chamber of the old lord!"

"Did you mention your discovery to any one?"

"To no one, until after I had stolen the child — and then I told all to Father John."

"This story," remarked the Earl of Oxford, "requires proof as much as any thing else."

"You shall receive that of your own eyes," said Holgrave, "if it please you to accompany me;" and Richard, expressing a wish to witness every thing connected with the strange discovery, arose, and with De Boteler, Oxford, and Sir Robert Knowles, proceeded, as we have before described, to the bed-chamber. "From that bed, my lord," said Holgrave to De Boteler, "I took the child — it slept soundly — I crept down these steps — it was a dark night — and I got home without being seen!"

"This is not satisfactory proof," said Oxford.

"My lord, I have more to show you," resumed Holgrave.

They then descended to the stabling, and, followed by many inquisitive eyes, went on to Holgrave's cottage.

It was uninhabited, but the door was fastened, and Holgrave, forcing it open, led the way into the deserted abode. A chill came over him as he removed the chest; but taking up a shovel from a corner, where he himself had thrown it, he prepared to remove the clay. He hesitated for a moment, and then began his task; — he had dug about a foot deep, when, raising up a slip of wood about one foot broad and two in length, the perfect form of an infant, lying beneath, caused those who were looking silently on to utter an exclamation.

"Poor babe! it was a sad night I laid ye there," said Holgrave, bending over the grave, and looking earnestly at the little corpse; and then kneeling down, he attempted to raise one of the hands, but it dropped crumbling from his touch.

Holgrave, although he had exerted himself much during the last hour, was extremely weak; and this little circumstance affected him so deeply that he started on his feet, and, to hide the weakness of tears, turned away his head from those who were gazing upon him.

"I was a man, and I felt as a father," said Holgrave, turning again and looking at De Boteler, "and yet I stole your child, and dug that grave, and

with my own hands laid in my little one; — and why did I do it? Because I had determined that your child should wear the bondage you had given to me."

"This seems strange language from a bondman," said Richard, aside, to Oxford.

"The man has an obstinate spirit, your grace," returned the earl.

"De Boteler," said Sir Robert Knowles, "this bondage should never have been."

"Was I more than man, that I could tell the traitor Calverley deceived me?" impatiently returned the baron, as he felt, though not choosing to acknowledge it, that he had done wrong when he insisted on the bondage.

During this brief colloquy, Holgrave had again bent over the grave, and had taken up the box in which were deposited the articles that had been on the young De Boteler. Sir Robert, mistaking his motive, observed, "You must not think of removing the babe, Holgrave. This hut is but of little worth — you can throw it down, and bring a priest to say a prayer over the spot; and then the grave will be as good as if it were in a church-yard."

Holgrave bent his head in acknowledgment to the knight; and, placing the box under his arm, observed, "I hid these, lest they should be witness against me; and now, if it please ye, noble sirs, to come back to the hall, I will restore them to my lady."

When the yeoman had returned to the castle, and presented the box to Isabella, the evidences it contained, in the dress and crucifix, were so conclusive, that the Earl of Oxford gave a kiss of welcome to the little Ralph.

"Baron of Sudley," said John Ball, "do you acknowledge that child as your son?"

"I do, monk, and I will fulfil my vow. Stephen Holgrave, to you I give the charge of collecting all my bondmen; — see that they are assembled here to-morrow morning. They shall be freed; and from henceforth, as I vowed, there shall be no more bondage in Sudley; and, by my faith! I believe I shall be better served by freemen than serfs."

"And, my Lord de Boteler, we feel much inclined to follow your example," said Richard. "The shire of Hereford is our royal patrimony — have ye a scribe here who can draw up a charter?"

Oakley was called upon, and desired to prepare an instrument, to the effect of freeing the bondmen of Hereford.

John Ball, who had looked on and listened with a deep interest, now approached the king, and knelt before him.

"The work that I strove for has begun, and it will finish; but mine eyes will not live to see that day. From the hour that blood was shed I forsook the cause; but I hid myself from the snares that were laid for me; — for I said, Surely the light shall yet rise up in darkness! and it has risen; and it will grow brighter and brighter: — but John Ball's task is done, and he gives himself up to the death that awaits him."

De Boteler said something in a low tone to Richard, who turned to the monk.

"Retire!" said he, "we shall consider of your punishment."

As the monk withdrew, Oakley, who had retired, for the purpose of transcribing the charter, re-entered; and the instrument being presented to Richard, received the royal signature. While this was being done, Oakley, under the impression that the affording a proof of Calverley's guilt, more tangible in its nature than mere assertions, could not possibly injure himself, and might turn to his permanent advantage, approached De Boteler, and, producing the prohibitory writ, —

"Please you, my lord," said he, "while searching among Thomas Calverley's writings for parchment, I discovered this."

"Discovered this among my steward's writings!" said the baron, as, biting his lip with vexation, he spread open the parchment on the table.

"Why, my Lord de Boteler," said Richard, taking up the writ, and glancing over the characters, "this is a prohibitory writ from the chancery! Where was this found?"

"My liege, in a private box in the steward's room, which, it seems, he had forgotten to lock," replied Oakley, with that propriety which he knew how to assume.

"The galleyman had stood in the hall, a silent but delighted spectator of all we have detailed. His heart yearned to grasp Holgrave's hand, and tell him how much he rejoiced in his freedom; but he dared not presume so far until the yeoman should have been dismissed. Besides, his thoughts were bent upon another object: as Richard raised the parchment for perusal, the seals attracted his attention, and he instantly recognised it as one he had observed Calverley drop in Gloucester, at the time of Edith's trial; but as he saw the ungracious look of the baron cast on Black Jack, he thought he would not irritate him further by mentioning it: yet, stepping forward as Oakley ceased, he said —

"Please your noble grace, that man lies. *I* found that parchment in a hostelry-yard at Gloucester, six years ago — I know it by the seals; and that John Oakley told me it was an old lease of no use, and so I gave it to him."

"And who are you, varlet?" said Richard, evidently more amused than offended, as he expected some fresh incident to grow out of this affair.

"Please your grace," replied Wells, encouraged by the king's manner, "I am a vintner in the city of London, and I came down to Sudley with Stephen Holgrave's wife, to see what could be done for her husband."

"By my faith! my Lord de Boteler, your hall seems a fitting place to act miracles in," said Richard, laughing.

"There have, indeed, been strange things done here to-day, my liege," replied De Boteler, smiling, but at heart annoyed at the thoughtless observation.

"Oxford," said Richard, "ask the knave if he have any more disclosures to make."

"Please you, my lord," said Wells, "I have only to say again, that John Oakley did not find this writing in the castle, and that he is a traitorous liar, and that I here challenge him to mortal combat."

"Retire, kerns!" said De Boteler, glancing with anger at Oakley and the galleyman, "and settle your vile feuds as ye may. Disturb not this noble presence longer."

"Be not angry, my Lord of Sudley: we request you to ask yonder varlet why he calls his fellow such hard names?"

"Please you, my lord," said Wells, nothing daunted, "did not John Oakley get Stephen Holgrave from the forest of Dean?"

"He did," answered De Boteler, who now remembered Wells as he who had assisted Isabella.

"Then, my lord, I call that man a liar, because he said he found the parchment in the steward's room; and I call him a traitor and a liar, because he got Stephen Holgrave out of the forest of Dean, by saying, that of his own good will he helped to lay his mother in a church-yard, when he was paid in good broad pieces for doing the work."

Holgrave, weak as he was, and forgetful even of the royal presence, sprung upon Oakley. The sight of the writ that would have saved his mother, almost maddened him. He did not exactly comprehend what had been said about the writ; but it seemed, that Oakley was in some measure

connected with this, and the sudden conviction, that he was, indeed, the betrayer, gave him such a frantic energy, that Black Jack's face grew still blacker beneath his grasp, and he would have dashed him to the ground, had not the baron risen and commanded Holgrave to loose his hold.

"I think," said Sir Robert Knowles, who saw that it was only under the influence of strong feeling that Holgrave could at present be a match for Oakley — "I think it would be better that this retainer accept the vintner's challenge; and should he worst him, then he and Holgrave can settle their quarrel, when a few days shall have given him more strength. This, despite of Holgrave's assurances that his strength was undiminished, was decided upon, and the galleyman and Oakley were directed to hold themselves in readiness to try the strength of their weapons on the morrow. They were then ordered to withdraw — Oakley and the galleyman to be lodged that night in the retainer's court, and Holgrave to tell over all he felt to the affectionate Margaret, who, for the present, at Isabella's request, was to occupy an apartment in the castle.

The more Oakley thought of the challenge he had been compelled to accept, the less relish he felt to engage in it. Even should he conquer his strong-knit antagonist, he must have to fight over again with the vindictive Holgrave; and he cursed the folly which had induced him to produce the writ. However, he had found a golden treasure in Calverley's room: and as he lay tossing on his sleepless bed, he resolved to take an opportunity, during the bustle of the next morning, to leave the castle. And, indeed, during the bustle of the next morning, an individual of much more consequence than Black Jack might have escaped unheeded.

The incidents of the previous day had caused a strong sensation, not only at Sudley and Winchcombe, but in all the immediate neighbourhood. The presence of a king; the recovery of an heir; and the unheard-of circumstance of giving freedom to the serfs of a whole county, were things well calculated to attract crowds to the castle: and then there were the feastings, and the rejoicings which were to gladden the hearts of all who chose to partake.

The gentle class, and the most respectable portion of the tenantry, prognosticated only evil from this all-advised proceeding. As they looked on, and saw the bondman and nief, with animated countenances, pouring into the hall, and beheld De Boteler, in the presence of the king and the nobles, give freedom to all who approached him, and order that from henceforth they should hold what land they possessed by copy of court-roll, they wondered how far this unprecedented innovation would extend, and how people were to get their land cultivated, if the peasant was allowed to go where he liked, and work as he pleased.

When the last bondman was freed, John Ball, who had stood looking on with devouring eyes, knelt down, and raising up a cheek suffused with the crimson of high-wrought feeling, and eyes glistening and radiant, ejaculated, in a scarcely audible voice,

"Now will my soul depart in peace, since mine eyes have beheld this day! — now will my spirit rejoice, since thou hast had compassion on them that were in fetters, and hast released the children of the bond!" Then rising, and extending his clasped hands towards De Boteler, he said, in a louder tone, "May the Lord add blessings upon thee and thy children! May length of days be thy portion, and mayest thou dwell for ever in the house of the Lord." Then approaching Holgrave, he continued — "Farewell, Stephen! The clemency of the king has saved my life, and the voice of the anointed priest hath proved me cleansed of the leper spot — but I must now be a dweller in a strange land. Tell Margaret that we may not meet again; but surely, if the prayers of a brother can aught

avail, mine shall be offered at the footstool of the Highest for her. I could not bid her adieu. Bless thee, Stephen, and bless her, and fare thee well!" He then pressed Holgrave's hand.

"Nay, Father John," said Holgrave, with emotion, "we must not part so."

It was to no purpose that the monk requested, and then commanded, that he should be permitted to pursue his journey alone. Stephen insisted upon accompanying him out of Gloucestershire, and Father John, to avoid contention, feigned to defer his departure; but when the tables were spread, and the domestics and vassals had sat down to the feast, Margaret, who had been seeking the monk about the castle, looked and looked again among them all, and at length had to weep over the certainty that she should never more behold her brother. Nor did she; for John Ball did not long survive his exile. On the second anniversary of the bondman's freedom, his own spirit was freed, and his body rested in the cemetery of the monastery of Cistercium, in Burgundy.

But to return. When the ceremony of enfranchisement was fairly over, there arose the cry for the combat, and great was the general disappointment, when, upon the galleyman's standing forth prepared for the encounter, no Oakley could be found. "He has skulked off to the craven Calverley, I'll warrant," said one. "Aye, aye, as sure as the sun shines, they are sworn brothers," said another: "they think more of saving their heads than sparing their heels. "Did ye ever know one who could read and write, who did n't know how to take care of his carcass," said another, with a sagacious nod. But though these good folks were all very shrewd, they did not happen to fall upon the truth, which was simply this, that as Black Jack was watching an opportunity to escape, without observation, he happened to see the cloak and cowl the monk had thrown off when first appearing in the hall, lying in a corner of the court-yard, where it had been carelessly placed by one of those whose business it was to keep the hall in order. It instantly occurred to him that this might be of use, and contriving to remove the cloak, he put it on, and, thus disguised, succeeded in leaving Sudley; but though disguises had so often befriended him, it proved fatal in this instance, for, upon taking a northerly direction, as one where he was least likely to be known, he was recognised as a leader of the commons, and his monkish dress inducing a suspicion of his being John Ball (the monk's pardon not being known), Oakley, although swearing by every thing sacred that he was no monk, was hanged without form of trial, at St. Alban's, as one who had stirred up the bondmen to insurrection.

Little more remains to be said. De Boteler, upon discovering that Byles held Holgrave's land by virtue of the mortgage transferred by the usurer to Calverley, pronounced, in the most summary way, the whole thing illegal. Byles was dispossessed, and the farm, now the largest in the manor, returned to Holgrave, who thus, like old Job, became the possessor of greater wealth after his misfortunes than he had enjoyed before.

When Holgrave's strength was re-established, he waged battle with Byles to prove the yeoman's guilt and his mother's innocence. Byles was no craven, but he was vanquished and mortally wounded, and when death was upon him, confessed the whole transaction. Mary, with her children, fled on the instant; and, some few years after, she was seen by Merritt, who had again become a peaceful artizan, begging alms in London.

Isabella, although, of course, never acknowledging her share in the writ, yet, as some atonement, gave a large benefaction to Hailes Abbey, on condition that a certain number of masses should be offered up for Edith.

The little Ralph grew up with a strong predilection for the sea, contracted, it was often suspected, by the strange stories he had heard the galley-

man repeat; and it is upon record, that Ralph De Boteler, Baron of Sudley, was the first high admiral of England. The young heir always evinced a strong affection for Margaret; so much so, indeed, as sometimes to raise a suspicion in the baroness that her son loved his foster-mother better than herself.

We must not forget Bridget Turner, who was so affected at the death of her husband, and perhaps, too, at the failure of the rising, that she took a journey on foot from Maidstone to Sudley, on purpose to reproach Holgrave with having been the cause of her husband's death. Margaret strove to tranquillize her unhappy feelings, and Holgrave endeavoured to convince her that, although Turner's removal from Sudley might be attributed to him, his connexion with the rising was his own act. And at length Bridget, finding that she was paid more attention by Margaret and Holgrave than she had received even from her own son, took up her permanent abode with them; and sometimes, when she could get the ear of an old neighbour, and talk of former times, and tell what her poor husband had done for Holgrave, when he was a bondman, she felt almost as happy as she had ever been.

About twenty years after this, Margaret, who had become a full, comely dame, and was by many thought better-looking now than in her youth, was one day bustling about her kitchen, for on the morrow her eldest son, who had accompanied the Lord Ralph on a naval expedition, was expected to bring home, from the galleyman's, in London, a counterpart of the pretty little Lucy. She was busy preparing the ingredients for some sweet dish, when one of Holgrave's labourers came in, and requested her to go to his hut directly, for an old man, who seemed dying, desired much to see her. Providing herself with a little wine, Margaret hastened to the cottage; and here, on a straw bed, lay a man with gray hairs hanging about his shoulders, and with a face so emaciated, and a hand so skeleton-like, that she almost shuddered as she looked. The invalid motioned the man to withdraw, and then, fixing his black eyes, that appeared gifted with an intense — an unnatural brilliance, upon Margaret, who seemed fascinated by the gaze, he said in a tremulous voice, —

"Margaret, do you know me?"

"Know you! — know you!" she repeated, starting from the seat she had taken beside him, and retreating a few steps.

"Do not fly me, Margaret. I cannot harm you — I never could have harmed *you*, — Do you not know me?"

"Surely," said Margaret, trembling from head to foot — "surely it cannot be ——"

"I see you have a misgiving that it is Thomas Calverley — it is he! But be seated, Margaret, and listen to the last words I shall ever breathe in mortal ear."

Margaret was so shocked and overpowered, that she obeyed.

"Margaret," said the dying man, as he raised himself a little from his bed, "I know not why I sent for you, or why I dragged my weary limbs from beyond the sea to this place; but as I felt my hour was coming, I longed to look upon you again. You are and have been happy — your looks bespeak it: but Margaret, what do mine tell of? — Of weary days and sleepless nights — of sickness of heart, and agony of soul — of crime — of pain — of sorrow, and deep destroying love!" His strength was exhausted with the feeling with which he uttered this, and he sank back on the bed.

Margaret was exceedingly agitated, and was rising to call for assistance, but he caught her hand in his cold grasp. "Do not go yet," he said, in a low voice — "I came far to see you!" His grasp relaxed, and Margaret, drawing away her hand, poured some wine in a cup, and held it to his lips:

he swallowed a little, and, looking up in her face, she saw that his eyes were filled with tears. "You are going to leave me, Margaret?"

"Yes," she replied, "I must go now, but I will see you again."

"Never! — you will never see me again!" he said, with fresh energy: "but, before you go, tell me that you forgive me all that is past."

"I do forgive you, indeed, as truly as I hope to be forgiven!" said Margaret, affected — and turning away, she left the cottage.

On the third day from this, Calverley, bearing the felon's brand, unwept and unknown, was laid in the stranger's grave.

THE END OF THE BONDMAN.

THREE NIGHTS IN A LIFETIME.

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF INISHAIRLACH.

A potent wand doth Sorrow wield;
What spell so strong as Guilty Fear!
Repentance is a tender sprite,
If aught on earth have heavenly might,
'T is lodged within her silent tear.

WORDSWORTH.

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THREE NIGHTS IN A LIFETIME.

A TALE.

"DATES MAY BE FORGOTTEN, EPOCHS NEVER."—DE QUINCY.

CHAPTER I.

How beautiful is Night!
A dewy freshness fills the silent air.
No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain,
Breaks the serene of Heaven!
In full-orb'd glory yonder Moon divine
Rolls through the dark blue depths.
* * * * * *
How beautiful is Night!

SOUTHEY'S THALABA.

THERE are some hours in life so replete with emotion, so filled to overflowing with the concentrated essence of existence, — into which the hope and joy, or the sorrow and despair, of a lifetime, seem so miraculously crowded, — that they stand forth ever after as eras in the mind's history, as landmarks in its retrospect of the past. There are few men who, having led at all a varied and eventful life, have not some such hours to look back upon; and it is a strange and fearful reflection, how short a space of time may suffice to change the whole current of our destiny! How brief may be the interval between the moment in which the breast seems too full to contain its own happiness, and that in which it may look around in its agony, only to exclaim, "All is barren!" Were aught wanting to convince the Christian that "here he hath no abiding city," such and so oft repeated lessons could not fail to teach it him. But although thus sent in mercy, — though, after the fearful torrent has passed over the soul, the fertilized soil may bring forth the fruits of patience and resignation, — yet under its first desolating force we can only feel, not reflect; nor, even after years have passed away, and all things — we ourselves more than all around — have changed, is it possible to revert to hours like those to which I have alluded, without a thrilling of the whole heart and frame.

Such were the feelings with which to the latest day of her life, Sophia Walsingham recurred to three separate evenings; separate, far less widely by distance of time, than by the strange diversity of thought and sentiment which distinguished the first of the number from its successors. That first evening was a lovely night in July, one of those, which, perhaps because they are so rare in our climate, leave an indelible impression of sweetness and freshness on the memory. For a time, she knew not how long, she had lingered at her open window, with eyes that could not tear themselves away, drinking in at every sense the delicious fragrance, the soothing balm, the peaceful loveliness, that were diffused over earth and sky. The full moon was floating high in heaven, not in a heaven of cloudless blue, but

in one where the rich, heavy, white-edged masses of large slumberous clouds, that hung almost motionless here and there on its surface,

> "Parted inward, and the deep blue sky
> Open'd beyond them like eternity;"

while, far within these glorious depths, the calm and holy stars looked silently forth, like watchers of the night. Below, the eye rested on a scene scarce less still and beautiful. Large masses of dark woods, here, silvered over by the moonlight, there, deep in shadow, leaving the full flood of white radiance to be poured over the soft green lawns that parted them, and to flash and tremble on the course of the river which "glided at its own sweet will" through their lovely recesses. The flowers that grew beneath the windows, the creeping and scented shrubs with which the walls of the old manor-house were covered, bathed in the summer-dews which were to refresh them after the burning heat of the day, gave out their whole store of fragrance; the very air which now and then breathed softly and fanningly in at the casement, seemed loaded with sweets. It was not a night for sleep, and the eyes which gazed on its beauty were the instruments of a mind well fitted to appreciate it. They were the eyes of one who, from her earliest childhood, had been a worshipper of Nature, to whom that glorious heaven and those burning stars spoke a language of their own, on whose brow the visitings of that gentle breeze came fraught with all the mysterious influences, only to be comprehended by those whose hearts have cherished a love in itself sufficient to compensate for many evils, and which has power to add tenfold intensity to the emotions of happiness.

And on that well-remembered night, delicious as must ever have been the feelings which were called forth by its loveliness, there were other and deeper sources of rapture in the young and glowing heart of her who now gazed on that loveliness, than even it could awaken. What must not such a scene have appeared, when, to its own countless beauties was added that charm which the soul has power to fling over all external objects, that charm which can create a paradise in the very bosom of the desert? It was not alone the overwhelming sense of delight in what she looked upon, that raised the tears which were now trembling in the eyes of Sophia Walsingham, it was not the emotion excited by the mere outward face of nature, which was swelling at her breast in rapture too deep for utterance. To her all these objects appeared bright, with the heart's first incommunicable splendour, with that lustre which the soul can fling but once over this cold material world. That night, when she entered her chamber, she had parted, at its very door, from one whom she loved with all the depth and purity of a first and only affection, who, within one short week, was to call her his own for ever. His kiss was on her lips, the fond pressure of his arm seemed yet thrilling through her frame. And she should see him again in the morning, — and the next day — and yet, again, the next and the next: — they were never to be parted more. They had a long vista of bright years before them — years "redolent of joy and youth;" there was no care to darken, no suspicion to cloud that fair prospect — there was not even the chilling recollection of by-gone pain and suffering to forbid the brilliant anticipations of hope; — to her the sorrows of early years had been few and far between; she was leaving her father's home, a young and happy bride, in all the springtide of opening life and promise, to surrender her trusting heart, with its warm affections, into the keeping of one whom it had long loved and confided in. She leaned on her casement ledge, and thought on all these things, and then she recurred to the days of her innocent childhood, to all the varied hours of peaceful enjoyment she had passed in her father's old hall, to all the many nights when her head had been pil-

lowed in the chamber she was so soon to quit, and the mornings when her light slumbers had been broken by the song of the birds at that window. She felt that she had been happy, very happy there, but she was going to be far happier now, — the future was all strewn with flowers and bright with sunshine, and at that moment she felt as if there were not such a thing as pain or sadness in the world. It seemed as if till then she never had been fully alive to the certainty of her own bliss. That was indeed a night to live in memory, while existence should endure.

There was another heart that night which did homage like hers to the loveliness around it, but with feelings widely different. In the breast of William Harrington Talbot, the accepted lover of Sophia, beneath all the rapture of intense and ardent love, all the glowing anticipations of hope, there was a dark and a troubled under-current, — a host of conflicting thoughts, — a vain struggle to drown the whispering of a still small voice which told him that, with all his deep love for his affianced bride, he was unworthy of purity and innocence like hers, — that, were all known of him which might have been unfolded, the heart of Sophia, dearly as it loved him, would have shrunk from his embrace, and rejected him from its affections. And he stood at that instant gazing like her on the lovely face of heaven, and execrating the faults whose remembrance he strove in vain to dispel from the scene it blighted.

William Harrington Talbot was a young man of transcendant talent, warm affections, and violent passions. At the age of twenty-three, he had far outstripped all his contemporaries, and was already distinguished as one of the most rising geniuses of the day. But the impetuosity of feeling, and the ardour of character which rendered him alike charming as a companion, and captivating as a lover, were the very features in his disposition which might have caused an accurate observer of human nature to tremble for his future career. Under wise and judicious management in early youth, fortified by the only safeguard of the finest natural qualities, the strong and unbending integrity of Christian principle, such a character might have become all that was great and good. But alas! such restraints had in his instance been wholly wanting. Left in infancy an orphan, with a considerable fortune, to the care of guardians, who conceived their duty fulfilled when they attended to his pecuniary interests, and took care that the school at which he was placed should be one which bore the highest reputation; he had found himself at twenty-one his own master, free to plunge into all the alluring pleasures of the world, and to encounter its innumerable temptations, — temptations to which the nature of his own mind, the ardour of his feelings, and the keenness of his perceptions, added tenfold force and danger. The reputation, justly acquired, of excellent talent, the independence of his fortune, united to the attractions of a person in which the charms of intellectual expression enhanced an uncommon degree of physical beauty, rendered him universally courted and sought after. He was no less delightful to his own sex, than dangerous to the other. And all these dangers, all these allurements, were to be encountered by one who totally wanted the only defensive armour which could have brought him unharmed through the midst of them. What wonder if he yielded to their power? But of this Sophia knew nothing. What woman is there who ever does know the whole character of the man she loves? The very constitution of society, the comparative seclusion of a female life, render it impossible that it should be otherwise. And her father, a retired country gentleman of fortune, in the North of England, was equally removed from the chance of hearing much of what occurred in the gay circles of London, of which Talbot had been a privileged member. All that he knew of him was as a guest, first at a near neighbour's house many years ago, while he was yet a schoolboy, and subsequently a frequent and a welcome one at

his own, — the beloved companion of a darling son whom he had lost three years before, and therefore dear to the father's heart as a relic of his own Arthur, and now the passionate lover and intended husband of his eldest and lovely daughter. And William Talbot, erring as had been his life, dark and many as were the faults which dimmed the lustre of his brilliant talents, was no dissembler. Dearly did he love the innocent and ardent girl who had given all her heart's warm affections to him. For years indeed, he had loved her, before he was himself aware of the nature of his feelings; she had been the connecting link that bound him to virtue, that restrained the excesses even of his wildest hours. But when a year previously, on returning to Woldsley Hall, after fourteen months' absence on the Continent, he had declared to her father the long attachment which had united them, and demanded permission to fulfil the vows he had plighted her in secret before his departure; Mr Walsingham only consented, on condition of a year's probation before the marriage should take place. He wished a space of time to elapse, which should prove, as he fancied, the steadiness of his future son-in-law; and made use, as his pretext, of his desire that Sophia should have attained her twentieth year before marrying Talbot, by which time his second daughter might be removed from school to take her sister's place at the head of his establishment. His wife had long been dead. With whatever reluctance, Talbot and Sophia were forced to subscribe to this unfortunate and ill-judged arrangement. Unfortunate and ill-judged it was, — not that there was any danger of Talbot's constancy, — nor that it was possible for him to forget Sophia; but, such as I have described him, to be cast into the vortex of the world, into all the dangers and all the fascinations of London, without the powerful link of domestic ties to bind him, — the innocent object of his virtuous love at a distance, — nothing near to remind him of the higher and purer aspirations of his youth, could it be imagined possible that a character like his should escape uninjured? From the knowledge of all this, however, as I have already said, Mr. Walsingham and his daughter were far distant, and it was with undiminished cordiality on the part of the former, that Talbot again was welcomed as a member of the family. And, Sophia, need I attempt to describe her feelings towards him? Talbot was all to her — the very life of her life. Endowed with talent of no common order, ardent, enthusiastic, and keenly feeling, she had been "a sealed book" to those around her, — had lived among minds that had little in common with hers, till she discovered in him a kindred spirit. His touch had disclosed the hidden fountain, and taught it to flow for him. Until she knew him, Sophia had, in fact, never felt what it was to meet with a being who could understand or appreciate her. Early deprived of the blessed and never-failing treasures of a mother's love and sympathy, she had found in her father a kind and watchful protector indeed, and an indulgent parent, but not one who could do justice to talents and imagination like hers, which, from their very depth and refinement, were retiring and unobtrusive, and, to be discovered, required to be sought. Her sister was three years younger than herself, and, in early youth, three years make all the difference between the *almost* woman and the child.

Of her two brothers one was a mere boy. The elder, a warm-hearted generous young man, was removed by death, just at the age when he would have been invaluable to her as an adviser and a friend; and the very memory of this beloved brother seemed to command and to consecrate the love she bore his chosen companion. Let those who have known "Love's sweet want," who have experienced the burning, thirsting desire to find some object on which to expend all the heart's best and warmest energies, — something that may justify the outpouring of all the deep treasures of its affection, — something, in short, that may realize those dreams

which, from their surpassing beauty, and the almost impossibility of their realization, are at once the blessing and the curse of the feeling and imaginative mind; let those who have felt all this — and alas! thousands have felt it, and have carried it to the grave with them — the thirst which this earth has no waters to quench — conceive with what sentiments Sophia must have looked upon one who seemed born to surpass even her brightest visions, — one whose depth of feeling, whose brilliant talents, and whose passionate love, seemed to announce a being cast in the same mould with herself, — one who entered, as it were, by intuition, into her every thought ere she could give it utterance — whose winning grace of manner, and whose noble and intellectual beauty added tenfold attraction to all he said and did. And, when William Talbot was with her, the bent of his soul was all towards virtue and domestic happiness, though unhappily her influence was not a sufficient restraint over his impetuous and unguarded passions, when removed from its immediate sphere. Yet, had he been permitted to make her his wife, at the period first proposed, ere corrupt principles and evil example had obtained a hold over him, he might have been saved from all that followed, and I should not now have had to record so melancholy a catastrophe. In speaking thus, I need not be thought to anticipate: for who is there that has cast an eye of observation on human nature and on human destiny, who has not perceived how invariably characters, such as I have described Sophia's, seem marked out for misfortune; — how constantly dispositions, endowed with capacity for the highest enjoyments of which our nature is susceptible, seem to be thus endowed, only to enable them to feel, with keener anguish, the rankling arrows of mental suffering; while those whose meaner souls are incapable of any very keen emotion, whether of pleasure or of pain, glide quietly and prosperously through life, all unconscious of the misery they never knew, and could not comprehend, were it possible to disclose it to such as they. "Let not the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Let us not question, but submit to, the inscrutable decrees of Providence. Even here, the eye of faith may faintly discern, what, in a higher and happier state, shall be fully disclosed to it, the reason why a mind thus attuned to depth and intensity of enjoyment, should be led away from the perishing fruits of earth, which, while they hindered its higher aspirations, would ye be found all unequal to the satisfying of its longings, and taught, even from amid the darkness and the desolation of the things of time, to look with trusting hope to the undying pleasures of eternity.

And, few and brief as may have been the hours of happiness granted to the most wretched amongst us, there have been some, in the lot of many, the recollection of which, whole years of after suffering have been unable to efface; for a return of which, the price of these weary years would be thought too poor a payment. But of hours like these there is no return. Many a long day after, when hope and happiness were alike fled for ever, did the bare idea of aught relating to the evening with which this story opens, bring back with it, upon Sophia's mind, a rushing tide of recollections, each one of which stood arrayed in all the vivid distinctness of reality. It was, indeed, a blessed evening. How often did she remember the moment, when, tempted by the cool and shadowy stillness of twilight, Talbot and she had stolen from the darkening drawing-room, and found themselves, reckless of their course, wandering through the lovely grounds which surrounded the old hall! They had rambled on, scarce knowing whither their footsteps tended, until they found themselves on the banks of a brawling rivulet, by whose side, just where it flung itself in a tiny cataract over a steep bank that overhung the river, Sophia had caused a rustic arbour to be erected, whose walls were plentifully covered with creeping shrubs, and the green turf around which was fragrant with innumerable flowers. Within

this arbour they seated themselves, and here, the arm of Talbot encircling Sophia's waist, her fair forehead and clustering ringlets resting on his shoulder, they lingered, while the time flew unheeded by, with their eyes now raised to the deepening blue of heaven, where the first trembling star-beams were seen emerging from the dim obscurity, and whence the silvery light of the rising moon was just beginning to fall quivering on the glassy waters beneath, and to pour its calm and soothing lustre in between the waving branches of the trees around them; and now, leaving the contemplation of that lovely scene to rest them on each other's faces, indistinctly seen through the glimmer of twilight, yet more beautiful to those gazing eyes in that very indistinctness. They were silent all the while, for happiness like theirs has few words, — and still, save when Sophia felt the arm that was entwined around her, move, to press her nearer to the heart against which she leaned.

At length the deep, low voice of Talbot broke the silence. "What a night!" he whispered, as if afraid to disturb the repose of nature, "what a holy — heavenly night! Do you remember the last time we sat here, Sophia? The last time we saw the moon on that river?"

"That I do, William: the evening before you last went away. Oh! is it not delighful to look back to it, now that we are so much, much happier? I do think the recollection of past sorrow enhances present joy. Perhaps we might not have been quite so sensible of our happiness to-night, if we had not to remember our former parting."

"Ah! Sophia," exclaimed Talbot, "I have never looked back to that parting, never shall look back to it, with any feeling but pain. There has never been moonlight like what we saw that night, — never to me at least. But to you ——"

"Nay, William, I am sure I can say the same. There has been many a beautiful moonlight night, while you were away, that I have seen with absolute pain, because I was alone, and had no one to listen to the expression of my feelings; for the only one who ever understood them was far distant; but that very pain, the recollection of it, I mean, now seems to me to add tenfold happiness to this present moment. The contrast is so delightful! Is it not?"

"Yes, my own innocent girl, to you it is, I have no doubt. But our cases are widely different. You can recall that scene with the very same feelings of peace and tranquillity which were in your heart when you last beheld it. But to me, who read reproach in its calm loveliness, the contrast is not delightful, but painful. No feeling of delight can dwell with the stings of remorse."

"Remorse, William!" and Sophia raised her head, and looked earnestly in the face of her lover, although the dim light could afford her no assistance in discovering the meaning of his words there. "Remorse, what have *you* to do with remorse? Or why do you speak of it?"

"Why do I speak of it to you at least, my own pure Sophia? It is a feeling that you will never know. And even I, now while I am gazing on this tranquil scene, in the dear society of her from whom my heart, as God is my witness! has never wandered, — even I can scarce believe that I should have incurred its punishment."

"Nor will I believe it, dearest William," said Sophia, as she again rested her head on his arm. "Nor will I believe it. I am sure, if you have ever done any thing wrong, that others, in your place, would have done the very same. There are a great many temptations in the world, of which I can have but a very imperfect idea."

"God forbid you should ever know them, dearest! It is a hateful world. Oh, how little can you imagine it! you, whose sweet life has glided away as retiredly and as untainted as that quiet stream now flowing past us; how

little can you, in your happy seclusion, have conceived of the guilt, and the misery, and the warfare of the world! how little of the sins and wickedness of the actors in its busy scenes! You do not know me, Sophia!"

"Not know you, William? Who should know you, if I do not? No, no, that won't do. It is very true, as you say, I know little of the world; but if I be happier without that knowledge, you had better not try to give it me. This I know, that there is no merit in being innocent where there are no temptations to be otherwise, as in my case; so you need not look for a very severe censor in me, if you have done wrong. I dare say, had I been you, I should have erred as frequently as ever you have done. If you call this not knowing you, I don't want to know you any better, or for any thing different from what you have always been to me. We, who have been companions since we were children, must be well acquainted with each other's characters: and why should we talk of such things at present? Let us forget every thing sad or painful. Why remember it, when it is all over now? Is it not, William?"

"Angel of my life!" exclaimed Talbot passionately, as he pressed his lips upon her fair open forehead. "Yes, it is surely over, for evil could not exist near you. Oh, that I had never left you! But that is over too; and we must not disturb the blessed present by one lamentation over the past. We are united now; and we shall never part again — never. With you for the guardian genius of my fate, what have I to fear for the future?"

"And shall I be your guardian genius, William? then I must begin my office now." She disengaged herself from his arms, rose, and stepped outside the arbour, whence, in an instant, she returned, holding in her hand a flower, wet with the sweet summer dew. "You must place this flower near your heart, dearest, and always wear it there. It is a sovereign charm against care. Keep it in memory of to-night — and — and of me, William."

"And you, dearest," whispered Talbot, as he clasped her in his arms, after he had placed the sprig of Heart's-Ease in his bosom, "have you kept none for yourself?"

"I need not do so, William. I cannot want it while you possess it!"

The moon was high in heaven when Talbot and Sophia returned home. They were received with happy smiles and significant glances from the assembled family party, and the evening passed swiftly away, between music and conversation. The signal for retiring to rest was not unwillingly obeyed, by those who knew that a night of delightful dreams awaited them, which would, in turn, usher in another long summer day of happiness.

"Papa," said Lucy Walsingham, Sophia's younger sister, who had a few minutes before left the room, and now returned, to receive the "good-night kiss" of early years, before retiring to rest, "Papa, I passed through the library just now, and saw a great thick letter addressed to you lying on a table. I suppose Hollis forgot to give it you." "Why did you not fetch it yourself, you little puss?" answered Mr. Walsingham. "Well, never mind now, I'll go there and read it. I fancy it is upon some county business. Good-night, my loves, and God bless you all! — Talbot, I shall be glad to see you to-morrow, looking more like your former self than you are to-night. You are an absolute ghost, my good fellow. Go to bed, and try to recover your good looks, before a certain day that is not far off. Good-night again, and pleasant dreams to every one."

The happy father watched the group with a smile, as they left the drawing-room, then, taking up a light, proceeded to the library.

Sophia lingered long that night ere she retired to rest. It was very late before she could tear herself from the contemplation of the glorious scene, or from the delicious recollections of her own perfect happiness. Her

heart seemed swelling with the fulness of its ecstasy; and, as she knelt down to her nightly devotions, a few sweet tears escaped her eyes, while thinking on all the blessings for which she had to thank Heaven.

CHAPTER II.

Tre volte e quattro e sei lesse lo scritto
Quell' infelice, e pur cercando in vano,
Che non vi fosse quel che v'era scritto:
E sempre lo vedea piu chiaro e piano.
Ed ogni volta in mezzo il petto afflitto
Stringersi il cuor sentia con fredda mano.
Rimase alfin con gli occhi e colla mente,
Fissi nel sasso, al sasso indifferente.

Fu allora per uscir del sentimento,
Si tutto in preda del delor si lassa.
Credete à chi n'ha fatto esperimento,
Che questo è il duol che tutti gli altri passa.

ORLANDO FURIOSO.

"WHAT a strange, what a very strange dream!" exclaimed Sophia, as the summons of her maid aroused her on the following morning, at an hour somewhat later than usual. "What could have put in my head at this happy time? it is odd enough, I must tell it to William."

Thus thinking, she arose, and flinging open her window, stood leaning over it for some time before she began to dress, inhaling the rich, soft, balmy freshness of the summer morning. And as she stood, the recollections of the previous night came thronging back upon her. But yet, notwithstanding all these, notwithstanding the vivifying influence of morning, with all its combined delights of gentle air, and sweet birds, and fragrant flower-scents, there were an indescribable weight and sinking at her heart, which she could neither analyse nor account for. She told herself that she was happy, perfectly happy — and she knew that she had no cause to be otherwise. But all the while there was an unacknowledged something, hanging like a dim cloud over her mind, which contradicted the feeling. "How weak, — how childish!" exclaimed she, as she turned away from the window. "How very foolish in me to allow a dream to make such an impression on my fancy!"

And yet it was a strange dream, strange, as being unconnected with any of the events of the previous days, and not to be resolved into the effect of any of those thoughts under whose influence she had closed her eyes. To a night of confused, but delicious visions, there had succeeded a deep and quiet sleep, from which, towards morning, she dreamed that she was suddenly awakened by the sound of lamentation and sobbing. It appeared to her that she started up in bed, drew back the curtain, and looked out; when, by the pale gray dawning light, she distinctly perceived a female figure seated in a chair which stood close by her bedside, clothed in a singular looking long white garment, which flowed down to her feet; her head was covered by a veil of the same colour, and she seemed to be weeping and wringing her hands, as if in the very extremity of affliction. While Sophia gazed on this figure, with that total absence of fear or wonder which is generally the case in a dream, she beheld it slowly rise from its seat, and bending over her, raised the veil which concealed its features. It was the countenance of her mother which met her eyes; that well-remembered countenance, pale and mournful as she had last beheld it, when her dying kiss was imprinted on the cheek of her weeping and inconsolable

child, eight long years ago. It seemed to Sophia that she struggled for utterance in her sleep, that she strove, but in vain, to extend her arms, and to clasp her mother; but while yet she did so, the sad countenance and tearful eyes became more and more pale and indistinct; and just as she felt herself break the spell that bound her motionless to her pillow, and started up to arrest the departing shade, it vanished altogether from her sight, and she awoke. It was a singular dream, and one calculated to make a deep impression on Sophia's feeling and imaginative character, the more especially as the affection she had borne to her lovely and gentle mother had been one nearly approaching to adoration, and even now, when years had elasped since her death, and the "burning dreams" and thronging incidents of youth, redolent of life and hope as youth ever is, might have been supposed to have drawn a thick cloud between her and the recollection of that sorrow of her early days, a touch, a breath upon the trembling chord, would suffice to rouse it to life again, and awaken all the yearnings of that mysterious and unutterable fondness, whose foundations are dug so deep in the human breast, that after ties cannot eradicate, nor time, nor sorrow, nor guilt itself, be found powerful enough to destroy them.

With a heart filled, in spite of itself, by a host of sad reflections, Sophia concluded her morning toilet. "Did my mother return," thought she, "to reproach me that, in the fulness of my happiness, I had forgotten her dear, dear memory? Oh no! she could not have done so, for if she be still permitted to behold her daughter, she well knows that the recollection of her has never, never left me; that my daily and my nightly thought has been, Would that my mother were here to witness the felicity of her children! It could not have been that. What, then, has brought her back? Oh! I am a fool, a very fool! I blush for my own weakness. I must not tell William how very childish this dream has made me."

And with the name of William came other and brighter thoughts as Sophia quitted her chamber. The apartment of Talbot was at the other end of the gallery, and in passing it to go down stairs, she perceived that the door was standing wide open. They must, then, be all at breakfast, and how she would be laughed at for her laziness! She quickened her steps, but on reaching the breakfast-room, found it occupied only by Lucy.—"Why, Lucy, where are they all gone to?" she exclaimed in surprise. "Papa is very busy in the library about something," returned her sister, "and ordered breakfast for himself early, but he would not allow you to be disturbed, and I believe William Talbot has some business too, for he had gone out before I came down."

"Business!" exclaimed Sophia, a little surprised, "what could it be? I never heard of it."

"I don't know indeed, Sophy, for I scarcely saw papa — he had done breakfast before I came in, and was in such a hurry to get away, that I did not like to ask him any questions. But I dare say, whatever the mighty mystery is," continued Lucy, with an arch smile, "you will very soon hear of it."

Though inclining to admit Lucy's interpretation of the matter being merely some little surprise which Talbot was preparing for them, Sophia felt disposed to wish that he had not left them to a dull breakfast by themselves, and then began to wonder, as it passed over without his reappearance, where in the world he could be gone. The meal was finished almost in silence, and Sophia had risen from table, and taken her station in a window overlooking the front entrance, when the library bell was heard to ring, and, in a few minutes, the old butler entering the room, announced, that if Miss Walsingham were done breakfast, his master wished to see her in the library. Sophia obeyed with alacrity, more than half expecting to find

Talbot with her father; Lucy exclaiming as she left the room, "Now Sophy, be sure you get the secret out of papa, I am dying to know it."

As Sophia entered the library, her father, who was seated at his writing table, looked up, and that single look at once sent a quivering thrill of horror and undefined alarm, like an arrow, through his daughter's heart and frame. She perceived immediately that there was something dreadfully wrong. Mr. Walsingham's face was as pale as death, his eyes haggard and bloodshot, like those of a person who has passed the night without sleep, and every limb seemed trembling under the influence of some strong and uncontrollable emotion. He held out his hand to her, but appeared unable to speak. One only thought possessed Sophia, — "William," she exclaimed, "my God! — William! something dreadful has happened — tell me, papa, — tell me at once, — for mercy's sake!"

She sunk into a chair with clasped hands, that seemed to lock and squeeze themselves together, as if to restrain her agony. Mr. Walsingham rose, and folded his arms around her. "Compose yourself," said he, in a thick and broken voice, "compose yourself, my poor girl."

"He is dead, I know he is dead," gasped Sophia, "nothing else would ——," the shuddering of her whole frame became such that she could not utter another word.

"No Sophia, — no, — my darling child, he is well; but — but — my child, my child! for God's sake, — for my sake, be calm, restrain yourself, Sophia! it must be told, and the sooner it is done the better; — he is gone away, — gone. William Talbot is an accursed villain, my child, and you can never, never, be his wife. I bless my God that I know him for what he is, before he has made you so."

More her father might have spoken, but the words fell meaningless on the ear of the miserable girl. Like one at whose feet the thunderbolt of Heaven has fallen, she sat, perfectly still and motionless, with fixed eyes, as if the very pulses of her heart had been arrested by the blow. At length her pale lips slowly and faintly articulated, "Gone — gone away, — William?"

"My child, it is a fearful task, — but I must perform it. Read this letter which I received last night; — you know the writer, — you cannot doubt his veracity, but if you could, Sophia, he — *he* has avowed it! I have not been in bed all night; — with the earliest light I went to him, and drew from his own lips the confession of guilt which must for ever estrange him from my child. — Villain! — Villain! Oh my poor dear unfortunate girl! Would to God I had not trusted in him as I did! but who — who could have dreamed of this? — Read it, my poor girl — read it."

* * * * * * * * *

Her dim and glazing eyes slowly gathered in the meaning of the fatal scroll. At length the sense of the words, which at first fell indistinctly and dull on her perceptions, became apparent to her. Again, and yet again, she read it.

"Father, father, he has not confessed this? you did not say he had confessed this? it is false, it is impossible! — do not believe it; — if an angel from Heaven ——"

"My child, my child! Do you imagine that if one ray of hope had existed, your father would have detained it from you? Do you suppose that he would have suffered such a blow to fall upon you, if one chance, however remote, had existed of warding it off? Sophia, as I hope for mercy, — it is true! he has confessed it all."

"Then father," said Sophia, rising from her seat, and with a firm, calm, fixed countenance and tearless eye, laying the letter on the table, "then, father, the die is cast, — all is over between him and me."

Her voice was as clear and distinct as if she had but uttered words of every-day import. She paused an instant, then deliberately drew from her

finger the ring, — the pledge of her engagement to William Talbot, — which had never left that finger since he had placed it there; — with a firm hand undid the ribbon which supported round her neck the locket he had given her, containing his hair, and, placing them beside the letter, said in the same clear, calm voice, — "There! return them to him."

Her father clasped her in his arms, — "My darling! My darling! this is but what I expected from you. Yes, you are your sainted mother's own daughter."

He had struck the chord. Before the mighty flood of awakened passion, all the barriers that virtuous pride and insulted affection had raised to stem its force, were levelled in an instant. Bursting from her father's arms with a shriek of agony, the unfortunate girl flung herself on the ground, and uttering the words, — "My mother! — My mother! Oh that I had died with her!" — fell into the most violent hysterics.

It was long ere Sophia awoke to the recollection of what had passed. At length, after long continued fainting fits, she recovered to find herself lying on her own bed. The room was partially darkened, by the curtain being drawn before an open window, where the summer breeze came softly in. The old housekeeper, who loved all the children of her master's house as though they had been her own, stood by her pillow chafing her cold hands.

For a few minutes Sophia struggled with the confused idea of something horrible — she knew not exactly what. Then all at once came rushing on the fearful tide of memory; — she uttered a groan of anguish, and covered her face with both her hands, while her whole frame shook and quivered like a leaf under the storm. "Leave me, Willis, leave me alone," she faintly whispered, — "I am quite well now."

"I will, Miss Sophy, dear. Only just drink this composing draught first, darling. 'T will do you good, and make you sleep."

Sophia mechanically swallowed what was offered her, with closed eyes, as if to shut out the light of day. She felt old Willis arranging a covering over her, and carefully closing the curtain of her bed, — then heard her speak to some one who appeared to be standing at the foot of it, — whence Sophia now first distinguished a sound, as if of suppressed weeping. "Come, Miss Lucy, darling, come away love. Best come away, indeed, Miss Lucy. And do n't cry so, darling, — do n't ye now." And she led the sobbing girl out.

As the door closed, Sophia sat up in her bed, drew back the curtain, and looked wildly round. She felt an impulse that prompted her to start up, and walk rapidly about the apartment; — she felt that if she could have moved, it would have relieved her, but she could not. A weight — a dull dead weight — was upon her; — something that chained her down; and she lay down again, and pressed her hands tightly upon her bosom, and remained perfectly still, motionless, and tearless.

Why dwell upon these hours of wretchedness? Why attempt to describe in words what no human language is competent to delineate? Those who have felt it, know too well how impossible it is for description to convey to those who have not, any idea of that fearful pang, — that first agony of suffering, — when the staff becomes a spear. The utter desolation, — the blight, — the impossibility of looking forward to the future, — the struggling of the heart against conviction, — then the dreary truth forcing itself on the mind, in spite of all these struggles; — these, — and worse than all, the feeling that it is vain to hope, — vain to expect any relief; — the involuntary recurrence to the idea of to-morrow (that constant accompaniment of wretchedness,) checked by the fearful thought, that to-morrow must be as to-day, — that it can bring no change, — none, — that futurity is but "a chaos of the heart." Who is competent to describe these things? Ye who have never

known them, thank Heaven for your exemption from some of the most fearful sufferings to which humanity is liable? Ye who have thus suffered, — ye to whom earth's sweetest fountains have been turned into bitterness! — well may ye sorrow, — yet sorrow not without hope! Ye too, may thank Heaven, if its mysterious dispensations have withdrawn your hearts from the things of a world they loved too dearly, and purified them — "though it be with fire."

CHAPTER III.

T were vain to speak — to weep — to sigh —
Oh! more than tears of blood can tell,
When wrung from Guilt's expiring eye —
Is in these words — Farewell — farewell!
These lips are mute — these eyes are dry —
But in my breast — and in my brain, —
Awake the pangs that pass not by —
The thought that ne'er shall sleep again.
My soul nor deigns nor dares complain,
Though grief and passion there rebel —
I only know — we loved in vain —
I only feel — Farewell — farewell!"

BYRON.

"MA'AM — Miss Walsingham," — said whisperingly Sophia's maid, entering her room about two hours after the time when Willis left her, — then approaching the bed, and perceiving that Sophia did not sleep, "I am so sorry to disturb you, ma'am, — but — but — here is a letter, — that a man on horseback brought, and he galloped off again, ma'am, without stopping, except to beg that you might get the letter immediately; — he said, ma'am, as how he believed it was of great consequence, — or I should not have ——"

"Very well, Manson," returned her mistress, "give it me; I am not asleep, you see; so you need make no aplogies."

She had spoken calmly, and calmly she received the letter, — but when the closingdoor again left her alone, she sunk upon her pillow in a transport of distress. — "William — William," she said — "Oh! my God! strengthen me, have mercy on me!" — It was a letter from Talbot that she held in her hand.

WILLIAM HARRINGTON TALBOT TO SOPHIA WALSINGHAM.

"I do not write — Sophia, to deprecate your indignation — still less to sue for your pity. Conscience forbids the one proceeding, and pride the other; he who has been loved by you will accept no meaner feeling — he must have that, or — nothing.

"I have been told that all is over betwixt us. — I have been ordered to leave your father's house, — and I left it, — left it — Sophia! without one other look — one parting glance from you. It was well I did so. — I would not have the last recollection of you, such as a parting glance from you would then ——————. I must not dwell on that. — Sophia! I have dared to address you once more, — yes, *dared*. Such is the style that now befits him, who but last night was your plighted lover, your affianced husband; — who loved you — who loves you now — Sophia! — *Now* — in the midst of conscious guilt — and misery — and despair — Oh! as man never loved woman.

"I have tried to be calm — I have worked up my courage to a pitch of reckless daring, — have steeled my heart against the softening tide of recollections that rushed upon it, — and sat down to the task of addressing

you ; — and I began calmly — did I not ? — Oh ! very calmly — and wrote these cold proud words ; and strove to think that I was injured and hardly treated ; — and then all at once arose before me your face — your sweet innocent face of confiding affection — as I saw it last night by that holy moonbeam ; — and our early days of happiness returned upon me, and your love — and your trust in me ; — and I thought how I had betrayed them — and that I should never behold you more as I had done — never in this world ; — and I flung away my pen — and wept, — wept — Sophia — as if my very heart would burst. Would it might ! Oh ! would to God it might ! I have been a villain — a damned betraying villain to you.

" And why do I presume to address you now ? Now when I am told that all must be over between you and me ? Why harrow up your innocent heart — and heap added bitterness on the gentle head my accursed hands have devoted to wretchedness ? I have done it, Sophia, because I will take from no words but *your own*, the mandate of our eternal separation. You have been mine ; — mine you would still have been, if no meddling fiend had stepped betwixt us, — and I had been saved from the guilt, and the horror, and the reckless despair, that must now be my portion. And, as such — Sophia — fallen as I now am from the place I once held in your heart — wide as is now the gulf that divides us, I yet conjure you, — by the memory of our early and our pure love — by the hours of happiness we have passed together — by all that Heaven and our own hearts alone have witnessed — by all that has been — and never — never — never can be again, — write to me yourself, — one line — one only, — to pronounce my doom, — to seal — if so it must be, — the sentence that drives me forth, an alien and a wanderer among mankind ; — and I will — yes, if *your* hand have signed the warrant — I *will* submit in silence. — I deserve your hatred — I know it. — Hate me then — forget me — if you will ; — but ere the grave have closed over our once fond affection — Oh my once own Sophia ! — say to me yet again — ' William — I did love you.' I have injured — insulted you, — have listened to the voice of my guilty passions, — have forfeited the heaven of your love, and I deserve my doom. Your father did but rightly avenge your outraged purity. Yet — Sophia — yet — from no one but yourself will I endure to hear what I have merited. He — yes — your father — shares the blame of my misdoings. Had he suffered me to become your husband a year ago, — had he not insisted on the probation which sent me, in all the madness of ungoverned passions, amid temptations which have been my ruin, — we might now — oh my God ! — have been blessed together, — and I might have escaped my earthly and eternal destruction ; — for, Sophia, — the hour that exiles me from your love, loosens for ever the tie which binds me yet to the haunts of peace and of virtue. When you are lost — what is there worth the keeping ?

" Now I have said all — all, — I have made my last request. I do not think you will deny it. — And what delays me now ? why linger over misery too acute to be felt again on this side the grave ? Over pangs of which you have not, and will never have, an idea, — those which make the punishment of hell, — the agonies of unavailing remorse ? — Why — but because I cannot — I cannot bear to say — farewell ? I hang on the brink of the precipice — and catch at the last straw to detain me. But the fearful plunge must come. — Not such a farewell as we uttered last night, Sophia ! — there is a withered flower lying on my burning heart — *you remember that flower !* it did not fade so soon as our happiness. — It must be said — fare thee well — my own — own Sophia. Oh ! think on what he must feel who says these bitter words for the last time. Yet again — farewell, — and if a wretch like me may dare to utter his name, — May God bless thee, Sophia !

" W. H. Talbot."

This wild and scarce coherent letter was written in an almost illegible hand, and blotted here and there, particularly the last part, with tears, which bore too visible a testimony to the agonies of the guilty and unfortunate writer. Need I dwell on the feelings with which it was read? or the fearful conflict between female delicacy, outraged affection, and all-powerful love? — Yes! Sophia did know — did feel that all indeed was over; even he had acknowledged his doom to be a merited one; but for this appeal she was not prepared. It aroused every spring of love and agony, and she felt as if now for the first time she knew the extent of her affection for him she might never again behold. In turning the letter in her convulsive grasp, her eye fell on these words, written within the envelope, — "I shall remain all day at ———" (a town about six miles off) "in expectation of an answer." There was therefore no time to be lost — for she could not dream of a denial to that last request. Even her indignant father could not object to that. Nor did he. Perhaps Mr. Walsingham might have felt the truth of an observation in the letter, which his daughter showed him. Or it might be, that he acquiesced in compassion to her silent wretchedness, and refrained from a refusal which he saw would be needless cruelty. And in despite of all his just paternal resentment, some old feeling of affection for the gifted and miserable lover of his daughter, might have come across him, — to influence his silent assent to her prayer. Certain it is, that he did assent, nor did he ever hint at a wish to see the letter which his servant that evening conveyed to ———.

SOPHIA WALSINGHAM TO WILLIAM HARRINGTON TALBOT.

"I do not write to reproach you, William. The time for that is gone by, and reproach would now be alike undignified and unavailing; — nor can I bear, even now, that the last words which will ever pass between us should be words of anger. I could have wished to have been spared this last bitter pang, — to have spared it to you, — for I cannot believe that yours is a heart which can calmly reconcile itself to beholding the ruin its passions have wrought, — and I did not wish to add to all you must now be enduring, the knowledge of what you had condemned one who loved and relied on you as I did, to suffer. But you have asked me to do this, — you have entreated one more word from my hand, and I could not refuse it you. Need I say what that word is? — I need not. Your own conscience has already told you it is, — and it must be — Farewell for ever. Yes, William! the heart that beat but for you,—that loved—that worshipped — that trusted in you — that heart your own hand has pierced, — that heart must henceforward know you no more. You and I must henceforth be to each other as though we had never been. I will never name your name again to living being. I will never look upon your face again, I will — yes — I will strive to *forget* you. It was no common love that you have outraged, — you were the first — the only object of no cold affections, — but the William Talbot whom I loved, the pure-minded — the faithful — the noble-hearted, he is no more, — or he never existed but in my fond imagination. I bless Providence that I have been awakened on the brink of the precipice — though awakened to the spectacle of desolation and despair.

"These are bitter words, William, — bitter words from me to you. I little thought last night that I should ever have addressed you thus. My heart smites me now for doing it, when we are parting for ever. I will not think now of the present or the future. I will only remember the time that can never return again. I will only remember that to you I owe all the happiness I have enjoyed in my youth, — all the purest and most exalted pleasures I have ever known. I cannot forget that. Why should I add to your misery? If you have sinned, you have also suffered, and have yet, I

fear, more to suffer; but it is not for me to be harsh with you. My own wretchedness should teach me mercy and forgiveness; and I do forgive you, William. God knows I do. I can never be your wife, never. I pray heaven we may never meet again. But it is in sorrow, not in anger, that I part from you. Life may yet have much to offer you, — and oh! I conjure you, by the memory of all that is past and gone, do not add, by future transgression, to the misery of my desolate lot! Do not heap added bitterness to all that must be my future portion. I am alone — alone in my anguish. I have no mother in whose arms I might weep to-night. No mother, into whose pitying ear I could pour my sufferings. I must bury them in my own aching, aching heart. Do not increase them, William! The knowledge of your future guilty conduct would be the last and bitterest drop in the brimming cup that is pressed to my lips. Oh! spare me that, at least!

"And now, farewell, William, farewell. The last cord is loosened, the struggle is over, and life is henceforth a desolate path for both of us. Take my forgiveness, William; take my blessing, — the last I shall ever send you. Farewell for ever."

"SOPHIA WALSINGHAM."

It was with a trembling hand, and a faltering pen, that this letter was written; but it was not till the task was accomplished, not till "the last cord" was indeed loosened, and loosened for ever, that Sophia felt the extent of her misery. When, turning from her chamber window, whence she had watched the departing messenger, for whose return she needed not to watch, — she slowly cast a fearful glance around; when her eye took in all the inanimate objects before it, — those well-known objects on which she had so often looked under far other auspices, and saw no change in them; but when her heart felt the change, then it was that the full sense of her desolation fell upon her. She raised her eyes mechanically to heaven, and they rested on the deep-blue western sky, where, from amidst the golden and crimson clouds that marked the sun's path of departed glory, one calm and beautiful star, "gem of the crimson-coloured even," was beaming forth in placid brightness, just over the rich foliage of the trees. Sophia had not shed tears till then; but that deep soft sky, that calm hour of sunset and of memory, that holy star — these touched her heart with some of their mysterious influence, and softened, while they pierced it. She sank upon a chair, hid her face in her hands, and wept long and bitterly.

And the wretched author of her wretchedness, what were his sensations the while? Over them compassion would draw a veil. They were sufferings of a nature better to be imagined than described. Let any one conceive what must have been the feelings of one who loved as the unhappy Talbot too surely did; yet whose own mad hands had undermined the fair fabric of his own happiness, and devoted to life-long misery the woman he adored, — one of passions such as his, alike ungovernable in seeking their gratification, and frantic in their repentance, when repentance came too late. Such characters there are; and alas! evil and dangerous as they may prove to others, yet are they ever their own direst enemies; their own errors' most implacable avengers.

He was alone, with Sophia's letter in his hands. He gazed upon it awhile, with wild irresolute eyes; then suddenly and distractedly tore it open, and rushed, as it were, through its contents. Twice he read it over in utter stillness; then, starting from his seat, he clenched his hands in his hair, and flung himself, face downwards, on a sofa. "Villain, — villain, — damned betraying villain!" he muttered in agony, while his convulsive sobs shook every fibre of his frame. "Oh villain! thou hast merited thy doom." He did not long lie prostrate there; but, in that brief space of time, could mortal pen enumerate the floods on floods of bitter recollec-

tions, the worlds of grief, of agony, of passionate remorse that swept tumultuously over his spirit?

> "In that moment, o'er his soul,
> Winters of memory seemed to roll."

They passed away like the hot simoom of the desert, and left behind them the stillness, the despairing calm, the silent desolation of death. He arose with a ghastly and bloodless countenance, and haggard, but unmoistened eye; and with a firm hand, while his sternly compressed lips spoke of calm and resolute determination, rang the bell of his apartment.

"Let the horses be ready for my travelling-carriage, by day-break," said he to the landlord, who answered his summons. The man bowed and withdrew.

All that night his footsteps were heard, by the inmates of the room below, pacing backwards and forwards in his chamber. Sometimes they paused for a little while, then there would be a furious impatient stamp, then another brief pause, when once more the same measured step was slowly resumed.

The lovely dawn of a summer morning broke at last. How strange, and how sad, to think on what wide varieties of human destiny the dawn of every rising day must be opening! How the light, which is to some the herald of hope, and joy, and happiness, is to others the signal of misery and despair, and to many, to thousands more than the world recks of, but the heart-sickening precursor of another weary day of hopeless, joyless, monotonous existence; another day that must "drag through, though storms keep out the sun," — that sun of life which to them will never beam again! And even the very night, which that dawn announces to be past, — that night which to some has been but one quiet time of dreams and of repose, a very blank in existence, has been to others a whole age of mental action and of mental agony, the period during which a dark conflict has been fought unseen by human eye, unsuspected, it may be, by any human being; but which, in that short space, has sufficed to change every feeling of the heart, to alter every feature of the character; and whence the combatant emerges, like the visitant of old from the cave of Trophonius, with lips on which this world's brightest allurements will never awaken one heartfelt smile again. It is a brief time to work so total a transformation, yet is not that transformation, so wrought, the less complete and sure. And briefer far have operated as wondrous revolutions. On the action of one hour has often turned the fate of an empire. On the decision of one moment has often hung the whole tenor of a man's after destiny. Well, then, may the events of one day and night be believed to have effected a change like that which I have attempted to delineate.

One hour after day-break saw William Talbot far on his road to London, a wide and desolate world before him, and his back for ever turned on all that earth contained for him of precious and beloved, forfeited by his own madness alone; with the consciousness that he himself, although the only sinner, was not the only sufferer; that his hand had inflicted a deep, a rankling, and a cureless wound on the heart that would have died for him, but now must be for ever shut against him.

It is not my intention to trace any farther his after career. I fear it may be too easily imagined what that career became, — what were the wild excesses into which he plunged, in reckless desperation, to blunt the arrows of sleepless and unavailing remorse. To enlarge upon the theme were an idle and a revolting task; and a bitter office it were to record the deterioration of a nature so amply formed for better things, so darkly and so miserably perverted. Yet let not those whose passions have been cast in a gentler mould — across whose path temptations such as he encountered have never

come — whose minds, above all, have been early fortified by the armour which was never given to him — let not such as they judge him too harshly. What he was they might have been, under circumstances such as were his ruin. Those who are most deeply skilled in the workings of that strange mystery, the human heart, will not be the most forward to accuse him. They know well that it is often those natures, originally the noblest, which, a fatal bias once given to their powers, have run most wildly wrong. Who, in looking on the most erring, the most recklessly guilty of human beings, can tell what stings of private and unendurable affliction or remorse may have driven him thus far astray? Who can estimate how different he might have been, had a happier lot been his, or had that mighty influence, the neglect of which is the source of nearly all of human wretchedness, and all of human crime, been early employed to exalt and to purify his nature, to teach him resignation, and to give him comfort even in despair? It is on the finest and the loftiest dispositions that mental distress exerts its most overwhelming power, and by which it is least endurable; and there is something in a man's nature impatient of suffering, something that drives him forth to seek refuge from it, in one excitement or another; submission is so hard, so impracticable a lesson to a man. Women, from their very nature, and the circumstances of their situation, are taught to bend in patience and in silence, beneath the pressure of affliction. They have been practising resignation all their lives; but with men it is far otherwise. The same species of blow which breaks a woman's heart, or crushes her spirit into silent wordless endurance, and bids her steal hopeless through life, as one that asks but to pine away unseen and unnoticed, tortures the breast of a man into frenzy, drives him away to escape himself, by any means; and too often renders him, for life, a confirmed and desperate libertine, or a soured and gloomy misanthrope. Alas! there is much, much of misery and despair in this world, often the deepest and the darkest, where there is the least of their outward show. And of the guilt of many thousands, how truly has it been said, by one whom God himself instructed to look on human nature,

> "One point must still be greatly dark,
> The moving *why* they do it.
> And just as lamely can ye mark
> How far perchance they rue it!"

CHAPTER IV.

> He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
>
> ROMEO AND JULIET.

> I've wet my path with tears like dew,
> Weeping for him when no one knew.
>
> WORDSWORTH.

"CAN any one tell me what has become of Miss Walsingham of Woldsley's marriage with young Talbot?" inquired Lord Darncliffe one day after dinner, at the crowded table of Mr. Hartlington, a gentleman whose seat was distant but a few miles from Woldsley Hall. "I heard three months ago that they were to be married in July; it is now the end of August, and I saw him in town just before I left it, a fortnight ago, looking like any thing rather than a bridegroom. Besides, I heard some one name him as one of a party who were just setting off for Ems, I think, or some other German

watering place. It struck me as very odd. Can you solve the riddle, Hartlington ?"

"Solve the riddle !" exclaimed that gentleman, filling his glass, "it needs no solution. Did you not know that the match was off?"

"Off! no. Never heard of such a thing. Are you serious ?"

"Serious ? yes, to be sure. I am astonished you did not hear the story yesterday at the Whartons'. I never doubted but that you must have had a full account of the whole proceeding from them. It made a considerable noise at the time in the country. It was a deuced odd affair altogether; nobody seems to know the exact particulars, but it was broken off all at once, within a week of the wedding-day, and Talbot left Woldsley instantly for London. In fact, the whole thing was so completely the transaction of a moment, that it seems they had all parted as usual the night before, (the very evening of the day that Talbot came down,) and next morning he left the house two hours before breakfast, and never returned again."

"You absolutely amaze me," said Lord Darncliffe. "By Jove! what! and was there no clue discovered to all this ? Did the enterprising genius of the acuter sex," turning with a smile to Mrs. Hartlington, "leave such a mystery unexplained ? was the story never inquired into ?"

"Your Lordship is pleased to compliment our inquiring spirit too highly, at the expense of that of your own sex," replied that lady. "I think, in so far as my observation went, there was fully more curiosity manifested on the subject by the gentlemen of this neighbourhood than by the ladies. But you cannot suppose that so unexpected an occurrence could fail to call forth innumerable conjectures, and a thousand attempts at explanation, none of which, I dare engage, were, or possibly could be, correct, since the parties alone concerned in the business were precisely those whom it was impossible to interrogate upon it."

"But still," pursued his Lordship, "some explanation must have been given to the world, of a circumstance so very singular as the breaking off of a marriage almost at the moment fixed for its celebration ? Such an explanation was due to the young lady herself. Matches are not dissolved in that manner, without creating much discussion, and there are such things as accusations of caprice, especially from the friends of the party so hastily dismissed."

"For that matter," replied Mr. Hartlington, "you know Talbot has been an orphan since his boyhood ; and his uncle, Lord Castleford, who was his only surviving near relation, has been several years dead. In fact, he has scarcely any friends alive, who have either right or interest sufficient in him to induce them to inquire into his concerns. But, however, there is no doubt that people don't stand upon relationship in taking cognizance of their neighbour's affairs, and of course Walsingham was too well aware of that not to exonerate his daughter from all blame in the matter, in any thing he ever said upon the subject."

"A wretched subject it must have been for him to speak upon," remarked Mrs. Dacre, a very lovely young woman, who sat next to Lord Darncliffe ; "for I know he had a very great regard for Mr. Talbot, and was so pleased with his daughter's engagement to him. It is a sad business for them all. But no one who knew Sophy Walsingham, could ever dream of its being her blame."

"Nor did I intend any such insinuation," said Lord Darncliffe. "But what, then, was the explanation given, Hartlington ?"

"Why," returned that gentleman, "Walsingham kept the matter excessively quiet; very quiet indeed. In announcing to his friends that the match was off, I have always understood that he declined entering into any particulars, simply stating that it was owing to misconduct on Talbot's part, of an extremely aggravated nature."

"It was at one time said," observed Sir Arthur Byng, "that there had been some quarrel about settlements, but that I have heard positively contradicted; besides which, I think it perfectly impossible. Talbot was not that sort of fellow at all — never had a thought of money in his life."

"No, no, rely upon it, that was not the thing," said Mr. Dacre. "I can assure you there might be found far more likely reasons. I can only say, that from my knowledge of Talbot last season in London, it was my amazement that Mr. Walsingham allowed the engagement to subsist even then. He was a clever fellow, a very clever fellow, a most talented, delightful companion, but certainly the last man in the world to whom I should have dreamt of intrusting the happiness of a daughter of mine. I often thought so then, being aware of the engagement."

"Nay, — but how could Mr. or Miss Walsingham, at this distance, have possibly known any thing of that?" observed Mrs. Dacre; "I do n't think they have any relations, or intimate friends in London at all, or at least none but some old people, very unlikely to know any thing of the young gay circle Mr. Talbot principally frequented. I do not see that you can blame Mr. Walsingham in that matter. Mr. Talbot, under his eye, was a very different person, and certainly was at all times the most fascinating creature possible. Besides which, he was a very much altered man, between the times when he left Woldsley a year ago, and returned to it again. London did him no good in many respects. But of course, no one aware of the situation of affairs would have thought of hinting any thing of that kind to Mr. Walsingham."

"No?" exclaimed her husband. "Really, my dear, you must permit me to differ with you on that head. I confess I could not sit by and see the daughter of an intimate friend sacrificed to a man of whose moral character I had a bad opinion, and not step in to arrest the danger. And I am perfectly convinced, from many circumstances which I am not at liberty to explain, that some such warning was the occasion of this rupture. It could not have been a trifle which led Mr. Walsingham to break off a match so long approved and sanctioned, and one which, I doubt, so deeply involved the happiness of his daughter."

"I never supposed it to be a *trifle*," returned Mrs. Dacre, "and of course it is impossible for those unacquainted with the motives of actions to criticise them correctly; but if it be as you think, I can only say that it would have required the knowledge of a crime of no ordinary magnitude, to have induced me to take such a step as conveying information, which would for ever ruin the happiness of an amiable girl."

"For ever!" exclaimed Lord Darncliffe, with a smile, "why, my dear Mrs. Dacre, these things happen every day. The breaking off of a match had not need to produce such disastrous effects. It would be a curious subject of investigation, were we to look round, and inquire how many married women of our acquaintance are united to the objects of their first attachment, or even to the men to whom they were first engaged. I'll venture to say ——."

"Venture to say nothing on the subject, my Lord," playfully interrupted Mrs. Hartlington, a lady whose heart had been too effectually seared under the influences of a fashionable mother, a fashionable governess, and a fashionable boarding-school, ever to have felt a first attachment for any thing beyond a brilliant establishment, and to that idol of her young imagination she undoubtedly had been united; "venture to say nothing on the subject. A bachelor is not a proper judge in this matter, and at all events, I pronounce it, in the name of all the ladies here assembled, a most impertinent investigation. Yet I own I should think it by far too high a compliment to pay a naughty man, to seclude myself for ever from society on his account. And so, I have no doubt, will Sophy Walsingham feel. But at present, it

really would not do for her to go out much. It would have an odd appearance, and only set people a talking, as the thing was so very well known. She receives all visiters, and does the honours of the house as usual, and really, from all I understand, has behaved with great spirit, and taken it quite properly. And that is all that can be expected or desired as yet."

"To be sure, my dear Mrs. Hartlington, to be sure; that is the very point I was endeavouring to establish with Mrs. Dacre, when you were pleased to censure and cut short my propositions, only the more effectually to confirm their truth. You have just placed in a clearer light what I attempted to advance, namely, the general feeling of your sex in respect to disappointments of that painful, but common, nature. I said, and I maintain it still, that there is not one woman in a hundred who remains single from such a cause; consequently there is, I will engage, scarce one in a hundred married to her first love."

"Well," said Mr. Hartlington, "if Sophy Walsingham be the one in a hundred who remains in single blessedness from any reason but an obstinate resolution so to do, all I can say is, it will reflect no credit on the taste of the gentlemen of her acquaintance. She 's a pretty girl, a very pretty girl, one of my great favourites. An old married man may say so with impunity, you know."

And in this spirit do the triflers of the world discuss events which involve the deep and irremediable wretchedness of their fellow-beings! Yet why express surprise at this? Who that has at all observed mankind, can feel surprise at the daily repeated instances of the little impression made by the misfortunes of others, even on the hearts of their (so called) most intimate friends?

"Not faster yonder rowers' might
Flings from their oars the spray —
Not faster yonder rippling bright,
That tracks the shallop's course in light —
Melts in the lake away —
Than men from memory erase

all thought of the sorrows and the sufferings of their kind, of all that doe. not concern self. We hasten, in our reckless prosperity, to dismiss from our minds the affliction of others, and then, when the dark hour comes to ourselves, we wonder and repine when we discover that ours in turn is forgotten. But of sorrow like Sophia's, it is the trifling and the heartless alone who can and do discuss and jest upon the particulars. Those who are capable of deeply sympathizing with the afflicted are withheld alike by the conventional practices of society, and the shrinking delicacy of female nature, from expressing their sympathy in its full extent. Those who, from bitter experience, do sympathize (and there are some such to be met with where least expected) can best tell whether it be possible for them to profane the feelings hid in their hearts' holiest recesses, by expressing them in words to the empty crowd surrounding them.

And in so far, all that Mrs. Hartlington had said was correct. Sophia had behaved "with great spirit." That is, after the first few days of uncontrollable agony had passed away, after the first unwitnessed outbreaking of misery that mocked restraint and concealment was over, she returned to her station in her father's family, and was, to all outward appearance, the same as ever. It is true her cheek was deadly pale, her lips unvisited by smiles, and a calm and settled gravity of deportment seemed to have taken place of her former youthful hilarity; but this was only for a time. After a while her smiles would return again, she would again bear a part in the family conversation, again appear to take an interest in her father's details of country matters, again partake in Lucy's youthful gayety, again

laugh at the boyish pranks of Charles. In short, no mere casual observer could ever have supposed that a demeanour so apparently easy and unconstrained was the cloak to a heart that was writhing, breaking under the weight of a wretchedness, the very intensity of which rendered it incommunicable. No one beheld Sophia in her hours of retirement; no one looked on her when the mask was flung aside, and the full tide of anguish found a vent unseen by mortal eye. The coldest heart that had done so would have shrunk appalled from the contemplation of all that hers was doomed to suffer in silence and alone.

There was a little manuscript book, the companion of her solitude, which, long after, fell into the hands of her sister Lucy, — long after the remembrance of these times had been dimmed by the lapse of years and varied incidents. Lucy's tears bedewed those pages with the less of bitterness then, that she reflected how perfect and how blessed was the rest which had succeeded to so much of unimagined agony. As I am not writing a narrative of events so much as a delineation of the feelings to which these events gave rise, I need make no apology for offering to the reader a few extracts from the book in question. It will better suffice to give an idea of her feelings than could any description of mine.

CHAPTER V.

——— Lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene
That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted —
Though in their souls, which thus each other thwarted,
Love was the very root of that fond rage
Which blighted their life's bloom, and then departed.
Itself expired; but leaving them an age
Of years, all winters, war within themselves to wage.

BYRON.

EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF SOPHIA WALSINGHAM.

"MONDAY EVENING, *August* 27.

"WHY do I continue to keep this diary? Why retain a record of feelings which are all bitterness, all madness and agony? Am I not already sufficiently wretched without the aggravation of transcribing them? It is all true, but I must, I must have some medium for these feelings; they must find some vent, or they will drive me mad. I almost wish they would. I cannot imagine any distraction so horrible as my present sanity. I sometimes think I am mad already. When I sit, as I sat to-night, forcing myself to speak, — seeming to listen, — appearing to those around me the same that I always was, yet feeling all the while that my body alone is present with them, that my soul is not there, — that it is lying chained down in darkness and loneliness, bound with a fearful pressure of something, I know not what, a sort of dull, dead, indefinable consciousness of misery and desolation; then — I am raving, I know not what I write. Oh that I could weep! that I could only weep! My head is burning, — my heart lies dead within me. I do not even *feel*, — if I felt I should be able to shed tears. I have sat to-night pressing my aching forehead with both hands, longing to weep, feeling that, if I could, it would relieve me; but I could not. The cold tear that arose would not fall from my eye. There is such a sense of loneliness and desolation around me. No one to pity me; no one to speak comfort to me. And yet I have so kind a father!

But oh! who could utter to a *man* feelings such as mine? And it would be so cruel — he can do me no good, — why should I make him wretched? He evidently thinks that I am "regaining composure," as the cant phrase runs: yes! he thinks I have learned to forget! Well, well, let him think so. It makes him happy. I could not bear to undeceive him; and I could not if I *would* do so. There was one day, not long ago, that he came suddenly into the drawing-room and found me alone there; the book I was trying to read had fallen from my hand, and I did not observe his approach till he was close beside me. He laid his hand on my shoulder, and said something in so kind, so pitying a tone; and at that moment I felt so desolate, so utterly miserable! Oh! I thought it would be such a relief just to fling myself into his arms and weep there, and ask for comfort and consolation! But no, no, I could not, I could not! It is the doom of misery, such as mine, that it must be endured alone. And I thought, where would be the comfort in making my father unhappy? He could do no good to me, — I must bear my lot alone; and I stifled the tears that were just beginning to start, and forced myself to answer him in a cheerful tone, and he left the room thinking me at ease!

"And then, Lucy? my kind, sweet sister? Oh! God forbid that I should harrow up her young innocent heart with the sufferings of mine! She could not comprehend these sufferings; she has never loved, never lost. But yet they would make her unhappy; they would cloud the morning of her opening youth, and render her familiar with sorrow. And could I be so selfish? Not for the price of worlds. It is sad enough for her to have so dull a companion as I must be. — Alas! now indeed I feel the want of a mother! To her alone could I have unfolded all my misery; with her alone been secure of consolation. Had I but had a mother on whose breast to weep to-night, I had not felt as I feel now, alone in the world. My mother, my dear, dear mother! You came from heaven to warn me of my impending wretchedness. Your spirit hovered over my couch to lament the approaching blight that was to fall upon your child! Will you not return yet again, for one short hour, to console her? Vain, vain hope! The grave will not restore its dead at my presumptuous voice. Alone the desolating tempest found me, alone I must bear its force."

"Sunday Evening, *September* 9.

"*It was this day two months ago.* Two months! Have two months passed since ——? To me it has been one long dark night, one fevered dream of misery and despair. But a dream to which each revolving day but adds some new amount of horror. I think it is only of late that I have become aware of the full realities of my lot, that I have known that I shall see *him* no more. No more! It was long ere I knew that, long ere I would allow myself to dwell on the fearful conviction that lay all the while like a spell upon my heart. Every morning when I awoke there was a sort of dim uncertainty, a sort of expectation of I know not what, struggling with the hideous, the sickening recollection that it was all a delusion. That is gone now. I know that I am indeed desolate. It was all so sudden, so fearfully rapid; no preparation, no doubt, no suspicion flung across my path to forewarn me of what was to follow. Plunged in one instant from the pinnacle of happiness to the depth of despair! Snatched from his very arms to be told that I should never behold him more!

"Why — why is it that while the recollection almost deprives me of reason, I yet cannot refrain from dwelling, with the minuteness of the most perfect exactitude, on every particular connected with that night, — that last night of perfect — of unutterable happiness? — Why, whenever I can steal out unobserved, do I haunt that lonely wood-walk, — do I enter that ar-

bour, — do I rest upon that seat, — when each time I do so sends a thousand daggers to my heart? Oh! that night — that heavenly night! with its flowers and its soft summer dews, — its unutterable fragrance, — its deep blue skies and glorious stars! — when, when shall I forget it? Would I forget if I could? Who can tell the desolation that strikes upon the heart when it looks around, and beholds all external objects the same, — all unchanged with which its undying memories are intwined, — all — save that which gave them their lustre and their charm? — when it beholds nature still smiling as she smiled *then*, as if in mockery of its despair? when the very associations which lent added loveliness and delight to its happiness, become the instruments of its torment — the aggravations of its wo?

"I have tried to arouse myself, — repeatedly have tried to strike off the benumbing influence of grief, — to live for those around me, — to forget my own sufferings. In vain! I cannot. My heart assents to all, but it goes no farther than assent. Then I tell myself how weak it is to repine for one who deserves to be forgotten, — who merits my indignation alone. Madness, — madness is in that thought! I know he does, — I know it, and does that console me? It is a tenfold aggravation of my misery. Oh! had we been separated by aught but his fault, methinks I could have borne it better; but to know *him* guilty, unworthy of my love, — yet to feel that I do love him still, that I must ever love him, — yet must never look upon his face again, that indeed is agony almost beyond the endurance of humanity. That it is which haunts my daily path, my nightly pillow, which would plant thorns among the roses of heaven.

"This is Sunday. Are these thoughts befitting this evening? Oh! that I could pray now as I prayed long ago, when my mother taught me! But no one ever spoke to me of these things after she died, and when I was happy I did not think of them, and *now* my heart is seared, as with a burning iron, — I cannot feel them now. Lucy was reading her Bible when I went to her room to wish her good night; — she looked so happy — so innocent! when I came to mine, I tried to do the same, but the words were all dim and indistinct, — I could not see them, and I was forced to close the book again. My head is aching — aching, — I must go and try to sleep. Would I were 'never more to waken!'"

"Friday Night, *September* 14.

"It is a bitter thing to be alone, and alas! it is possible to be alone without living in a hermitage. But after having felt the want of a kindred spirit, after having thirsted for one heart to meet the burning necessity of love we found in our own, for one that could understand and answer all the hidden treasures of our affection, which shrank from the cold and common-place channels around us, — if, after seeking all this, we have found it all, and more than all; — have revelled in the delights of full and unrestrained communion with such a spirit, — have poured forth all the deep tides of our love, and been met by an adequate return, — have become so intwined in every hope, every wish, every pulsation of our heart with another, that we felt as if one and the same; and that other such a being as is met but once in an age of life — a being endowed by genius with its rarest fascinations; — one whom to forget is impossible; — if such have been our lot, — then to have it all dashed to earth, — all that bright fabric of happiness levelled with the dust, — to be driven forth, a solitary wanderer over the waters of desolation, — to be doomed again to be *alone*, — again — after experiencing all that such companionship had to bestow; this is indeed the climax — the very crowning point of suffering. And such — such is mine; and yet the one bitter drop is added to the overflowing cup, — *it was his hand that poured it.*"

SATURDAY NIGHT, *September 22.*

"Another day — another week passed away, — Oh! how laggingly, how wearily! Surely the fetters of common-place monotony — the dreary restraints of custom, these are what add tenfold bitterness to the sufferings of a woman. Even the first stunning anguish of a blow such as I have felt, — the first overwhelming sensation of misery, intense and intolerable though they be, are scarce comparable in their effects to the weary, sickening, after sensations which must be borne alone and in silence. To waken, — if we have sleep to awake from, every morning, heavy at heart, and weary of existence, longing for rest, for silence, for solitude, where no eye might note our tears, — asking in our agony for the wings of a dove, that we might flee far away from all that can remind us of what has been, and never can be again; — and yet chained — chained to one spot, — too often the very one which has witnessed the birth and death of happiness, and beholding, stretched forth in joyless perspective, the long dull day, with its lifeless duties; — the insipid talk that must be listened to, and answered; the sedentary occupations which employ the hands, only to leave the heart full scope for brooding on its wretchedness; the vapid crowd of idlers to be entertained; or, it may be, the dead, cold, calm solitude of a weary soul to be endured unmurmuringly! Aye, it is a sad lot.

"And then the heart becomes so closed up, so hardened. All that once could interest and delight can do so no longer. Oh! it is fearful for a disposition formed to love, with which affection is a necessity of existence, to lose the power of feeling it; to have a deadly numbing spell thrown over the soul; to be the object of warm and kindly domestic attachment, which it has become, as it were, unable to return! To feel, yet hate itself for the feeling, that its own woes engross it solely, to the exclusion of every other emotion! And sorrow like mine must be hid, it cannot find consolation in imparting itself. All other griefs are lessened by communication, by the kind sympathy of others; are at least, if not lessened, soothed and deprived of their bitterness. Disappointed and wounded affection alone has no consolation to look for, nothing to expect, or to desire; it will not be disclosed, even when the heart fancies that disclosure might bring relief, — for what human, what female, lips could bring themselves to utter to the ear of another the secret of pangs so dark, so desolating, so utterly hopeless? They say concealment is treason against friendship. Alas! in that case, the evils of blighted love are manifold."

"THURSDAY EVENING, *September* 27.

"What a night of winds, and storms, and torrents of rain! How the blast is howling! — dashing the big drops and the leaves it has torn from the branches, altogether against the window. I hear the river roaring along, gaining strength and fierceness every instant. Alas! what a scene of desolation and anticipated winter shall we behold to-morrow. One night of tempests can perform wild work in the natural as in the moral world. I remember that formerly, however I grieved over the departure of the lovely summer, I yet welcomed the approach of pale, melancholy, waning autumn, and looked forward with pleasure to the long and happy winter evenings. With what horror do I now contemplate their approach! When cold, and storms, and darkness shall render escape impossible; when I can no longer fly from the company of those before whom I dare not display my sufferings, into the open air, and the lonely woods, there to relieve my bursting heart, by weeping in solitude; when I must be chained to the house, and its horribly familiar objects, for days together, forcing myself to appear cheerful, and to join in the conversation, or the amusements around me! Torture, torture! How can I bear it? Even my own apartment is sometimes a prison: its narrow bounds seem to cast fetters

upon me; on all sides I am surrounded by things with which are connected associations that madden me. Yet all this must come, must be borne, for long endless months. And then will spring return; spring, the season of reviving life and gladness, mocking my wretchedness. It will bring nought to me but recollections; vain, vain recollections; or vainer feelings of momentary sympathy with the restored loveliness of nature; dreams that thus it ought to be with other things; dreams whose swift and hideous awakening is to despair.

"I cannot bear this life; it will drive me mad. Any change were preferable to this; any change that would force me to turn my thoughts from the dreadful themes which haunt me day and night. Daily does existence become more hateful. There is not an object around me, which does not remind me of all I would bury in oblivion. If I live thus much longer, I shall be impelled to some act of desperation, to escape from the torments of memory."

These passages, selected from among others to the like effect, may serve to give some idea of the state of mind over which their gifted but most miserable writer threw a veil of so much assumed cheerfulness and calmness. The very exertions to which the shrinking reserve of Sophia's feelings, not less than her generous anxiety to spare those of her friends, impelled her, told with double severity on her private moments, and rendered her secret sufferings more acute and intolerable. The cause, too, of these sufferings, as she herself said, aggravated them beyond what can be conceived by any save those to whom agonizing experience has taught the painful truth, that

"—— to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness on the brain."

There indeed lay the rankling venom of the wound. How vainly do we often hear it taken for granted, that the discovery of unworthiness in a beloved object is to operate as a cure on the passion it renders hopeless? Empty conclusion! The heart will not follow where reason leads. It may feel its chains, yet be unequal to casting them aside. We are not masters of the duration, any more than of the intensity, of our own affections. Nor is the sudden and horrible conviction, when forced upon us, of power to unbind the million links which the hand of custom has been long and diligently winding round us, and which it has rendered indispensably necessary to the very existence of the soul. Woman's love has been known to survive years of neglect, of unkindness, of cruelty, of guilt itself; nay, to live on hopeless, unseen, yet unfading, after the withering certainty of its being unrequited has impressed it with the signet of despair. How much more, then, in the present instance, where, alas! it was only too well assured of its being returned, yet doomed to feel that assurance valueless and unavailing!

There needs no farther evidence than that afforded by the undisguised avowal of her own sensations, to show the life of agony, the withering away of the heart, which Sophia Walsingham was enduring; and yet those hours in which the full tide of wretchedness found its vent, and poured forth its irrepressible torrents, dreadful as they were, were less intolerable than those in which her very heart lay dead within her, and in which she seemed to herself no longer to retain the power of feeling, or the capability of loving. To a mind, indeed, of strong and acute sensibility, which has once been fully summoned into the putting forth of all its capacities of affection, the dying of that affection, the cold, dead, creeping approach of apathy, stealing with viewless speed over the soul, must be more dreadful than all the positive sufferings it ever could be condemned to bear. Had

the mild spirit of Christian resignation then taught her to kiss the chastening rod; had there been one warning voice to whisper that thus it must ever be when the immortal spirit creates itself idols out of dust; one faithful hand to point where only the weary pilgrim may hope for perfect rest and holy peace, then indeed she might still have mourned the downfall of her dearest hopes, yet mourned no longer as one "that refuseth to be comforted." But there was none such near her, none from whom her heart could have asked consolation or support; none to whom she could have unfolded its depth of wo; and she sat alone on the grave of hope and happiness; alone upon earth; and unable to raise her aching heart to heaven.

Time passed on slowly, and as he is wont to pass with the wretched, and brought with him but added misery to Sophia. For if one faint, lingering, unacknowledged hope had been still existing in her bosom; if one voice had there whispered of after years, long after, when, by penitence and amendment, the erring lover of her youth might win his way back to the esteem of the virtuous, perhaps even to her restored confidence, that hope and that soothing voice were doomed to be crushed and silenced for ever. The accounts that now reached Mr. Walsingham of Talbot's conduct since the rupture between them, and which he esteemed it a duty to impart to his daughter, were such as to render the remotest chance of future reconciliation impossible. They sealed the fate of Sophia. "I cannot," she exclaimed in convulsive agony, after reading a letter containing such intelligence as that to which I have referred, "I cannot, I will not longer endure this life. It will end in madness — in suicide. I will forget him. I will put it out of my own power to dwell upon his image again. There is a method, a terrible one, but a sure; and, where all is dark and desolate alike, what matters it how terrible it be?"

The next memorable evening in Sophia's lifetime, was the one which found her prepared on the morrow to be again a Bride, though not the bride of Talbot.

CHAPTER VI.

It is not meet — it is not fit —
Though fortune all our hopes hath thwarted,
As on the very spot I sit
Where first we met, and last we parted —
That absent from my heart should be
The thought that loves and looks to *thee*.
* * * * * * *
I cannot. — Oh! hast *thou* forgot
Our early loves — this hallow'd spot?
I almost think I see thee stand,
I almost dream I hear thee speaking.
I feel the pressure of thy hand
Thy living glance ———

DELTA.

A BRIDE again! and thus soon! Could it be possible? Yes; but too possible. How such a resolution could be taken, by what process the mind could be wrought up to it, let those answer, and there are many, whom the pangs of disappointed hope, and outraged affection, have driven to that desperate remedy, a marriage in which the heart had no share — a marriage contracted with the wild and vain idea of its restoring tranquillity by teaching forgetfulness. Lord Darncliffe spoke truly when he said, that not many women, comparatively speaking, were married to their first loves;

but untruly, if he meant to infer, that it was because their first loves were no longer remembered. It is true that thousands of women have lived to find peace and calm domestic happiness yet their portion, after the fitful fever of the heart has passed away; but that can only be when years have rolled over their heads, and experience has taught them to content themselves with a smaller share of sublunary bliss than that to which, in the glowing fervour of youth, they had aspired; and still, even then, is the memory of early love among the forgotten things of life? Or can the heart, which has once really loved (for it is not every one who is capable of that passion in all its reality) ever find, in any earthly fountain, a draught of oblivion to remove such a recollection? But a marriage of pique, as it is called, a marriage such as that into which anguish and resentment had hurried Sophia, — thousands more have tried that cure for memory, with what success it were an empty task to tell. Those, however, who look no farther than the outward deportment, cast their eyes on the calm brow and external gayety that cover many a broken heart, and remark, "She has quite got the better of her disappointment. She is quite happy with her husband!"

Among the most constant visiters at Woldsley was Sir John Delamere, a baronet of large fortune in a neigbouring county. He was a man considerably past the prime of life, though still in possession of full health and vigour, and of a personal appearance in no way remarkable, rather plain than otherwise, and principally distinguished by an imperturbable calmness of demeanour, and a total absence of all fire and intellect. His character corresponded with his outward man, being most distinguished for the negative virtues. He was perfectly respectable in all the relations of life; calm, slow, and extremely obtuse in his perceptions; born without any one keen feeling on any point, but at least quietly tolerant of those which he could not comprehend in others, and entirely satisfied with the passive degree of liking which his own disposition excited towards him. A man, in short, who had no one prominence of nature to call forth any other species of emotion; a man whom it was impossible to love, yet not worth one's while to hate, and one too respectable in the discharge of every function belonging to him, to be ever obnoxious to censure or to ridicule; while, at the same time, any idea of praise or admiration was equally incompatible with his cold methodical formality.

This gentleman, about a year previously, had been a still more frequent inmate of Mr. Walsingham's house; and, feeling it incumbent on him, though so long and apparently so decidedly a bachelor, to marry, and support the dignity of his family by an appropriate choice, had found that long-wavering choice at last determined by the beauty and the youthful sweetness of Sophia. Her higher qualities he was incapable of appreciating, but she certainly excited in him a more positive sensation, something more nearly approaching to pleasure and to admiration, than he had ever before experienced; and, all unaware that it was possible for a woman to require more, in matrimony, than an attentive and good-natured husband, a large establishment, servants, carriages, horses, jewels in abundance, and an ample settlement, he forthwith proceeded to lay these at the feet of his young enslaver, and felt not a little surprised and confounded at her gentle, but positive rejection of the whole. Surprising, however, as the thing itself might be, it was nevertheless true; and Sir John, finding his overtures declined, calmly took leave, though certainly with some slight feelings of disappointment. After the sketch I have given of his character, it will not be thought surprising that, with the report of Miss Walsingham's being free from her engagement to Talbot, which of course was not long in reaching him, came renewed visions of her loveliness, coupled with the reflection, that there was yet a strong probability of his calling that loveliness his own.

Sir John was one of those people who can perceive nothing but matter of congratulation in an engagement with an unworthy object being broken off, however unexpectedly. He did not take into account the existence of any feelings save those which, on a similar occasion, he fancied would have affected himself; and the result of his deliberations may be gathered from the fact, that the beginning of winter found him once more a visiter at Woldsley Hall. The sequel I have already related; and it were a painful and a wearisome task to dwell any longer on the gradations of feeling by which that sequel was brought to pass.

Still more painful would it be to detail all that intervened between Sophia's acceptance of Sir John Delamere and her marriage-day. To relate the horrible revulsion of feeling that succeeded the almost stupefaction of mind in which she had received and replied to his proposals, on the very evening of that day when she had read the letter already alluded to. The floods of memory that rushed upon her, — the horror, — the amazement, — the actual incredulity with which her heart received, as it were, intelligence of the fate her own words had sealed. "She could not marry him, — no, no! she would not, — it was not yet too late — she would fly; she would cast herself upon his mercy; she would confess all — all. She would lay bare the misery of her heart; she would show him how unfit it was that she should become his wife, with that heart full of — full of what?" Aye! there lay the pang. "Shall I tell him," she exclaimed, sinking again on the seat whence she had started; "shall I tell him of whom that heart is full? shall I show him that it still retains the memory of the guilty, the treacherous, the unworthy? of him who has broken its peace? of him in whom it never, never could repose trust or confidence again? And what should I gain by such a step? The privilege of dragging out a lingering life of agony; of enduring again the untold pangs of the last months, — alone, — hopeless, — without a joy in the present, without one ray of sunshine for the future, — abandoned to the horrors of memory, where memory is despair. Any thing — any thing but that. He shall not imagine that I retain one thought, one dream of fancy, in which his image bears a part. He has rendered it time that I should prove I have forgotten him."

And she tried to prove it, and succeeded, with some at least, of those around her. It would have been a harder task, indeed, to have endeavoured to make Sir John aware that the reverse was the case. He could not feel the instinctive shudder with which his approach was greeted. He did not perceive how cold and lifeless was the hand he pressed in his; how unnatural was the glow that brightened the cheek, or the light that beamed in the eye, of his intended bride. He could not read the tale of a far-away heart in the forced gayety, the mechanical attentions to the forms of society, the sudden and eager starts from silence and revery, the versatility which flew from one occupation to another, as if alike afraid to pause, and incapable of fixing on any thing. All these symptoms passed unnoticed by him; he beheld no more than met his eye. And Mr. Walsingham, a man not naturally gifted with any very great depth of feeling, was equally blind to the real state of things. He had been aware, in so far as his mind could enter into the feelings of hers, of his daughter's devoted love for William Talbot. He had deeply sympathized with her distress at his misconduct, in so far as he could follow it, and done every thing that warm parental affection could suggest to console her. But, judging of her sentiments from his own transports of indignation against the offender, he concluded that no affection could survive the added proofs hers had received of the unworthiness of its object, and welcomed with the highest cordiality the proposals of Sir John, not only as a means, in his judgment, of entirely dismissing Talbot from her recollection, but as, in every point of view, a perfectly eligible establishment, and a highly advantageous connexion. As to the sentiments of

Mrs. Hartlington, *et hujus generis omnis*, their opinions of "Miss Walsingham's proper spirit;" of its being "a far better marriage than the other; Sir John much richer than Mr. Talbot," &c. &c., they may be easily guessed at. And of course there was a due proportion of quiet sneers at the disparity of age, and of hints that "the disappointment had not been a very lasting one." All the benevolent comments, in short, that a marriage of any kind is sure to excite. What were these to Sophia? Even had she heard them, it is doubtful with how much of meaning they would have reached her perceptions. There were voices enough from her own heart to deaden all other sounds.

One person there was, however, who, with the quick tact of affection and feeling, speedily became aware that all was not as it should be. It is true that Lucy Walsingham, a quiet, gentle, but warm-hearted and reflective girl, though invariably treated with the fondest love by her sister, had never been a witness of that sister's hours of private suffering, nor, if she had, could her young and untouched heart have entered into their intensity. But she was old enough, and possessed of sufficient feeling, to enable her to perceive that there were tears shed behind the mask, that Sophia had not forgotten the past so entirely as she would have had those around her to believe. Lucy had no one to whom she could communicate these thoughts, but still they existed, and gained strength every day. Her feelings of consternation and astonishment may therefore be conceived, when her sister's intended marriage became known to her. She felt, without embodying the feeling in words, even to her own mind, that despair and impatience of suffering could alone have prompted such a measure. And, retired in the solitude of her own unshared meditations, she shed many a tear over the wretchedness of that sister to whom she dared not communicate her apprehensions.

The 24th of January was fixed for Sophia's marriage-day. That day drew near, — the 23d arrived, — the last day! At Sophia's earnest request, the only one she had made to Sir John, there was to be no crowd of people, no company invited. But there were a good many relations of both parties, whose presence was deemed indispensable, and therefore Woldsley Hall received on that day a considerable accession of guests. It was about three in the afternoon that its young mistress left the house, with its ill-timed sights and sounds of cheerfulness, and took her way rapidly down a winding path that led through the pleasure-grounds to a picturesque cottage, the retreat selected by Mr. Walsingham for the old age of a faithful attendant and early friend, to whom Sophia wished to pay a farewell visit. This woman had been her father's nurse, and for years a privileged inmate of the Hall; and when her advancing infirmities made her desirous to relinquish its bustle for a quieter habitation, she had been placed there, with an affectionate granddaughter to attend her, and sufficiently near the family of her beloved master, to ensure their constant visits at her peaceful dwelling.

On Sophia's entrance to the cottage, she found the placid old woman seated in her easy-chair by the blazing hearth, employed in her usual knitting, her lively little granddaughter bustling about in her various household occupations, and the old favourite cat asleep by the fire at her feet. The whole domestic scene wore the aspect of contented and peaceful monotony, of the repose of happy old age, and called forth a bitter sigh from the fair and gifted being who would, at that moment, have gladly exchanged youth, beauty, wealth, and talent, for the heartfelt calm, the rest from life's bustle and its thousand ills, which were now before her eyes.

As Sophia, after the first affectionate salutation, drew a seat close by that of nurse Wilton, while little Kitty respectfully withdrew from the apartment, a gush of feeling rose to her throat and nearly drowned her voice.

Collecting it, however, by a strong effort, she said in a low tone, "I have not a long time to stay, dear nurse, I — I am come to bid you good bye." The tears filled her eyes as she spoke, and she leaned her head against the shoulder of the kind old woman.

"Aye, Miss Sophy, my own sweet darling, and you are going away to leave us? Well, love, God send you be happy, as happy as you deserve; happier you can't be. To think of my sweet Miss Sophy leaving all her grand company up at the Hall, to come down and say good bye to her poor old nurse! Will they not wonder what is come over you, darling?"

"No, no, nurse, they do n't want me; and I would rather be with you than with them. I could n't go without seeing you again. Do n't forget me when I am away from you all, dear, dear nurse. I shall never forget you, or the happy times when we were all children, and you used to be so kind to us."

"Forget you, my darling! How could I forget you? Aye, it will be dull enough when I have n't a sight of your sweet face coming every day to see me. And poor dear Miss Lucy! she will be so lonely without you. To think what changes one lives to see! Deary me, when I look back and remember you all such tiny little ones, and your dear mamma and sweet master Arthur, and now — Aye, aye, 't is a great change surely."

She was interrupted by an agonized burst of weeping from Sophia, whose tears, already trembling in her eyes, no longer brooked control, but, at the mention of her mother, at the name of Arthur, and, alas! the recollection of all with which that name was linked, flowed forth in torrents that brought a dreary relief to the overloaded heart which prompted them. "Let me cry, nurse; let me cry," she said, as the kind-hearted old woman endeavoured, with many caresses, to comfort and compose her; "it is such a relief." And she wept on the faithful bosom that had often soothed her infant sorrows into peace.

"Oh! Miss Sophy, my own darling," said, in a low voice, her humble, but affectionate comforter; "oh! Miss Sophy, forgive me if I am going to say any thing that will vex you, for indeed I can't help speaking, and I am an old servant of your good papa's, dear; and, if ye were all my own children, I could not love you better. I do n't like to see a bride crying this way: I do n't indeed, Miss Sophy. To be sure, it is but natural, as a body may say, that you should be sorry to leave your papa, and your sister and brother, and the old hall, and every body that loves you so dearly; but still, my darling, it 's not like going far away, never to see any of them again. Oh! no. And do n't be angry at me for saying it; but when your dear mamma came here, a young bride (you are very like her, dear), she did not look as you do to-day."

A fresh burst of tears was the only reply, as Sophia, now agitated beyond all control, gave a free vent to the tide of passionate grief which had all day been gathering and swelling at her heart. Her kind old friend mingled her tears with those of her beloved nursling; and, sad as was this moment, it was perhaps the most soothing, and the least bitter, one which Sophia had experienced for a long while. The sympathy with her unhappiness, which, though rather felt than expressed, she yet perceived to exist, was a sort of balm to her dried-up and aching heart. There were few more words spoken between them, till she started up, and once more uttering, in a broken voice, "God bless you, God bless you, dear nurse," flung herself into those kind arms that had been her childhood's resting-place, imprinted one more fond kiss on the withered cheek against which her own had often been pressed, and tore herself from the cottage.

Her homeward path lay along a well-known route; and ere she was well aware whither her steps tended, they had paused opposite an arbour that overhung the waterfall, where it joined the river. Sophia shuddered,

averted her eyes, and was about to pass on, but an undefined feeling arrested her steps. Her late interview with nurse Wilton had lulled to rest all sterner feelings, and once more aroused the trembling chord which responded to the voices of "Auld Lang Syne." She thought not now of William Talbot as the guilty, the base, the deserving of indignation and of forgetfulness. He stood before her mind's eye as the William Talbot of other days, the friend of Arthur, the kind, the gentle, the generous and noble lover of her youth, -- the beautiful and gifted being who had first realized her brightest visions of perfection. And then she thought of the last evening, the last of her life of hope and love; she remembered his words that night; she recalled every syllable he had uttered, expressive alike of burning affection and of passionate remorse; — words, alas! too late remembered as witnesses from his own mouth to condemn him. Often, often, since that night, had she visited that arbour, but never as now. This was the last time, "the last — the last — the last -- :" — after this day she must remember him no more. Oh! then, could there be error in giving these few moments to the memory of one who had sinned much, but who had also loved much? No, there could not. Sophia approached the arbour, entered it, flung herself on her knees on its damp, cold floor, and, burying her face in her arms, wept those bitter, burning tears, the last and saddest tribute that Memory pays at the grave of blighted Love.

CHAPTER VII.

"This looks not like a nuptial."
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

THE evening, which appeared to some of the party as though it would never close, at last came to an end. At last there was a pause in the hum of conversation, which had, with every succeeding hour, fallen more and more faintly and indistinctly on the ears and senses of Sophia. At last she found herself released from the weary task of dissimulation, and the necessity of entertaining her guests, and turned, — for one night more, — only one, — to the solitude of her own apartment. Lucy had followed her sister thither, but finding that an aunt of theirs, Lady Annesly, who was among the relations invited, had also gone into Sophia's room, and was standing talking to her by the fire, she quickly turned, and entered her own chamber. Lady Annesly, an amiable common-place woman, remained a considerable time longer in her niece's room, gently prosing on the usual truisms addressed to brides, — all unconscious that the smile with which her harangue was received was one totally mechanical, and had no connexion with the attention paid her; — that the eyes apparently bent on her countenance beheld nothing of what was before them; — or, that the ears of Sophia heard no more of the words addressed to them, than if they had been uttered at a thousand miles' distance. At last Lady Annesly having concluded her say, affectionately kissed her niece, and bade her "go to bed directly, that she might have a nice long sleep to prepare her for to-morrow." She then turned and left the room. Sophia looked round — her maid had at that moment entered, but she dismissed her, saying that she should not that night require her assistance.

In a few minutes after, the door of Lucy's room was gently opened, without knocking, and Sophia glided in. Lucy was seated at a litle table beside the fire, — her prayer-book lay open upon it, — she was about to begin her evening devotions. She raised her head as Sophia, hastily advancing, bent over her, and folded her arms around her neck.

"I thought," she said, "you were in bed, Sophy dear, or I should have come to wish you good night."

"I am just going, love, just going. But I could n't go without kissing you for the last time. I shan't be with you to-morrow night, you know. But I have disturbed you at your prayers. — Good night, and God bless you, dearest — and — and Lucy" she strained her convulsively in her arms, — "pray for *me*, too — Lucy — pray for me, — I need your prayers."

She started up as she spoke, and hastened from the room. Need I say that the injunction was obeyed, amid sobs and irrepressible tears! — or how sad was Lucy Walsingham's young heart that night?

Sophia re-entered her own chamber, closed the door, and sat down on a seat by the fire. How long she sat thus, she knew not; — time did not exist for her; — it was all one dark, one fearful *now*. One thought alone seemed ever brooding over her, like a thick and motionless cloud; but under its dark and still expanse, millions on millions of thronging fancies and recollections were wildly rolling in a tumultuous torrent over her spirit. Her childhood — her youth — the blessed sungilt hours of hope and love — the lofty imaginings and bright anticipations that then were hers — the moment of happiness so near, almost within her grasp; — then the fearful blight — the utter prostration of heart and mind, the long protracted hours, and days, and months of lingering and desolate despair — the madness and desperation that had seized upon her heart — the doom her own lips had pronounced — the long and sickening term of punishment she had prepared for herself — all these were with her. And then came feverish visions of bridal pomp and splendour — of the jewels, and the light, and the gayety, that would be round and above the cold and breaking heart; — and she thought of the altar and the church, and the surpliced priest; — and then across the scene came the apparition of a pale fixed countenance, with dark, glorious, mournful eyes gazing sternly on her; — and then all vanished, and she was in a woodland bower, beside a rushing waterfall, with sweet flowers beneath, and green rustling leaves overhead, and summer's holiest moonbeam stealing through their silvered verdure; and *he* was there — *he* — the lover of her youth, she felt the pressure of his clasping arm, — she looked upon his beaming countenance, as it bent to hers; — then — then — all was gone again — she sprang from her seat, and pressed her hands to her burning brow — for she felt as if her brain were turning; — and when she withdrew them, her eyes fell upon the splendid dress that was to adorn her on the morrow, — when she would vow, in the face of heaven, to love, honour, and obey one man, with her whole heart, still, in reason's very despite, devoted to another! She looked on it, and all the present came rushing on her again. The air of the room seemed to stifle her; — she turned to the window, drew back the curtain, and flung open the casement. It was moonlight, — moonlight still sweet and beautiful over that lovely scene, even amid the bare lawns and leafless trees of winter. A fresh cold breeze came to her throbbing forehead. She leaned over the window-ledge, and looked to earth and heaven, and the memory of *another* evening stole over her spirit — on — on — till the agony that could find no vent in tears swelled at her struggling heart, — and she turned from the window, unable longer to endure it.

That was indeed a night, whose varied emotions of wretchedness were such as might have filled an age of common life. It was laid up in the storehouse of memory, a never-to-be-forgotten era. But dreadful as was the conflict of passions it witnessed, Sophia yet clung to it, as the drowning man to the plank that is the only obstacle between him and death. It was her last night of solitude, — her last of recollection. Henceforth she would be no longer her own. This night closed the first period of her life. On the morrow she was to enter on a new scene of existence — and *such* a

scene! — It was not, then, till the exhausted frame could no longer support the spirit's fever, that her aching eyes closed in that heavy sleep which succeeds violent and painful mental excitement.

The morning dawned. Its hours passed on; — the moment arrived when her father entered her apartment to conduct her to the altar. Sophia had imagined, in contemplating this hour, — when she had dared to let her mind dwell on it, that it would be one of agony so utterly overwhelming as perhaps to incapacitate her from fulfilling her part in the scene. She was mistaken. It is the nature of excessive mental suffering, to deaden entirely every function of mind and body. All outward demonstration of feeling is suppressed, and the very faculties of the soul are wound up to that pitch, at which they are no longer conscious of feeling any thing. Sophia obeyed her father's summons with a countenance pale and fixed as marble, but which bore not a vestige of agitation or of tears. With a firm step she descended the stair with him, left the home of her infancy, and entered the carriage which was to carry her to the church. It was a damp, thick, cheerless morning. A heavy rain had fallen before day-break, and every leafless tree and shrub was hung with clustering drops of moisture. As Mr. Walsingham alighted at the old-fashioned porch of the church, which was entirely covered by long wavy tendrils and thick branches of ivy, and assisted his daughter to descend from the carriage, a slight breeze, for the first time arising, shook these branches, and a sudden shower of rain-drops fell upon Sophia.

"Did thee see *that*, neighbour Franklin?" said one of the country women among the crowd, who had assembled in the church-yard, and were thronging to the door; "did thee see that? and what does thee think of it?"

"Hold thy peace, dame," said the person addressed, a withered and very aged female. "It bodes no good to the bride that the rain fell on, — but that is neither thy concern nor mine."

"It 's a grand company," observed another, "but did thee ever see such a pale bride as Miss Sophy? aye, aye, to my mind, there was another bridegroom that she would have liked better to see where Sir John is standing now."

Meanwhile the scarce conscious subject of these comments had taken her place at the altar. The ceremony began — Sophia repeated words whose import she did not know, mechanically, but distinctly. Only once Lucy remarked, that when the ring was placed on her sister's finger, a momentary convulsion seemed to shake her frame, a momentary expression of agony crossed her countenance — then passed away — and left her calm and collected as before.

It was over — all over. Lady Delamere felt the pressure of congratulating hands, — and heard the cheerful tones of voices ringing in her ears, but without comprehending the import of their words. Then she found herself in the vestry with her father and sister. She was locked in a kind embrace, and the half-choking words, — "God bless you — God bless you — my darling girl," — were the first articulate sounds of which her ear received the meaning. Then there was a warm, hearty kiss from Charles, then the arms of Lucy were clasped round her, and she felt her hot tears falling on her bosom.

"Do n't make me cry — Lucy! do n't — darling — for my sake do n't," — Sophia's quivering and bloodless lips faintly whispered.

"I will not — Sophy," — and Lucy struggled with her rebellious sobs. "God bless you! Good bye."

Sir John was at the door, calm, formal, and collected as ever, to claim his bride. They reached the porch, and a loud cheer burst from the assembled throng without, and was again and again repeated as the steps were clapped to, the door closed, and the stately equipage whirled from the church-yard gate.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I 'm sprighted with a fool,
Sprighted and angered worse!"

CYMBELINE.

"Needs it must have been
A sore heart wasting."

WORDSWORTH.

A GIFTED writer has truly observed of grief, that "even the sincerest and deepest seated occupies, after all, when the first triumph of its energies is over, no more than a place in the back ground. The front of life is as smooth as ever."* If this be true of the sorrow of the bereaved mourner, of sorrow to which is not attached the curse of necessary concealment, how much more does it hold just with regard to that which we are forced to hide from the eyes of all around us! however acute, however unforgotten, the constant habit of repressing its outward demonstration soon teaches it to remain quietly at the bottom of the heart, and the stream of common life and common action is felt, even by ourselves, to glide on as smoothly as ever, all independent of the dark under-current whose depths no eye can penetrate, and which is pouring its unfailing tides along in the inmost soul.

There is a certain routine of form through which a bride must go — a more than common number of the cant usages of which there are so many in this very canting world, to which she must submit, — and very wearisome and very troublesome they would in all cases be, did not the rosy light of joy, to a young and happy heart, tinge the meanest and commonest objects with its own brilliant hue. She must sit in state so many days after her arrival at her future home, to receive visiters, whose visits must in due time be as formally returned. She must accept of a round of invitations from all who wish to cultivate her future acquaintance, and must afterwards receive and entertain them. And all this was duly performed by Lady Delamere, aided and supported in the arduous task of masking a heavy heart and aching brow with smiles, of forcing easy conversation, and of creating amusement for her guests, by the dullest, the most impracticable, and the most formal of husbands. But, hard as was the task, it was preferable to the hideous inanity of the dull domestic evening; the horror of an uncompanioned mind, preying on itself, and pining for love it might never know again, — yet not even at liberty to indulge in the sad luxury of silent meditation and solitary grief; — forced to appear gay and cheerful, and to keep up the ball of conversation (conversation!) with a being who did not possess one idea in common with it, — yet was perfectly contented and blest in his own leaden mediocrity, and inspired — as mediocrity ever is — with utter contempt for all that soared above him in intellect or imagination. Sophia was too gentle, too lofty and refined, to amuse herself by endeavouring to manage her husband, or to engage in unseemly warfare with his prejudices, or with his provoking, frittering round of formalities. She endeavoured, so far as in her lay, to accommodate herself to his ideas, and she even felt so desolate at heart, as to long to be the object of affection such as he could bestow. But she was mistaken in fancying that he could bestow affection. There was no such ingredient in his composition.

* Lockhart.

He was quite pleased with his wife, and never doubted that she was equally so with him. His quiet, formal pride was gratified by the possession of so fair and so much admired a creature, and by the additional consequence she gave him among the gay neighbours, who had been accustomed to consider Sir John Delamere, a bachelor, as a kind of bore, but who assiduously cultivated the acquaintance of Sir John Delamere, a married man, with a young and charming wife. And he was quite satisfied that she should enjoy herself as much as possible, which he was firmly persuaded she did, for she had every thing to make her happy, in his opinion. This was the extent of his feelings towards her, and this she speedily discovered was the utmost limit to which they ever could extend. She had made her choice, and she must now abide by it. And Lady Delamere was universally spoken of as a most enviable person — who had all that youth, beauty, wealth, and an indulgent husband could bestow. So much for the world's wise judgments.

As the time approached when Sir John's presence was required in London, to attend his duties in Parliament, a place where he deemed himself of great importance, Sophia experienced the first pleasurable emotion she had known since her marriage, for Mr. Walsingham had exacted a promise that they should spend some days at Woldsley, on their way up; and her weary heart looked, with eager longing, to reposing for a space, however brief, on her father's kindness, and her gentle sister's love; — now discovered to be doubly precious, when her own rashness had deprived her of the privilege of enjoying them. These hopes were, however, destined to disappointment.

On the morning of the day previous to that on which their journey was to commence, Sir John entered his lady's sitting room with an open letter in his hand, and an air of additional importance diffused over his person.

"I have just received intelligence, Lady Delamere," said he, "which must alter our plans for to-morrow, and I came to inform you of this, thinking it unfair to hurry you at the last."

"Indeed, Sir John?" returned Sophia, — "any thing to defer our journey? I hope not."

"Why, my dear, when you are made aware of the cause, I should imagine that your feelings will alter, as I cannot suppose you indifferent to the pleasure which this letter informs me is awaiting you. You are acquainted with the long and intimate political connexion, strengthened by sentiments of private friendship, which has subsisted between my family and that of the Duke of C. That friendship, I am happy to say, has suffered no diminution in the persons of his present Grace and myself. In fact, I have always been honoured by a most perfect intimacy with him and with his excellent and respectable Duchess. And it was matter of considerable regret to me, that, on a late pleasing event in my life, among the many congratulations which poured in from all quarters of the county, — a county in which I may, without vanity, say that my family has always held no mean place, those of my earliest and most esteemed friends should alone have been wanting, owing to their unfortunate absence at the seat of Lord Grey de Alwyn, the husband of their youngest daughter. It is true that I had the pleasure of receiving, by letter from the Duke, the most friendly expressions of sympathy in my agreeable prospects, yet the satisfaction of making your ladyship personally known to the Duchess and him was denied me. At length, however, as I am informed by the letter I now hold in my hand, they have returned to C , and, resolved to lose no time (such is the Duke's expression) in making the acquaintance of Lady Delamere, they request our company to dinner on Friday next: and although, as his Grace observes, the invitation, coming as it does before the Duchess and he have had the pleasure of waiting upon your ladyship, is certainly somewhat

out of rule; yet, as peculiarly imperative engagements interfere with their desire to do so, and as they are aware of the necessity for our departure hence, her Grace hopes that, upon these pleas, your ladyship will kindly excuse the previous ceremony of a visit before Friday."

"Friday," said Lady Delamere, stifling her disappointment at being thus long delayed from the promised visit to her father, in order to cultivate the acquaintance of an old, prosing, tiresome Duke and Duchess, whom she had often heard described as the most formal, stupid, and ceremonious couple in Christendom, — "on Friday; and this is only Monday. I must write, then, directly to papa, and let him know that he need not expect us till —— which day shall I fix, Sir John?"

"My dear Lady Delamere," returned Sir John, in his calmly formal tone, "you forget that Parliament meets next week; and that consequently my presence in London can no longer be delayed. I could not possibly leave this the day after dining at C., as it is not improbable that I may make some arrangements with the Duke, the first settling of which must occupy me on Saturday. On Sunday, you are aware, I make it a rule never to travel. I consider such conduct as improper in itself, and as setting a pernicious example to the lower classes of society, of whose morals it is the duty of their superiors to take all care. I have, therefore, finally resolved not to leave Delamere Park till to-morrow week, the day I had originally settled as that on which we should depart from Woldsley Hall. Pursuant to these new arrangements, I propose writing immediately to Mr. Walsingham, to inform him of the cogent reasons which have dictated my change in the intentions I had with such pleasure entertained of visiting him at present."

"And are you then really decided on remaining, and giving up the visit to Woldsley entirely?" exclaimed Sophia, in a tone and with a look such as must have proved to any other man the distress and disappointment this provoking change had occasioned her, but which fell powerless on the senses of Sir John.

"Decided, of course," he calmly replied, "the occasion admits of no other alternative. I am about to write immediately. Have you any message which I can send."

"I shall write myself a few lines to Lucy," was the faint reply. Sir John then left the apartment, fully satisfied with his arrangements; and Sophia, leaning back on the sofa, could not refrain from a burst of tears. "I deserve it — I deserve it all," she bitterly exclaimed; "but yet it is hard to bear."

The coolness with which the change was made; the entire absence of all care as to how it might affect her feelings; no regret expressed for a disappointment, it did not even seem taken for granted that she could suffer; none for that which her father and sister must feel; no gratitude for her acquiescence in his plan, to the sacrifice of her own earnest wishes; a total disregard, in short, to every thing which other people would at least have deemed it fitting to pretend, if they did not really feel; and all this from no malignity of disposition, nothing on which indignation could fix, — but from a total want of ordinary sensation; a perfect impenetrability of nature, on which anger would have been as much flung away as love. What a husband was this man for a girl like Sophia! She was too truly unhappy, too subdued by suffering, to find relief in anger against him, and too generous to inflict pain on her sister, by dwelling on the absurdity of the reasons for which she had been disappointed. She merely lamented, in her letter to Lucy, that unforeseen business with the Duke of C. had unavoidably detained Sir John; and she would not even enlarge on her own distress, though she did not avoid showing it in some measure; for

she knew that if she expressed it to its full extent, it would be too plainly discerned to be what no happy wife could possibly feel.

This duty done, Sophia had but to dismiss from her thoughts, with what speed she might, all the anticipations she had been indulging; to school herself to look with patient meekness to another long weary term of sickening existence, unbroken by even a few days' intermission; and, lastly, to assume a cheerfulness of demeanor which should prevent her appearing rebellious against the will of her husband. These things it was now her duty to do. She was no longer her own; she was another's; and however her heart might revolt against the task in which it took no share, that task it was not the less imperative upon it to perform.

The week dragged on. The important Friday was spent at C. in all the dignified dulness and cumbrous ceremonial which Sophia had anticipated; and the following Tuesday beheld Sir John and Lady Delamere on their route to London.

CHAPTER IX.

We met — 't was in a crowd — and I thought he would shun me;
He came — I could not breathe — for his eye was upon me;
He spoke — his words were cold — and his smile was unalter'd;
I knew how much he felt — for his deep-toned voice falter'd;
I wore my bridal robe, and I rivall'd its whiteness;
Bright gems were in my hair, how I hated their brightness!
He call'd me by my name, as the bride of another!
* * * * * * * BAYLEY.

"My lady," said Sophia's maid, entering her dressing-room one afternoon, not long after their arrival in town, "there is a message just come from Sir John, — a note, my lady. Jackson says he will not be home in time for the dinner-party your ladyship and he are engaged to."

The note announced, in the writer's usual style, that an important debate on the —— bill being expected that night, it would probably be very late ere he returned home from the House; that he therefore requested she would kindly excuse his accompanying her to Lady Rayland's dinner-party, and would be the bearer of his apologies to the noble host and hostess. Sophia accordingly put herself under the hands of her attendant; and, at the appointed hour, took her seat alone in the carriage which was to convey her to another of those wearisome assemblages of human beings with which her London life was beginning to entangle her. Her present entertainers were entirely new acquaintances, and this was the first time she had ever been invited to their house. She found herself, on her arrival, among the earliest guests, only one or two being as yet congregated in the uncertain twilight of the drawing-room. The room, however, began rapidly to fill; but the forms only of those who approached the upper end were at all distinguishable. The rest, especially those gentlemen who remained near the door, were shrouded in total obscurity. Dinner at length was announced, and the company proceeded down stairs in the usual form.

On entering the dining-room, the blaze of light, so immediately succeeding the darkness above stairs, was at first dazzling to the sight. Sophia felt it so; and it was not until she had gained her seat that she raised her eyes, just as a gentleman immediately opposite took his. Each, at the same instant, looked upon the other. Every drop of blood in Sophia's body seemed to make an instantaneous revulsion to her heart, only to rush back, like a torrent of liquid fire, till each vessel of her head throbbed to bursting. The room swam around her; the lights reeled before her eyes. It was Talbot whom she saw before her.

Talbot? Yes! It was Talbot—her first, her last, her only love. It was that most guilty, most miserable of beings, who now, with bloodless lips, and fixed eyes, and heart whose pulsations seemed arrested in his bosom, sat gazing on the apparition of her whom he had injured, insulted, yet oh! amid sin and madness, had never, never ceased to adore. This was indeed a time and a place for such a fearful recognition! They had not met, had not looked upon each other's faces since that night when he clasped her in his arms, and imprinted the kiss of an affianced bridegroom on her lips, at her own chamber-door. Horror, and agony, and despair had rolled over either head since that remembered evening; but they had never met since then. And now they sat and beheld each other; and they knew that, let them dream as they chose of pride, and of estrangement, and of oblivion, it was all a dream; that they loved at that moment as deeply and as fervently as they loved on the day when their hearts were plighted to each other; and they felt this, and they felt that a gulf was betwixt them, that it was guilt and madness to look upon each other; that she was a wife; and he, what was he? a reckless, an abandoned, and a miserable man.

And then the horror of such a meeting, at such a moment! Talbot would have started from his seat, would have rushed from the room, from the house, would have fled he knew not whither. His senses reeled with the sudden shock; his brain seemed on fire; but he still had recollection sufficient to tell him where he was; how many malignant eyes a single unguarded movement might draw upon them; and that thought chained him to his seat, like one arrested by the wand of an enchanter. A minute, a fearful minute of mute, and cold, and shuddering agony, a very age in torment; and then came the desperate resolution, that he would not give way, would not be o'ermastered, or made a gazing-stock in the eyes of the world. He leaned back in his chair, passed his death-cold hand over his damp forehead, through his clustering dark hair, and called to the servant who stood nearest him for wine. It was brought; he poured a large quantity, with a hasty hand, into the goblet beside him, drank it off at a draught, and sat calm, collected, and serene, to all outward appearance, though every nerve in his frame was thrilling with agony.

And Sophia? she to whom the least, the slightest betrayal of her sentiments must bring shame and horror unutterable; she too, even in the very instant of recognition, at the moment when she could have welcomed the thunderbolt which should lay her dead upon the ground, still, as if by instinct, exerted that wonderful power of self-command which has been in mercy bestowed upon women, as if in a peculiar manner to arm them against the trials which they are perpetually called upon to encounter. No sound escaped her parched and trembling lips; she resisted the impulse that prompted her to rise from her chair, to fly from the apartment; she struggled against the cold, creeping chill that she felt coming all over her; she neither fainted nor wept; but, like one striving in desperate battle for his life, who has just received a stunning blow, and is still reeling under it, yet only fights the more strenuously and unflinchingly, she bent all her half-prostrated energies to endure, with unshrinking fortitude, the brunt of the dreadful conflict to which she felt them summoned.

It cannot be supposed that the terrible, though brief, agitation of Talbot could pass altogether unobserved by those near him, yet, owing to the bustle around, it did not attract universal notice; and if it had, the rapid self-mastery with which he assumed his usual manner was well calculated, with common observers, to obliterate the recollection. As to Lady Delamere, she was only conscious, during the remainder of that ill-omened feast, of confused and indistinct sounds, to which she could attach no meaning, of her own eager striving to comprehend and to answer the conversation addressed to herself, and of the wretched mechanical smiles with which she

seemed to hear it. She only every now and then awoke with a thrill as if a dagger had been driven to her heart, when, on daring to raise her eyes, to do which a species of fascination seemed impelling her, they were met by the dark, fixed, agonizing gaze of those deep and glorious orbs that once had beamed with love for her alone. She looked upon a pale and wasted countenance, yet one still beautiful even amid the havoc caused by error, and suffering, and despair; and he gazed on the dark blue eyes that were sunk and dimmed by the tears they had shed for him, on the pale cheek whence his guilt had stolen its rich youthful bloom, on the lips whence he had banished their once innocent and mantling smiles. How little did the reckless crowd around them dream of the untold anguish which was that day wringing these two devoted and breaking hearts!

It was remarked at the party, after the ladies had retired, that, delightful as William Talbot always was, he even, on this occasion, seemed to surpass his usual powers; that his wit had never been so brilliant, his gayety never so contagious, the sallies of his fancy never so rapid, so various, and so unintermitting. And when, pleading an engagement elsewhere, he arose at an early hour to leave them, one and all agreed, ere adjourning to the drawing-room, that a more completely fascinating companion it was impossible to find; and that it was incomprehensible how a man who seemed at times an absolute foe to thought or care, should at others be a prey to those fits of gloom and of moody despondency in which some of the party averred that they had occasionally seen him. Some few hints there were from one or two of the gentlemen, of a severe disappointment which he had not long since sustained, and one, who knew something of the north of England, suddenly recollected the name of Walsingham, and then inquired, as if struck by the thought, "was not Lady Delamere a Miss Walsingham." Then followed various conjectures and surmises, and a comparing of notes by those who had sat near the parties in question during dinner. Then there were significant glances and shrugs, and then the gentlemen abandoned the table and retreated up stairs.

"Is Sir John returned home?" was Lady Delamere's first question on alighting from her carriage.

"Not yet, my Lady," answered the man whom she addressed.

"Thank God!" Sophia internally ejaculated, as she ascended the stairs to her own dressing-room. "You may leave me, Manson," she said to the maid who was beginning to disencumber her of her ornaments. "Yes, take these things away, and then you may go. I shall not want you to-night again."

The door closed, and Sophia was alone, alone with her own heart. "Oh my God! my God!" she ejaculated, sinking on her knees, and raising her despairing eyes to heaven, "have pity on me, have mercy on me! my punishment is greater than I can bear. I have rebelled against thy will, oh my God! I have perjured my own soul, — rightly am I made to suffer; but yet — yet — forsake me not utterly; leave me not alone with despair and wretchedness!"

Her voice was stifled by deep convulsive sobs, but no tears fell to relieve her. She hid her face in the cushions of the sofa beside which she knelt; she pressed her bosom against it, as if to still its tumults; she writhed in her agony like one beneath the burden of a heavy load that weighs him to the earth. Then she started up and traversed the apartment with hasty steps; then again flung herself on the ground, and wrung her clasped hands, and wildly twined her fingers in the ringlets of her dishevelled hair; and then burst forth on a sudden the pent-up torrent that lay swelling at her heart, "and she lifted up her voice and wept."

That was a dark hour, — an hour of stern, of horrible conviction. Then she clearly beheld, in all its extent, the sin of which she had been guilty.

She had perjured herself in the sight of God; to escape, as she vainly fancied, the doom of suffering which his hand had laid upon her, she had rushed into a sacred engagement that her heart had never sanctioned. She had vowed at his holy altar the words of a lying vow; she did not, she could not, love her husband, whom she had there sworn to love; and she had turned into guilt, deep guilt, those feelings which one single glance of him she had that night beheld sufficed to tell her still reigned in her heart triumphant and undying. She knew now that her whole life was sin, for it was all one thought of him; that the words her own lips had spoken rose up in judgment against her; that she had deprived herself of the last consolation, of the permission still to retain the memory of days that were gone, of the privilege of joining his name with her own in her prayers to Heaven; that she durst not do, for she felt that a God of purity would not answer the petitions dictated by unhallowed love, that the worship and the worshipper would be alike odious in his eyes. And could it be, — oh! could it be, — that her love for William Talbot was now unhallowed love? that her own act had rendered it so? that love once alike her duty and her happiness! that love once so twined with every emotion of her soul! And had she imagined it possible that such love could be forgotten, could be exchanged for wrath and indignation! True, he had been erring, — guilty; they never could have met on earth again as they had met; a sad and lonely life had been hers till her dying day, but a life at least unembittered by remorse, by a haunting sense of guilt, by that fierce conflict between duty and passion which must wear away the springs of existence, yet only terminate with it. These, and a thousand such thoughts as these, rolled over her spirit as she lay there, writhing in her agony, and ever and anon the vision of that pale countenance, those dark and mournful eyes, passed before her, or remained to gaze upon her, till she clasped her hands over her brow, and sobbed and shrieked in utter abandonment of soul. Then the storm of grief and passion exhausted its own strength, and a cold, dead calm fell upon her; she rested her head on her hand, and sat, still and silent, while one big tear-drop after another slowly gathered in her eyes, and rolled over her pale cheeks; and thus a time, she knew not how long, passed on, till the dread of her husband's return startled her from that state of leaden stupor, and she arose and prepared for retiring to her sleepless pillow, and laid down her head in that desolate stillness of heart with which hope hath no more to do.

Thus passed *The Third Night*, a short, but a memorable.

"Oh! who can tell, in one brief hour, what ages of agony may roll over one bruised human spirit."*

* Lockhart.

CHAPTER X.

'T is done, -- and shivering in the gale,
The bark unfurls her snowy sail;
And, whistling o'er the bending mast,
Loud sings on high the fresh'ning blast;
And I must from this land begone,
Because I cannot love but one.
* * * * * *
As some lone bird, without a mate,
My weary heart is desolate:
I look around, and cannot trace
One friendly smile or welcome face,
And even in crowds am still alone,
Because I cannot love but one.

BYRON.

WILLIAM HARRINGTON TALBOT TO THE HON. AUGUSTUS WYNFORD.

"DOVER, *April* 10, 18—.

"I SEE your astonishment, dear Wynford, at the date of this letter. It will be still farther increased by its contents. Ere it reach you, the writer will be across the Channel — will have taken a last look of the white cliffs of England. A last look it well may be. England has little, besides yourself, to tempt me back again.

"You will, I know, be amazed at the suddenness of this resolution, so little expected at our parting in London a fortnight ago, when, if I remember aright (for events have occurred since then unfavourable to my memory's powers of retention) I made a half promise to follow you to Devonshire, when your yacht should be ready to take the sea. But you will not, I am convinced, accuse me of caprice when you become acquainted with the reasons which have impelled me to bid a long farewell to England. I can no longer live here; I can carry on the farce no longer; I must fly, while flight is in my power, and to a resolution so necessary, yet formed under such circumstances, delay were fatal.

"From you, Wynford, and from you alone, throughout my short and turbulent career, I have concealed nothing. You alone have seen and known me as I really was, since in you alone did I find a disposition capable of entering into, and sympathizing with, the peculiarities of my own. During all the dark and stormy course on which remorse and desperation have goaded my steps, whatever I have seemed to others, — reckless, daring, unprincipled — at times gay to the verge of folly, -- at times a prey to gloom as unaccountable, — to you the secrets of my heart have ever been laid open. You have known me formed to live for other objects than the fools around me; — you have read the troubled depths of that spirit which the outward mask concealed so well; — you have seen the agonies of fruitless remorse to which it has been a prey; — fruitless — for when that was lost, for whose sake alone the paths of virtue seemed paths of pleasantness, — what did life contain worthy to moderate one single excess, which could bring temporary oblivion in its train?

"You knew my love for Sophia Walsingham. — Love! that is a weak word to express all I felt, — all I feel, — for her. Yet you know how I lost her! — Let me not dwell on that maddening thought. It was insanity, — it was — any thing but forgetfulness of her. — She has been avenged, -- fearfully avenged. By day, — by night, — in the frantic mirth of the noisy revel, — in the unbroken silence and solitude of my chamber, -- crossing my path, haunting my pillow, — never leaving nor forsaking me, has her image been.

Her eyes have looked upon me wherever I have turned ; — her voice has sounded in my ears ; — the memory of her innocent — her outraged love — has been as a spell and a curse upon me. Guilty I have been, — and am ; — but forgetful — never. I shall go to the grave loving her, to whom my love has brought nothing save bitterness and blighting. — That love it is which drives me now, an exile from my native land. — Wynford ! I have seen her, — have looked upon her again ! And how ? as the bride of another man ! She who was *my* bride — mine : — my own madness has done it — I know it all. — I have driven her to the arms of a being without heart or soul ; — a being whom she cannot love, — who is incapable of loving her, — and she is wretched and broken-hearted. I read it in her cheek, — her eye ; — I have heard it whispered by sneering and malignant lips in the world around me. And I sat by and saw this ! — I — the damned author of her misery, — I — who was her own plighted husband — and we looked in each other's faces as though we had never met before ! — There was a crowd of heartless fools around us, and I scorned to betray the anguish of my soul to them. I did not sink at her feet and bid her curse me ; — I did not fly her presence ; — I sat still and braved it out. — I drank deep — and sought a refuge from my own thoughts in the sallies of half-insane mirth ; — and when at length released, I rushed from the room — the house — and I returned home to pass a night, whose eternity of torment will never be effaced from my memory.

" This meeting it is which drives me hence. I cannot — I will not — I dare not — see her *thus* again. The bare idea of remaining where I may be daily liable to such a chance, is sufficient to destroy the little of reason I have left. Another such night of horror, — aggravated by the necessity of concealment — of the hideous mask of assumed levity — would render me a madman. And shall I expose her, whose peace I have destroyed, to such added sufferings ? — I saw the agony my presence caused her. — I know how she must abhor — detest me — villain as I have been ; — but there are some things in this world which it is impossible to forget ; — and *that* has passed between her and me, after which we must have met, as we can meet no more, — or never, never again on this side the grave. No time could bring indifference to us — nor shall the experiment be made. The little chance of happiness left to her on earth shall never be endangered by me. The die is cast — I shall go — no matter where ; — so it be far enough from England, and all that England contains.

" Of you, dear Wynford — the only human being to whom I could have unfolded feelings like those which I have now laid open, — the only friend who has sympathized with me in my suffering, or from whom I grieve to part, — I have but one request to make, and I am convinced that it will not be made in vain. Let me sometimes hear of *her* through you. Although you do not know her family, yet you may, in the intercourse of the world, have many opportunities of ascertaining particulars concerning her ; — do not neglect such when they offer. The all of satisfaction I can ever feel will arise from the use you make of them. You shall hear of my route, wherever that may be. — And now farewell — all good things go with you.

" Ever most faithfully yours,

" W. H. Talbot."

Little now remains to be told of a melancholy, but alas ! a too common tale. I have no catastrophe to relate, no highly-wrought scenes wherewith to close its details. Such are not, in general, the lot of real life, and it is with real life alone that I have to do. I have traced its course from the bright spring-time of hope and love, on to the bitter hours of blight, and desolation, and loneliness ; — have shown the dark workings of despair and of late repentance in the soul ; — and have told the tale of hours, which

" clasp" in their own brief spaces " the grief of years," after which it appears that life has no more to offer, whether for hope or fear ; — which, in their dark passage over the spirit, seem to wither up, not only its every vestige of earthly happiness, but its very powers and capacities for enjoyment or for suffering. And shall I now go on to trace the bitter and lingering death of the heart ? — the slow but sure approach of cold apathy over its warmest feelings ? — " the dreary void," compared with which the storm of passion is bliss ? — Shall I follow, step by step, the dark path whose long extent lay betwixt the sufferer and repose ? No. It were a painful and a needless task. Thousands have trod that path. Thousands more are destined to tread it. What boots it to describe its dreary windings ? — There is *one* light that can pierce its gloom, and only one, — and blessed beyond all which this world can bestow are they, on the desolation even of whose fairest earthly prospects that ray from Heaven has descended.

CHAPTER XI.

And must this parting be our very last ?
No. I shall love thee still, when death itself is past.
GERTRUDE OF WYOMING.

THREE years subsequent to the events I have just related, William Talbot, after some months' wandering among the Ionian Isles, returned to the town of Zante, where he had fixed his head quarters during his sojourn. At the mercantile house in that town, whither he had desired that his English correspondence might be forwarded, he found a letter from his friend Augustus Wynford, which had lain there nearly two months awaiting him, no one having been exactly aware of his route. Wynford, the only one of his many companions with whom Talbot had continued to correspond, had, throughout all the wanderings of his unhappy friend, faithfully discharged the office imposed upon him by his last letter from England ; and although his opportunities of hearing any intelligence concerning Lady Delamere were but few, he had improved them so far as to be enabled at least to make some mention of her name in every letter. He could at one time inform him of her having been in London with her husband ; of his having once or twice met with her there ; of his admiration of her beauty, and of the interest she excited in him, increased by his knowledge of her story. He did not, in compassion to Talbot's feelings, dwell upon the too evident struggle which he could discern that she made, to veil a breaking heart beneath the aspect of cheerfulness and serenity, nor did he remark upon the alteration visible in her appearance, between the first time he saw her and the last, after an interval of many months. It was at that period plain to him that the canker-worm of hidden sorrow was surely, though slowly, doing its work ; but his heart revolted from the task of communicating such intelligence to the repentant and unhappy author of that sorrow. From that time the name of Sophia occurred less and less frequently in Wynford's letters. He heard of her being in the north, at her husband's seat, but farther he could not tell. Then there was a long blank, owing to his residing nearly a whole winter in Paris, during which time he could hear nothing of her. And latterly, there had been hints of her declining health, which this last letter now received by Talbot at Zante, rather tended to confirm ; although, as they were only given from hearsay, they were very vague and indefinite.

However that might be, they were amply sufficient to inflict cruel agitation on him to whom they were addressed, and to lend added poignancy

to the stings of that remorse which never ceased to haunt his footsteps; while many a vision of wasted youth, and talents misapplied, returned to augment his sufferings, and to bid him execrate anew the madness which had rendered him, in the very spring of life, an outcast and a wanderer among mankind. "Is this," he said, "the fulfilment of my youth's bright promise? Is this the end of all my early dreams of love, and happiness, and honour?"

And yet the present life of this unfortunate young man, aimless and hopeless though it might be, was preferable, by many thousand times, to that which had preceded it ere his departure from England. On that period of existence he now looked back as on a dark and guilty dream. The heart of Talbot was not formed by nature for dwelling amid such scenes; it had turned with disgust and horror even from the excesses into which reckless desperation, and absence of religious principle, had driven him. Now, when wearied at length of mingling with mankind, that same desperation of feeling was urging his restless steps into solitude, wherever it was to be found; his feelings, in spite of himself, were gradually becoming elevated from the state of apathy and gloom into which they had sunk; and the lonely communing with nature was exerting over his heart that beneficent influence which no bosom, capable of appreciating her glorious charms, and of feeling her power, can fail to recognise, when exposed to it, even amid the depths of misery. It seemed as though the gracious purposes of Heaven, willing to recall the guilty wanderer, were to prepare him by means like these for the mysterious dispensations appointed in due time to lead him into the paths of repentance and of peace.

Three or four days after his return to Zante, a packet was brought to him, addressed in the hand of his agent in London, which, on opening, he found to contain a letter from that gentleman, along with a sealed parcel. The superscription of the latter caused Talbot to start, and tremble, with an indefinite anticipation of evil. It was in the hand of Mr. Walsingham. Hastily opening his agent's letter, with a feeling that he could not encounter Mr. Walsingham's, while totally unprepared for its contents, he glanced his eye over it. The writer, Mr. Petersham, informed him that, the day before its date, he had been waited upon by Mr. Walsingham of Woldsley Hall, who requested to be informed whether he still continued, as formerly, to transact business for Mr. Harrington Talbot. On Mr. Petersham's answering in the affirmative, Mr. Walsingham put the enclosed parcel into his hands, and begged that it might be forwarded to Mr. Talbot's present address, of which he himself was ignorant. Mr. Walsingham at the same time informed him, he added, of an event which it gave him sincere concern to hear, the death of his eldest daughter, Lady Delamere. The letter dropped from the hands of Talbot; he staggered back, and, but for the support of his servant, who had chanced at that moment to enter the room, would have fallen to the ground. The man laid his master on a couch, chafed his temples, and bared his throat to the air. In a few minutes Talbot opened his eyes, and, raising himself up, faintly desired to be left alone. As the man obeyed, and left the room, he again sunk back with a groan of anguish, and hid his face in his hands; then, summoning all his resolution, he rose, took up the fatal packet, and with trembling fingers undid the seal. On taking off the envelope, he beheld a letter addressed to himself in the hand of Sophia, once so well known, with these words written beneath in a faltering character, "Not to be delivered until after my death." He paused a moment to collect his courage, then broke it open.

SOPHIA TO TALBOT.

"You will start, I know, Talbot, at the hand in which this letter is written; but your astonishment will soon be at an end. Long ere you re-

ceive it, the writer will be mouldering in the dust. It is from the brink of the tomb that it is addressed to you, and that is a place where the temporary separations of this world exist no longer; whither neither its joys nor its sorrows pursue us, nor any feelings save those over which death has no power.

"William! for on my death-bed I may call you by that name again, my own dear William! you and I have long been widely sundered; but once it was not thus, and it is of that time alone that I can think now. All else is among the fast-fading recollections of an existence which is ebbing away with every breath I draw. While I lived it was guilt for me to think of you, but in death it is no longer so; — and oh! William, among the many things which render death sweet to me, how most blessed of all is the thought, that I am going where it will be no longer a sin to love you!

"We parted, William, — how, it boots not now to remember — or why. All that is forgotten, forgiven, long ago. Forgiven as freely, as entirely, as I trust that, through the blood of my Redeemer, my sins shall also be forgiven and forgotten. All that is part of what I leave behind me. I shall bear with me no recollection of earthly suffering, or of earthly sin; nothing save the hallowed memory of my first, my pure, my only and never-dying love. Yes! William, that love never died. Misery came across it, and despair, and desolation of heart, but it lived through all. Yet I forgot the Almighty hand which had smitten me; I refused to submit to the decree that snatched my earthly idol from me; and madness came over me, and I dared, even at the very altar of God, to plight my heart and my life to one man, while that heart remained full to overflowing with love for another. It was a sinful and an unhallowed deed, and it brought along with it its own deserved and daily increasing punishment. But oh! I never knew, in their full extent, the guilt I had incurred, the doom I had drawn down on my own head, till that dreadful night when I again met with you. The agonies of that night will only be effaced from my recollection when life itself shall become extinct. When I felt that I, the wife of another man, that I loved you still, — that I could never cease to love you; yet that it was guilt to look upon you, guilt to think of you, that I might not even breathe your name in my prayers to Heaven! Oh! thank God! thank God! that is all over now. Now, on my deathbed, I may pray for you, William. And I do pray for you; daily, hourly, do I pray for you, — that the light which in mercy has been sent to arise on my darkness may also be vouchsafed to you; that our parting in this world may not be an eternal parting. The love I bear to you is one that has no reference to earthly feelings; even in death it is permitted me to ask of a God of mercy that we may be reunited in heaven. And it is this hope that now dictates these trembling lines; the last which the hand of Sophia will ever address to you. Let them not speak in vain, when from her early grave they exhort you to turn from the paths of rebellion against a Redeeming God into the ways of peace and of submission.

"Oh! my own beloved William, I have lived to witness the desolation of my fairest earthly hopes of happiness, — to see the bright fabric of many years dashed to atoms by the work of an instant, — to endure the stormy agony of hopeless love, and the long, the weary, the intolerable load of existence, after all was gone that made existence bright. But yet I have lived to bless the mysterious decree, which, in laying all this upon me, taught my rebellious heart to turn from the love of earth, and of earthly things, to the higher and holier hopes that alone befit an immortal being. Had I continued happy, I might have continued estranged from God. You and I had forgotten the Giver in his gift; was it not then mercy to withdraw that gift? Oh! yes, I am persuaded that, widely as you have erred, the purposes of God towards you are full of mercy yet. Would that my voice might be en-

dowed with strength and persuasion to speak to your heart ere the dust have stifled its sound, and to tell you of how little moment now appear to me — now, on the brink of eternity — the deepest and darkest afflictions of the transitory scene I am quitting! Of how little consequence it seems now, whether the path which brought me hither was strewn with flowers or thorns! And oh! that I had power to make you aware of how little avail, at this awful hour, are the proudest attributes of our mortal nature, the loftiest distinctions of intellect, all that makes the superiority of man over man, when brought, unaided and alone, to cope with the stern realities of death and a coming judgment! and how the soul shrinks appalled from the gloom which no eye, save that of firm, unwavering faith alone, is able to penetrate. William! it is with my dying breath that I conjure you, by all you have ever held dear, by the memory of our days of early happiness, by the love you have borne her whom you will never more behold on earth, but who, not even in death, can cease to love you; by your value for your own immortal soul; by the gratitude you owe to the God who gave himself a sacrifice for you and for all men; turn to that God ere yet it be too late, turn to him, and all your sins shall be forgiven and blotted from the book of his remembrance. You have strayed widely from the paths of peace, you have made the transcendant talents he himself bestowed upon you, the instruments of rebellion against his authority; but, William, there is no sin so dark that the blood of the Redeemer cannot wash it away, — there is no corner of the human heart so despairing, or so desolate, that his healing mercy can find no entrance there. Defer not the work of reconciliation till it be too late; when you come to lie upon the bed of death, — when the spirit, dizzy with awe and terror, is prostrate beneath the body's weakness, — when the scattered faculties desert their post, and will no longer arise at your bidding, that is no time to flee for refuge to the God whose commands you have all your life resisted, whose authority you have despised, whose right over his creatures you have dared to question. Come to him now, now when he invites you to come, and to quit the path of misery for that which alone conducts to happiness and to repose.

"William, I am dying, dying gladly, in the very prime of mortal life. I have striven to bend in humble submission to the will of God, and had it so pleased him, I should have endeavoured to avoid repining at the decree which lengthened my term of existence. But in His mercy he hath appointed otherwise, — and I am happy now — oh! happier far than all this world contains of brightest and of dearest could have ever made me. I leave some few behind me whom I dearly love; — but even they, in the midst of natural sorrow, must soon feel how far more blessed to me was death than continued life. My — my husband — he has been kind to me, — kinder than I deserved — though I have striven to do my duty to him; — but he will not deeply feel my loss, — it is not in his nature to love fondly. No, thank God! I have not the additional guilt that would have laid upon me to answer for! there is but one sorrow — one alone — that haunts me on my death-bed, and with you it lies to remove that sorrow. Oh! when you think that my ransomed spirit is watching in heaven for yours; when you reflect that she from whom your errors have divided you here below, — is awaiting a reunion there where there is neither sin nor suffering; when you know that the way which conducted her from death to life is open alike to you, will you not turn, and live? You will — I know you will! a prophetic voice whispers me, that this last appeal shall not be made in vain. Fare you well, my own dear William — my first — my last — my only love! Fare you well — yet not I trust for ever. We shall meet again.

"Sophia."

CHAPTER XII.

When morning awoke on the ocean
Dim tempests were louring around:
Yet see, with how steadfast a motion,
As the clouds bend and glow with devotion,
The sun his asylum hath found!
Twilight weeps and all gorgeously red
Are the smooth slooping vale, and the tall mountain's head.

Lo! thus when the clouds of life's sorrow
Have pass'd and have perish'd, the sky
An added effulgence shall borrow
From the storms that have flown, and the morrow
Gleam bright in Eternity's eye;
And the Angel of Righteousness send
His balm to that heart which is true to the end!

DELTA.

It was on a beautiful calm evening towards the end of September in that year, that a stranger in deep mourning rode into the little village of West Morden, and alighted at the Delamere Arms, — the only inn it boasted. Although entirely unattended, there was something in his air and appearance, which, to the eyes of the observant landlord, clearly denoted superior station and consequence. His commanding height, and the lofty, intellectual, but melancholy expression of his dark eyes and beautifully formed features, a slight tinge of brown over whose extreme paleness told of the influence of a warmer sun, while the youthful fire of his eyes seemed quenched by the languor of illness and mental suffering, were all alike strongly calculated to excite interest, even in those who now looked upon him, and he had not been a quarter of an hour in the inn, ere the whole of its inhabitants were astir with eager curiosity to know who he could possibly be. Meanwhile, the object of all this excitement, after about half an hour's stay, summoned the landlord to his presence. On entering the apartment of his guest, that personage found him slowly pacing its limited extent, while the refreshments he had ordered lay untouched upon the table. On the landlord's appearance he paused, and informing him of his intention of remaining all night in the village, desired that a bed might be prepared for him; but added, that he was now going out, and might possibly not return till a late hour; therefore he requested that he might not be the means of keeping any one from retiring to rest, as no doubt they could easily hear him apply for admittance on his return. He then left the house, and the whole family followed him with their eyes till an abrupt turn hid him from their view.

Guided by the spire of the village church, which peeped forth at a little distance among the trees, Talbot pursued the neatly kept road along whose sides the houses were scattered, here and there, among their trim gardens, and beneath their sheltering trees. A few windings led him to the foot of the gentle ascent, at the head of which stood the gate of the sequestered church-yard, the peaceful resting-place, where lay the predecessors of those, whose own simple lives were destined to be rounded by the sleep its precincts would one day afford themselves. Beneath the shade of some beautiful old limes, and close by this gate, stood a little neat cottage, which he rightly conjectured to be the abode of the village sexton; and on his approaching, and tapping at the door, it was opened by the old man who held that office, and who started, in evident surprise, at the sight of a stranger of such distinguished appearance.

"Can I have access into the church-yard, my good friend," demanded Talbot, slipping some money into the old man's hand.

"Surely, Sir," returned the other, bowing respectfully; "indeed, for the matter o' that, the gate is open. In these lonely parts, your honour, there is little occasion to lock it till nightfall."

"Perhaps for one night," said Talbot, "you would not mind locking it? there is a part of the church-yard I wish much to visit, and I fear that I should detain you from your bed were you to await my return, as night is already drawing on. It cannot be of much consequence for one night."

"No — your honour," answered the old man, — "there can be no chance of any body knowing, I'll warrant me: I'll have the gate ajar for you. 'T is a lonesome time to be walking in a church-yard, your honour — but mayhap you do n't mind these things?"

"Thank you," replied Talbot. "No — I should like to walk there this evening, it seems a lovely spot. Can you tell me," he leaned back against the wall of the house as he spoke, "is Sir John Delamere's burial-place here!"

"Sir John's — your honour? yes — and a grand burial-ground it is, — he's the lord of the Manor. Look, you may see the wall of it up there among the trees to the left. Aye! the last person that was buried there was my lady. Oh! she was a beautiful, sweet angel! there was not a dry eye in the village, the day she was laid there. And there were some men down this very day, putting up a grand monument to her on the outside of the wall. And they left the door of the ground open, that I might go in to-morrow morning early, and clean and weed the inside of it, for the weeds are growing very fast with the rain we have had."

"Well, good evening, my honest old friend," said Talbot, — turning his head away from the old man. "Remember not to lock the gate." And he entered the church-yard.

As he approached the walled-in burial-place of the Delamere family, his eye rested for an instant on a magnificent inscription, in white marble, which bore the name of "Sophia, Lady Delamere," in large black letters, distinguishable through the gathering gloom of evening. Talbot did not pause to read the pompous epitaph which followed; he advanced with a rapid step, pushed open the unfastened door, and entered the enclosure. It was a pretty large space, surrounded by high walls, but uncovered over head. The rough unequal surface of the earth beneath was, as the old man had said, overgrown with tall rank weeds, but there was only one grave which bore the marks of recent covering. On it the weeds had scarce found time to spring. Talbot advanced, knelt down upon the damp ground, and embraced that heap of lifeless sod. "Sophia!" he exclaimed, in the stifled voice of convulsive agony, "Sophia! my murdered love! and is it thus we meet at last?"

Who can read the workings of the penitent and mourning heart at such an hour as this? Who can describe the mysteries of that long dark night of solitary anguish, or tell how God was dealing with that spirit which there was wrestling with its load of remorse and misery, beheld by no eye save His alone? It was not till the cold gray light of dawn was breaking around him, that Talbot arose from the grave of her whom his agency had despatched thither. He cast one long last glance on the bed of her repose, and left the church-yard. In a few hours after he rode from the village, and departed, none knew whither. In England he was never seen again; and, save by a very few persons, the name of William Talbot was scarce remembered among all whom his genius had once dazzled, and his fellowship delighted.

Two years after this, an English gentleman and his wife, in the course of a tour on the Continent, arrived at a beautiful small town in the south of France, near the seacoast, and considerably out of the common route. They had been induced to visit this place for the purpose of meeting with an old friend, a clergyman from their own country, who had been for some time residing at ——— on account of his health. This gentleman received his friends with delight, and a long course of mutual inquiries followed, concerning all that had occurred to either party since they had last met. Something being said on the subject of travelling in search of health, Mr. Melbourne remarked, that although, in his own case, he certainly had found it beneficial, yet that, in general, it appeared to him little better than sending a patient abroad to die; "and it is a melancholy thing," he added, "to die in a foreign land. I have thought much on the subject lately, from an instance I witnessed in the person of a young Englishman, who expired here about a month ago. His grave is in that beautiful cemetery which we can descry from this window, the place set apart for strangers."

"Alas!" exclaimed Mrs. Percival, the wife of Mr. Melbourne's friend, a young and interesting woman, whose countenance, though denoting repose of mind and happiness, was marked by a shade of pensive seriousness; "did he come here for health, and die all alone, away from his own country?"

"He had been long absent from his native country," replied Mr. Melbourne, "but he came hither from Rome, to escape the burning heat of an Italian summer, and died here, after a residence of about two months. I accidentally became acquainted with him just after his arrival, and we were soon inseparable companions. In my life I never met with so interesting a being."

"And had he no friends with him?" asked Mr. Percival. "Was he entirely alone?"

"Entirely, with the exception of servants, all of whom were foreign, save one extremely attached English valet. It was a strange circumstance that a young man of fortune such as he, should be so completely estranged from his native land, but so it was. He told me that until he became too ill for exertion, he had been travelling over the most solitary and unfrequented parts of the Continent, and frequently residing for a length of time in the most desolate places he could find, with books for his only companions."

"Strange!" said Mr. Percival; "there must have been some cause."

"Some cause there undoubtedly was. Indeed, although he never confided the story of his former life to me, it was easy to perceive that severe unhappiness had disgusted him with his native country. He was a singular, but a most attaching character, endowed with the very highest natural abilities, which had been cultivated to the utmost. But it was evident that he had at one time of his life perverted them to evil purposes; that he had been guilty of much error; and had suffered in consequence most intensely. Indeed, I could easily perceive that his illness originated more in the mind than in the body. He had no desire to live; he seemed to welcome death as a boon. I shall never forget the last conversation we had together, the evening before his death, when he was, apparently, much stronger than he had been for many days. I went, as usual, to sit with him; he was lying on a couch, near a window of his apartment, which looked towards the sea; over which the sun had just set. It was a glorious evening; I little thought it was the last sunset he was ever to look upon!" Mr. Melbourne paused in strong emotion.

"Don't tell us about it, if it agitates you so," said Mrs. Percival, her eyes swimming in tears.

"Nay," replied Mr. Melbourne, "I rather like to talk of him. There is no pain in recalling the memory of such a death-bed. We talked of death

that night, and of all that renders death to the Christian the gate of life; and then he led the conversation to a topic on which we had often before spoken, the one he most delighted in,— the reunion, namely in another world, of those who have loved in this. I cannot describe to you the eloquence and enthusiasm with which he dilated on that blessed subject of hope. Indeed I have more than once observed, in cases of consumption, that the mind seems to become inspired with some of the anticipated glow of its immortal strength, in proportion as its connexion with the body draws nearer to a close. So it appeared with him, certainly. He is gone now to realize those hopes he held so dear and sacred; for I can only say, that if sincere repentance, and undoubting faith, and unreserved trust in our Redeemer's sacrifice, be the means to win eternal happiness, let his former sins have been what they may, the soul of Talbot is in heaven to night."

"Talbot!" exclaimed Mrs. Percival, starting from her chair, "what? William Harrington Talbot?"

"The same," returned Mr. Melbourne. "That was his name."

Lucy Percival raised her eyes to heaven, in silent thanksgiving; then turned aside her head, and wept, but not for sorrow.

THE END.

SELECT POEMS.

ADDRESS TO LORD BYRON,

ON THE PUBLICATION OF CHILDE HAROLD.

BY GRANVILLE PENN.

Cold is the breast, extinct the vital spark,
That kindles not to flame at Harold's muse;
The mental vision, too, how surely dark,
Which, as the anxious wanderer it pursues,
Sees not a noble heart, that fain would choose
The course to heaven, could that course be found;
And, since on earth it nothing fears to lose,
Would joy to press that bless'd etherial ground,
Where peace, and truth, and life, and friends, and love abound.

I "deem not Harold's breast a breast of steel,"
Steel'd is the heart that could the thought receive,
But warm, affectionate, and quick to feel,
Eager in joy, yet not unwont to grieve;
And sorely do I view his vessel leave —
Like erring bark, of card and chart bereft —
The shore to which his soul would love to cleave;
Would, Harold, I could make thee know full oft,
That, bearing thus the helm, the land thou seek'st is left.

Is Harold "satiate with worldly joy?"
"Leaves he his home, his land, without a sigh?"
'T is half the way to heaven! — oh! then employ
That blessed freedom of thy soul, to fly
To him, who, ever gracious, ever nigh,
Demands the heart that breaks the world's hard chain;
If early freed, though by satiety,
Vast is the privilege that man may gain; —
Who early foils the foe, may well the prize obtain.

Thou lovest Nature with a filial zeal,
Canst ny mankind to brood with her apart;
Unutterable sure, that inward feel,
When swells the soul, and heaves the labouring heart
With yearning throes, which nothing can impart
But Nature's majesty, remote from man!
In kindred raptures, I have borne my part;
The Pyrennean mountains loved to scan,
And from the crest of Alps peruse the mighty plan.

"'T is ecstasy to brood o'er flood and fell,"
"To slowly trace the forest's shady scene,"
Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,
And mortal foot hath ne'er or rarely been;
To climb the trackless mountain all unseen,
With the wild flocks that never need a fold;
Alone o'er steeps and foaming falls to lean;—
This is not solitude! —'t is but to hold
Converse with Nature's God, and see *His* stores unroll'd."

Forget we not the Artist in the art,
Nor overlook the Giver in the grace;
Say, what is Nature, but that little part
Which man's imperfect vision can embrace
Of the stupendous whole, which fills all space;
The work of Him by whom all space is bound!
Shall Raphael's pencil Raphael's self efface?
Shall Handel's self be lost in Handel's sound?
Or, shall not Nature's God in Nature's works be found?

But Harold "through sin's labyrinth has run,"
Nor "made atonement when he did amiss;"
And does the memory of that evil done
Disturb his spirit, or obscure his bliss!
'T is just; 't is Harold's due — yet let not this
Press heavier on his heart than heaven ordains;
What mortal lives, not guilty nor remiss?
What breast that has not felt remorse's pains?
What human soul so pure, but mark'd by sin's dark stains?

And can this helpless thing, pollute, debased,
Its own disfigured nature e'er reform?
Say, can the sculptured marble, once defaced,
Restore its lineament, renew its form?
That can the sculptor's hand alone perform,
Else must the marr'd and mutilated stone
For ever lie imperfect and deform;—
So man may sin and wail, but not *atone;*
That restorative power belongs to God alone.

Yet is atonement made: — Creation's Lord
Deserts not thus the work his skill devised;
Man, not his creature only, but his ward,
Too dearly in his Maker's eye is prized,
Than thus to be abandon'd and despised.
Atonement is the Almighty's richest dole,
And ever in the mystic plan comprised,
To mend the foul defacements of the soul,
Restore God's likeness lost, and make the image whole.

Oh! "*if*, as holiest men have deem'd, there be,
A land of souls beyond death's sable shore,"
How would quick-hearted Harold burn to see
The much-lov'd objects of his life once more,
And Nature's new sublimities explore
In better worlds! — Ah! Harold, I conjure,

Speak not in *ifs*; — to him whom God hath taught,
If aught on earth, *that* blessed truth is sure;
All gracious God, to quiet human thought,
Has pledged his sacred word, and demonstration wrought.

Did Babylon, in truth, by Cyrus fall
Is't true that Persia stain'd the Grecian land?
Did Philip's son the Persian host enthrall?
Or Cæsar's legions press the British strand?
Fell Palestine by Titus' sword and brand?—
Can Harold to such facts *his faith* intrust!
Then let him humbly learn, and understand: —
"Then Christ is risen from the dead!" — the first
Dear pledge of mortal frames yet mouldering in the dust.

But Harold "will not look beyond the tomb,"
And thinks "he may not hope for rest before:"
Fie! Harold, fie! unconscious of thy doom,
The nature of thy soul thou know'st not more;
Nor know'st thy lofty mind, which loves to soar;
Thy glowing spirit, and thy thoughts sublime,
Are foreign to this flat and naked shore,
And languish for their own celestial clime,
Far in the bounds of space, — beyond the bounds of time.

There must thou surely live — and of that life
Ages on ages shall no part exhaust:
But with renew'd existence ever rife,
No more in dark uncertainty be toss'd,
When once the teeming barrier is cross'd;
(The birth of mortals to immortal day) —
O let not then this precious hour be lost,
But humbly turn to Him who points the way
To ever-during youth, from infinite decay!

Such, such the prospect, — such the glorious boon,
The last great end in Heaven's supreme design;
Deem not thy cloud continuous, for soon
Must truth break in upon a soul like thine,
Yearning, unconscious, for the light divine;
Oh! hear the gracious word to thee address'd
By Him, thy Lord, almighty and benign—
"Come unto me, all ye by care oppress'd!
Come to my open arms, and I will give you rest!"

Would thou hadst loved through Judah's courts to stray;
Would Sion Hill Parnassus' love might share;
What joy to hear thy muse's potent lay
The sacred honours of that land declare,
And all that holy scene engage her care;
Where poets harp'd ere Homer's shell was strung,
Where heavenly wisdom pour'd her treasures rare,
Long, long ere Athens woke to Solon's song,
And truth-inspired seers of after ages sung.

But, thanks for what we have; and for the more
Thy muse doth bid the listening ear attend,

Nor vainly bids those whom she charm'd before;
Oh! let not then this humble verse offend,
Her skill can judge the speaking of a friend;
Not zeal presumptuous prompts the cautious strain,
But Christian zeal, that would to all extend
The cloudless ray and steady calm that reign,
Where evangelic truths their empire due maintain.

HERE 'S TO THEE, MY SCOTTISH LASSIE.

BY THE REV. JOHN MOULTRIE.

Here 's to thee, my Scottish lassie! here 's a hearty health to thee,
For thine eye so bright, thy form so light, and thy step so firm and free;
For all thine artless elegance, and all thy native grace,
For the music of thy mirthful voice, and the sunshine of thy face;
For thy guileless look and speech sincere, yet sweet as speech can be,
Here 's a health my Scottish lassie! here 's a hearty health to thee!

Here 's to thee, my Scottish lassie! — though my glow of youth is o'er;
And I, as once I felt and dream'd, must feel and dream no more;
Though the world, with all its frosts and storms, has chill'd my soul at last,
And genius, with the foodful looks of youthful friendship past;
Though my path is dark and lonely now, o'er this world's dreary sea, —
Here 's a health, my Scottish lassie! here 's a hearty health to thee!

Here 's to thee, my Scottish lassie! — though I know that not for me
Is thine eye so bright, thy form so light, and thy step so firm and free
Though thou, with cold and careless looks, wilt often pass me by,
Unconscious of my swelling heart, and of my wistful eye;
Though thou wilt wed some Highland love, nor waste one thought on me, —
Here 's a health, my Scottish lassie! here 's a hearty health to thee!

Here 's to thee, my Scottish lassie! when I meet thee in the throng
Of merry youths and maidens, dancing lightsomely along,
I 'll dream away an hour or twain, still gazing on thy form,
As it flashes through the baser crowd, like lightning through a storm;
And I, perhaps, shall touch thy hand, and share thy looks of glee,
And for once, my Scottish lassie! dance a giddy dance with thee.

Here 's to thee, my Scottish lassie! — I shall think of thee at even,
When I see its first and fairest star come smiling up through heaven;
I shall hear thy sweet and touching voice, in every wind that grieves,
As it whirls from the abandon'd oak its wither'd autumn leaves;
In the gloom of the wild forest, in the stillness of the sea,
I shall think, my Scottish lassie! I shall often think of thee.

Here 's to thee, my Scottish lassie! — in my sad and lonely hours,
The thought of thee comes o'er me, like the breath of distant flowers; —
Like the music that enchants mine ear, the sights that bless mine eye,
Like the verdure of the meadow, like the azure of the sky;
Like the rainbow in the evening, like the blossoms on the tree,
Is the thought, my Scottish lassie! is the lonely thought of thee.

Here 's to thee, my Scottish lassie! — though my muse must soon be dumb,
(For graver thoughts and duties, with my graver years, are come,

Though my soul must burst the bonds of earth, and learn to soar on high,
And to look on this world's follies with a calm and sober eye;
Though the merry wine must seldom flow, the revel cease for me, —
Still to thee, my Scottish lassie! still I 'll drink a health to thee.

Here's a health, my Scottish lassie! here's a parting health to thee;
May thine be still a cloudless lot, though it be far from me!
May still thy laughing eye be bright, and open still thy brow,
Thy thoughts as pure, thy speech as free, thy heart as light as now!
And, whatsoe'er my after fate, my dearest toast shall be, —
Still a health, my Scottish lassie! still a hearty health to thee!

A STRAIN OF MUSIC.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

I am never merry when I hear sweet music
MERCHANT OF VENICE.

Oh! joyously, triumphantly, sweet sounds! ye swell and float,
A breath of hope, of youth, of spring, is pour'd on every note;
And yet my full o'erburthen'd heart grows troubled by your power,
And ye seem to press the long past years into one little hour.

If I have look'd on lovely scenes, that now I view no more —
A summer sea, with glittering ships, along the mountain shore,
A ruin, girt with solemn woods, and a crimson evening sky, —
Ye bring me back those images fast as ye wander by.

If in the happy walks and days of childhood I have heard,
And into childhood's memory link'd the music of a bird;
A bird that with the primrose came, and in the violet's train, —
Ye give me that wild melody of early life again.

Or if a dear and gentle voice, that now is changed, or gone,
Hath left within my bosom deep the thrilling of its tone,
I find that murmur in your notes — they touch the chords of thought,
And a sudden flow of tenderness across my soul is brought.

If I have bid a spot farewell, on whose familiar ground
To every path, and leaf, and flower, my soul in love was bound:
If I have watch 'd the parting step of one who came not back,
The feeling of that moment wakes in your exulting track.

Yet on ye float! — the very air seems kindling with your glee!
Oh! do ye fling this mournful spell, sweet sounds! alone on me?
Or, have a thousand hearts replied, as mine doth now, in sighs,
To the glad music breathing thus of blue Italian skies?

I know not! — only this I know, that not by me on earth,
May the deep joy of song be found, untroubled in its birth;
It must be for a brighter life, for some immortal sphere,
Wherein its flow shall have no taste of the bitter fountains here.

THE WAR OF THE LEAGUE.

BY THOMAS MACAULEY.

Now glory to the Lord of Hosts, from whom all glories are!
And glory to our Sovereign Liege, King Henry of Navarre!
Now let there be the merry sound of music and of dance,
Through thy corn-fields green, and sunny vines, O pleasant land of France:
And thou, Rochelle, our own Rochelle, proud city of the waters,
Again let rapture light the eyes of all thy mourning daughters.
As thou wert constant in our ills, be joyous in our joy,
For cold, and stiff, and still are they who wrought thy walls annoy.
Hurrah! hurrah! a single field hath turned the chance of war,
Hurrah! hurrah! for Ivry, and King Henry of Navarre.

Oh! how our hearts were beating, when, at the dawn of day,
We saw the army of the League drawn out in long array;
With all its priest-led citizens, and all its rebel peers,
And Appenzel's stout infantry, and Egmont's Flemish spears.
There rode the brood of false Lorraine, the curses of our land!
And dark Mayenne was in the midst, a truncheon in his hand;
And, as we look'd on them, we thought of Seine's empurpled flood,
And good Coligni's hoary hair all dabbled with his blood;
And we cried unto the living God, who rules the fate of war,
To fight for his own holy name, and Henry of Navarre.

The King is come to marshal us, in all his armour drest,
And he has bound a snow-white plume upon his gallant crest.
He look'd upon his people, and a tear was in his eye;
He look'd upon the traitors, and his glance was stern and high.
Right graciously he smiled on us, as rolled from wing to wing,
Down all our line, a deafening shout, "God save our Lord the King."
"And if my standard-bearer fall, as fall full well he may, —
For never saw I promise yet of such a bloody fray, —
Press where ye see my white plume shine, amidst the ranks of war,
And be your oriflamme, to-day, the helmet of Navarre."

Hurrah! the foes are moving! Hark to the mingled din,
Of fife, and steed, and trump, and drum, and roaring culverin!
The fiery Duke is pricking fast across Saint Andrè's plain,
With all the hireling chivalry of Guelders and Almayne.
Now by the lips of those ye love, fair gentlemen of France,
Charge for the golden lilies now, — upon them with the lance!
A thousand spurs are striking deep, a thousand spears in rest,
A thousand knights are pressing close behind the snow-white crest;
And in they burst, and on they rush'd, while, like a guiding star,
Amidst the thickest carnage blazed the helmet of Navarre.

Now, God be praised, the day is ours! Mayenne hath turn'd his rein.
D'Aumale hath cried for quarter. The Flemish Count is slain.
Their ranks are breaking like thin clouds before a Biscay gale;
The field is heap'd with bleeding steeds, and flags, and cloven mail;
And then we thought on vengeance, and, all along our van,
"Remember St. Bartholomew," was pass'd from man to man;

But out spake gentle Henry, "No Frenchman is my foe:
Down, down, with every foreigner, but let your brethren go."
Oh! was there ever such a knight, in friendship or in war,
As our Sovereign Lord, King Henry, the soldier of Navarre!

Ho! maidens of Vienna! Ho! matrons of Lucerne!
Weep, weep, and rend your hair for those who never shall return.
Ho! Philip, send, for charity, thy Mexican pistoles,
That Antwerp monks may sing a mass for thy poor spearmen's souls!
Ho! gallant nobles of the League, look that your arms be bright!
Ho! burghers of Saint Genevieve, keep watch and ward to-night!
For our God hath crush'd the tyrant, our God hath rais'd the slave,
And mock'd the counsel of the wise, and the valour of the brave.
Then glory to his holy name, from whom all glories are;
And glory to our Sovereign Lord, King Henry of Navarre.

THE AMERICAN EAGLE.

BY CHARLES WEST THOMPSON.

Bird of the heavens! whose matchless eye
  Alone can front the blaze of day,
And, wand'ring through the radiant sky,
  Ne'er from the sunlight turns away;
Whose ample wing was made to rise
  Majestic o'er the loftiest peak,
On whose chill tops the winter skies,
  Around thy nest, in tempests speak.
What ranger of the winds can dare,
Proud mountain king! with thee compare;
Or lift his gaudier plumes on high
Before thy native majesty,
When thou hast ta'en thy seat alone,
Upon thy cloud-encircled throne?

Bird of the cliffs! thy noble form
  Might well be thought almost divine;
Born for the thunder and the storm,
  The mountain and the rock are thine;
And there, where never foot has been,
  Thy eyry is sublimely hung,
Where louring skies their wrath begin,
  And loudest lullabies are sung
By the fierce spirit of the blast,
When, his snow mantle o'er him cast,
He sweeps across the mountain top,
With a dark fury naught can stop,
And wings his wild unearthly way
Far through the clouded realms of day.

Bird of the sun! to thee — to thee
  The earliest tints of dawn are known,
And 'tis thy proud delight to see
  The monarch mount his gorgeous throne;

Throwing the crimson drapery by,
That half impedes his glorious way;
And mounting up the radiant sky,
E'en what he is, — the king of day!
Before the regent of the skies
Men shrink, and veil their dazzled eyes!
But thou, in regal majesty,
Hast kingly rank as well as he;
And with a steady, dauntless gaze,
Thou meet'st the splendour of his blaze.

Bird of Columbia! well art thou
An emblem of our native land;
With unblench'd front and noble brow,
Among the nations doom'd to stand;
Proud, like her mighty mountain woods;
Like her own rivers, wandering free;
And sending forth, from hills and floods,
The joyous shout of liberty!
Like thee, majestic bird! like thee,
She stands in unbought majesty,
With spreading wing, untired and strong,
That dares a soaring far and long,
That mounts aloft, nor looks below,
And will not quail though tempests blow.

The admiration of the earth,
In grand simplicity she stands;
Like thee, the storms beheld her birth,
And she was nursed by rugged hands;
But, past the fierce and furious war,
Her rising fame new glory brings,
For kings and nobles come from far
To seek the shelter of her wings.
And like thee, rider of the cloud,
She mounts the heavens, serene and proud,
Great in a pure and noble fame,
Great in her spotless champion's name,
And destined in her day to be
Mighty as Rome — more nobly free.

My native land! my native land!
To whom my thoughts will fondly turn:
For her the warmest hopes expand,
For her the heart with fears will yearn.
Oh! may she keep her eye, like thee,
Proud eagle of the rocky wild,
Fix'd on the sun of liberty,
By rank, by faction unbeguiled;
Remembering still the rugged road
Our venerable fathers trod,
When they through toil and danger press'd,
To gain their glorious bequest,
And from each lip the caution fell
To those who follow'd, "Guard it well."

THE ÆOLIAN HARP.

BY ALARIC A. WATTS.

Methinks it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world like this,
Where even the breezes and the common air
Contain the power and spirit of harmony.—COLERIDGE.

HARP of the winds! What music may compare
With thy wild gush of melody; — Or where,
'Mid this world's discords, may we hope to meet
Tones like to thine — so soothing and so sweet!

Harp of the winds! When Summer's Zephyr wings
His airy flight across thy tremulous strings,
As if enamour'd of his breath, they move
With soft low murmurs, — like the voice of Love,
Ere passion deepens it, or sorrow mars
Its harmony with sighs! — All earth-born jars
Confess thy soothing power, when strains like these
From thy bliss-breathing chords are borne upon the breeze!

But when a more pervading force compels
Their sweetness into strength, — and swiftly swells
Each tenderer tone to fulness, — what a strange
And spirit-stirring sense that fitful change
Wakes in my heart! — Visions of days long past, —
Hope — joy — pride — pain — and passion — with the blast
Come rushing on my soul, — till I believe
Some strong enchantment, purposed to deceive,
Hath fix'd its spell upon me, and I grieve
I may not burst its bonds! — Anon the gale
Softly subsides, — and whisperings wild prevail
Of inarticulate melody, which seem
Not music, but its shadow; — what a dream
Is to reality; — or as the swell
(Those who have felt alone have power to tell)
Of the full heart where love was late a guest
Ere it recovers from its sweet unrest!
The charm is o'er! Each warring thought flits by
Quell'd by that more than mortal minstrelsy!
Each turbulent feeling owns its sweet control,
And peace once more returns, and settles on my soul!

Harp of the winds! thy ever tuneful chords,
In language far more eloquent than words
Of earth's best skill'd philosophers, do teach
A deep and heavenly lesson! Could it reach,
With its impressive truths, the heart of man,
Then were he bless'd indeed; and he might scan
His coming miseries with delight! The storm
Of keen adversity would then deform

No more the calm stream of his thoughts, nor bring
Its wonted "grisly train;" but rather wring
Sweetness from out his grief, — till even the string
On which his sorrows hung, should make reply,
However rudely swept, in tones of melody!

THE NEGLECTED CHILD.

BY THOMAS H. BAYLY.

I NEVER was a favourite —
My mother never smiled
On me, with half the tenderness
That bless'd her fairer child;
I 've seen her kiss my sister's cheek,
While fondled on her knee;
I've turn'd away to hide my tears, —
There was no kiss for me!

And yet I strove to please, with all
My little store of sense;
I *strove* to please, and infancy
Can rarely give offence;
But when my artless efforts met
A cold, ungentle check,
I did not dare to throw myself
In tears upon her neck.

How blessed are the beautiful!
Love watches o'er their birth;
O beauty! in my nursery
I learn'd to know thy worth; —
For even *there*, I often felt
Forsaken and forlorn;
And wish'd — for others wish'd it too —
I never had been born!

I 'm sure I was affectionate, —
But in my sister's face,
There was a look of love, that claim'd
A smile or an embrace.
But when *I* raised my lip, to meet
The pressure children prize,
None knew the feelings of my heart, —
They spoke not in my eyes.

But oh! that heart too keenly felt
The anguish of neglect;
I saw my sister's lovely form
With gems and roses deck'd;
I did not covet *them*: but oft,
When wantonly reproved,
I envied her the privilege
Of being so beloved.

But soon a time of triumph came —
A time of sorrow too, —
For sickness o'er my sister's form
Her venom'd mantle threw : —
The features, once so beautiful,
Now wore the hue of death ;
And former friends shrank fearfully
From her infectious breath.

'T was then, unwearied, day and night,
I watch'd beside her bed,
And fearlessly upon my breast
I pillow'd her poor head.
She lived ! — and loved me for my care ! —
My grief was at an end ;
I was a lonely being once,
But now I *have* a friend !

THE GRAVES OF A HOUSEHOLD.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

They grew in beauty, side by side,
They fill'd one house with glee —
Their graves are sever'd far and wide,
By mount, and stream, and sea !

The same fond mother bent at night
O'er each fair sleeping brow,
She had each folded flower in sight —
Where are those dreamers now ?

One 'midst the forests of the west
By a dark stream is laid ;
The Indian knows his place of rest,
Far in the cedar shade.

The sea, the blue lone sea, hath one ;
He lies where pearls lie deep ;
He was the loved of all, yet none
O'er his low bed may weep.

One sleeps where southern vines are dress'd,
Above the noble slain,
He wrapp'd his colours round his breast,
On a blood-red field of Spain.

And one — o'er *her* the myrtle showers
Its leaves by soft winds fann'd,
She faded, 'midst Italian flowers,
The last of that bright band.

And parted thus, *they* rest who play'd
Beneath the same green tree,
Whose voices mingled as they pray'd
Around one parent knee !

They that with smiles lit up the hall,
And cheer'd with songs the hearth —
Alas for love, if *thou* wert all,
And naught beyond on earth!

SAPPHO.

BY MISS LANDON.

She was one
Whose Lyre the spirit of sweet song had hung
With myrtle and with laurel; on whose head
Genius had shed his starry glories, — transcripts
Of woman's loving heart and woman's disappointment.

She lean'd upon her harp, and thousands look'd
On her in love and wonder; — thousands knelt
And worship'd in her presence; — burning tears,
And words that died in utterance, and a pause
Of breathless agitated eagerness,
First gave the full heart's homage, then came forth
A shout that rose to heaven; and the hills,
The distant valleys, all rang with the name
Of the Æolian Sappho! — Every heart
Found in itself some echo to her song.
Low notes of love, hopes beautiful and fresh, —
And some gone by for ever — glorious dreams,
High aspirations, those thrice gentle thoughts
That dwell upon the absent and the dead,
Were breathing in her music — and these are
Chords every bosom vibrates to. But she,
Upon whose brow the laurel crown is placed,
Her colour's varying with deep emotion —
There is a softer blush than conscious pride,
Upon her cheek, and in that tremulous smile
Is all a woman's timid tenderness.
Her eye is on a Youth, and other days
And feelings warm have rushed on her soul
With all their former influence; — thoughts that slept
Cold, calm as death, have waken'd to new life; —
Whole years' existence have pass'd in that glance. —
She had once loved in very early days;
That was a thing gone by. One had call'd forth
The music of her soul. — He loved her too,
But not as she did: — she was unto him
As a young bird, whose early flight he train'd,
Whose first wild songs were sweet, for he had taught
Those songs: — but she look'd up to him with all
Youth's deep and passionate idolatry; —
Love was her heart's sole universe — he was
To her, Hope, Genius, Energy, — the God
Her inmost spirit worship'd, — in whose smile
Was all e'en minstrel pride held precious; praise
Was prized but as the echo of his own.
But other times and other feelings came: —
Hope is love's element, and love with her
Sicken'd of its own vanity. — She lived

Mid bright realities and brighter dreams,
Those strange but exquisite imaginings
That tinge with such sweet colours minstrel thoughts:
And Fame, like sunlight, was upon her path;
And strangers heard her name, and eyes that never
Had look'd on Sappho, yet had wept with her.
Her first love never wholly lost its power,
But, like rich incense shed, although no trace
Was of its visible presence, yet its sweetness
Mingled with every feeling, and it gave
That soft and melancholy tenderness
Which was the magic of her song. — That Youth
Who knelt before her was so like the shape
That haunted her spring dreams — the same dark eyes,
Whose light had once been as the light of heaven! —
Others breathed winning flatteries, — she turn'd
A careless hearing; but when Phaon spoke,
Her heart beat quicker, and the crimson light
Upon her cheek gave a most tender answer. —
She loved with all the ardour of a heart
Which lives but in itself; her life had pass'd
Amid the grand creations of the thought.
Love was to her a vision; — it was now
Heighten'd into devotion. — but a soul
So gifted and so passionate as hers
Will seek companionship in vain, and find
Its feelings solitary. — Phaon soon
Forgot the fondness of his Lesbian maid;
And Sappho knew that talents, riches, fame,
May not sooth slighted love.

There is a dark rock looks on the blue sea;
'T was there love's last song echo'd: — there she sleeps,
Whose lyre was crown'd with laurel, and whose name
Will be remember'd long as Love or Song
Are sacred — the devoted Sappho!

THE TREASURES OF THE DEEP.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

What hid'st thou in thy treasure-caves and cells?
Thou hollow-sounding and mysterious Main!
Pale glist'ning pearls, and rainbow-colour'd shells,
Bright things which gleam unreck'd of and in vain.
Keep, keep thy riches, melancholy sea!
We ask not such from thee.

Yet more, the Depths have more! What wealth untold,
Far down, and shining through their stillness, lies!
Thou hast the starry gems, the burning gold,
Won from ten thousand royal Argosies.
Sweep o'er thy spoils, thou wild and wrathful Main!
Earth claims not these again!

Yet more, the Depths have more! — Thy waves have roll'd
Above the cities of a world gone by!
Sand hath fill'd up the palaces of old,
Sea-weed o'ergrown the halls of revelry!
Dash o'er them, Ocean! in thy scornful play,
Man yields them to decay!

Yet more! the Billows and the Depths have more!
High hearts and brave are gather'd to thy breast!
They hear not now the booming waters roar, —
The battle-thunders will not break their rest.
Keep thy red gold and gems, thou stormy grave! —
Give back the true and brave!

Give back the lost and lovely! — Those for whom
The place was kept at board and hearth so long;
The prayer went up through midnight's breathless gloom,
And the vain yearning woke 'midst festal song!
Hold fast thy buried isles, thy towers o'erthrown,
— But all is not thine own!

FIELD FLOWERS.

BY THOMAS CAMPBELL.

Ye field flowers! the gardens eclipse you 't is true,
Yet, wildings of nature, I dote upon you,
For ye waft me to summers of old,
When the earth teem'd around me with fairy delight,
And when daisies and buttercups gladden'd my sight,
Like treasures of silver and gold.

I love you for lulling me back into dreams
Of the blue Highland mountains and echoing streams,
And of broken blades breathing their balm;
While the deer was seen glancing in sunshine remote,
And the deep mellow crush of the wood-pigeon's note,
Made music that sweeten'd the calm.

Not a pastoral song has a pleasanter tune
Than ye speak to my heart, little wildings of June;
Of old ruinous castles ye tell:
I thought it delightful your beauties to find,
When the magic of nature first breathed on my mind,
And your blossoms were part of her spell.

Even now what affections the violet awakes;
What loved little islands, twice seen in the lakes,
Can the wild water-lily restore.
What landscapes I read in the primrose's looks;
What pictures of pebbles and minnowy brooks,
In the vetches that tangle the shore.

Earth's cultureless buds! to my heart ye were dear
Ere the fever of passion, or ague of fear,
Had scath'd my existence's bloom;
Once I welcome you more, in life's passionless stage
With the visions of youth to revisit my age,
And I wish you to grow on my tomb.

LINES TO A YOUNG LADY,

ON HER MARRIAGE.

BY G. M. FITZGERALD.

They tell me, gentle lady, that they deck thee for a bride,
That the wreath is woven for thy hair, the bridegroom by thy side;
And I think I hear thy father's sigh, thy mother's calmer tone,
As they give thee to another's arms — their beautiful — their own.

I never saw a bridal, but my eyelid hath been wet,
And it always seem'd to me as though a joyous crowd were met
To see the saddest sight of all, a gay and girlish thing
Lay aside her maiden gladness — for a name — and for a ring.

And other cares will claim thy thoughts, and other hearts thy love,
And gayer friends may be around, and bluer skies above;
Yet thou, when I behold thee next, may'st wear upon thy brow,
Perchance, a mother's look of care, for that which decks it now.

And when I think how often I have seen thee, with thy mild
And lovely look, and step of air, and bearing like a child,
Oh! how mournfully, how mournfully the thought comes o'er my brain,
When I think thou ne'er may'st be that free and girlish thing again.

I would that, as my heart dictates, just such might be my lay,
And my voice should be a voice of mirth, a music like the May;
But it may not be! — within my breast all frozen are the springs,
The murmur dies upon the lip — the music on the strings.

But a voice is floating round me, and it tells me in my rest,
That sunshine shall illume thy path, that joy shall be thy guest,
That thy life shall be a summer's day, whose evening shall go down,
Like the evening in the eastern clime, that never knows a frown.

When thy foot is at the altar, when the ring hath press'd thy hand,
When those thou lov'st, and those that love thee, weeping round thee stand,
Oh! may the verse that friendship weaves, like a spirit of the air,
Be o'er thee at that moment — for a blessing and a prayer!

THE EAST INDIAMAN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF ROUGE ET NOIR.

> How like a younker, or a prodigal,
> The scarfed bark puts from her native bay,
> Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind!
> How like the prodigal doth she return;
> With over-weather'd ribs, and ragged sails,
> Lean, rent, and beggar'd by the strumpet wind!
> MERCHANT OF VENICE.

An anxious, lingering, perilous voyage past,
An India ship hail'd Albion's land at last!
Moor'd in the Downs, her mighty pinions close
Like some far flying bird that seeks repose
While, crowding on the deck, a hundred eyes
Turn'd shoreward — flash'd with pleasure and surprise.
That eve they anchor'd, from the horizon's hem
The virgin Moon, as if to welcome them,
Rose from her rest — but would no more reveal
Than the faint outline of her pale profile:
Though soon (as maids forego their fears) she gave
Her orbed brow to kiss the wanton wave:
Till — like a scornful lover, swoll'n with pride,
Because too fondly loved to be denied,
The rude wave spurn'd her off, and raised that loud
And angry blast that scream'd through sail and shroud,
The livelong night on which my harp is dwelling.
Meanwhile, the swarthy crew, each care dispelling,
Had sported thrice three summer suns away
Since they had cast their anchor in that bay.
Oh, none save Fortune's step-sons, doom'd to roam
The deep, can prize a harbour and a home!
The temperate breeze their sun-bronzed temples blessing —
A native shore the gladden'd eye refreshing —
The painted pinnace dancing from the land
Freighted with friends — the pressure of the hand,
Whose pulse throbs happy seconds — the warm gush
Of blood into the cheek, as it would rush
With the heart's welcome ere the tongue could half
Perform its office — feeling's telegraph!
Impassion'd smiles, and tears of rapture starting —
Oh, how unlike the tears which fell at parting!
And all were theirs — that good ship's gallant crew —
As though each joy which absence render'd due
Were paid in one bright moment: such are known
To those long sever'd, loving, loved, alone!

A gorgeous freight that broad-sail'd vessel bore —
The blazing diamonds and the blushing ore;
Spices that sigh'd their incense, till the sails
Were fann'd along on aromatic gales

From Orient lands. Then marvel not if he
Who there is Chief should look exultingly
Back on the storms he baffled, and should know
The bosom's warmest wildest overflow
While gazing on the land which laugh'd before him —
The smooth sea round — the blue pavilion o'er him!
Yet felt he more than ever sprang from these,
For love demanded deeper sympathies;
And long in lonely bower had sigh'd for him
A fond fair Bride, whose infant Cherubim
Oft spirit-clouded from its playthings crept,
To weep beside its mother while she wept.
But oh, they met at length! And such sweet days
Already proved, as leave a light that plays
Upon the memory when the warmth is gone.
The fount thus treasures sunbeams, and shines on
Through dusk and darkness. Like some happy mother,
Joy mark'd the hours pursuing one another —
A wreath of buoyant angels! Yet as they
Wheel'd laughing round, oft sigh'd, to make them stay!

This was a day of banqueting on board;
And swan-wing'd barks, and barges many oar'd
Came crowded to the feast. The young — the gay —
The beautiful — were there. Right merrily
The pleasure boats glide onward; — with swift prow
The clear wave curling, till around each bow,
With frequent flash, the bright and feathery spray
Threw mimic rainbows at the sun in play.
The ship is won, the silken chair is lower'd —
Exulting Youth and Beauty bound on board:
And, while they wondering gaze on sail and shroud,
The flag flaps o'er them like a crimson cloud.

Young Pleasure kiss'd each heart! From Persia's loom
An ample awning spread its purple bloom
To canopy the guests; and vases, wreath'd
With deep-hued flowers and foliage, sweetly breathed
Their incense, fresh as zephyrs when they rove
Among the blossoms of a citron grove;
Soft sounds — (invisible spirits on the wing) —
Were heard and felt around them hovering; —
In short, some magic seem'd to sway the hour,
The wand-struck deck becomes an orient bower!
A very wilderness of blushing roses,
Just such as Love would choose when he reposes.
The pendent orange, from a lush of leaves,
Hangs like Hesperian gold; and, tied in sheaves,
Carnations prop their triple coronals;
The grape, out-peeping from thick foliage, falls
Like cluster'd amethysts in deep festoons;
And shells are scatter'd round, which Indian moons
Had sheeted with the silver of their beams;
But oh, what, more than all, the scene beseems,
Fair, faultless forms, glide there with wing-like motion! —
Bright as young Peris rising from the ocean!

Eve darken'd down — and yet they were not gone;
The sky had changed, — the sudden storm came on!

One waved on high a ruby sparkling bowl —
(Youth, passion, wine, ran riot in his soul) —
"Fill to the brim," he cried; "let others peer
Their doubtful path to heaven; — my heaven is here!
This hour is mine, and who can dash its bliss?
Fate dare not darken such an hour as this!"
Then stoop'd to quaff; — but (as a charm were thrown)
His hand, his lips, grew motionless as stone;
His drunkenness of heart no more deceives —
The thunder growls, the surge-smote vessel heaves;
And while aghast he stared, a hurrying squall
Rent the wide awning, and discover'd all!
Across their eyes the hissing lightning blazed —
The black wave burst beside them as they gazed;
And dizzily the thick surf scatter'd o'er them;
And dim and distant loom'd the land before them;
No longer firm — th' eternal hills did leave
Their solid rest, and heaved, or seem'd to heave,
O, 't was an awful moment! — for the crew
Had rashly, deeply drank, while yet they knew
No ruling eye was on them — and became
Wild as the tempest! Peril could not tame —
Nay, stirr'd their brutal hearts to more excess;
Round the deserted banquet-board they press,
Like men transform'd to fiends, with oath and yell!
And many deem'd the sea less terrible
Than maniacs fiercely ripe for all, or aught,
That ever flash'd upon a desperate thought!
Strange laughter mingled with the shriek and groan —
Nor woman shrank, nor woman wept, alone.
Some, as a bolt had smote them, fell; — and some
Stared haggard wild: — dismay had struck them dumb.
There were of firmer nerve, or fiercer cast,
Who scowl'd defiance back upon the blast —
Half scorning in their haughty souls to be
Thus pent and buffeted. And tenderly,
Even then, to manly hearts fair forms were drawn,
Whose virgin eyes had never shed their dawn
Before — soft, beautifully shy — to flush
A lover's hope; but as the dove will rush
Into the school-boy's bosom to elude
The swooping goshawk — woman, thus subdued,
Will cling to those she shunn'd in lighter mood —
The soul confess emotions but conceal'd —
Pure, glowing, deep, though lingeringly reveal'd;
That true chameleon which imbibes the tone
Of every passing hue she pauses on!
O, 't is the cheek that 's false — so subtly taught,
It takes not of its colour from the thought;
But like volcanic mountains veil'd in snow,
Hides the heart's lava, while it works below!

And there were two who loved, but never told
Their love to one another: years had roll'd
Since Passion touch'd them with his purple wing,
Though still their youth was in its blossoming.

Lofty of soul, as riches were denied,
He deem'd it mean to woo a wealthy bride;
And (for her tears were secret) coldly she
Wreath'd her pale brow in maiden dignity;
Yet each had caught the other's eye reposing,
And, far as looks disclose, the truth disclosing;
But when they met, pride check'd the soul's warm sigh,
And froze the melting spirit of the eye —
A pride in vulgar hearts that never shone.
And thus they loved, and silently loved on;
But *this* was not a moment when the head
Could trifle with the heart! The cloud that spread
Its chilling veil between them, now had past —
Too long awaking — but they woke at last!
He rush'd where clung the fainting fair one -- sought
To sooth with hopes he felt not, cherish'd not;
And while in passionate support he press'd,
She raised her eyes — then swiftly on his breast
Hid her blanch'd cheek — as if resign'd to share
The worst with him; — nay, die contented there!
That silent act was fondly eloquent;
And to the youth's deep soul, like lightning, sent
A gleam of rapture — exquisite yet brief,
As his (poor wretch) that in the grave of grief
Feels Fortune's sun burst on him, and looks up
With hope to heaven — forgetful of the cup,
The deadly cup, his shivering hand yet strain'd —
A hot heart-pang reminds him — it is drain'd!
Away with words! for when had true love ever
A happy star to bless it? — Never, never!
And oh, the brightest after-smile of Fate
Is but a sad reprieve, which comes — too late!

The riot shout peal'd on; — but deep distress
Had sunk all else in utter hopelessness!
One mark'd the strife of frenzy and despair --
The most concern'd, and yet the calmest there;
In bitterness of soul beheld his crew —
He should have known them, and he thought he knew:
The blood-hound on the leash may fawn, obey —
He 'll tear thee, shouldst thou cross him at his prey!
One only trust survives, a doubtful one —
But oh, how cherish'd, every other gone!
"While hold our cables, fear not" — As he spoke
A sea burst o'er them, and their cables broke!
Then, like a lion bounding from the toil,
The ship shot through the billow's black recoil;
Urged by the howling blast — all guidance gone —
They shuddering felt her reeling, rushing on —
Nor dared to question where; nor dared to cast
One asking look — for that might be their last!

What frowns so steep in front — a cliff? a rock?
The groaning vessel staggers in the shock!
The last shriek rings.
Hark! whence that voice they hear
Loud o'er the rushing waters — loud and near?

Alas! they dream! — 't is but the ocean roar
Oh no! it echoes from the swarming shore!
Kind Heaven, thy hand was there. With swelling bound
The vast waves heaved the giant hull aground;
And, ebbing with the turning tide, became,
Like dying monsters, impotent and tame;
Wedged in the sand, their chafing can no more
Than lave her sides, and deaden with their roar
The clamorous burst of joy. But some there were
Whose joy was voiceless as their late despair —
Whose heavenward eyes, clasp'd hands, and streaming cheeks,
Did speak a language which the lip ne'er speaks!
O, he were heartless, in that passionate hour,
Who could not feel that weakness hath its power,
When gentle woman, sobbing and subdued,
Breathed forth her vow of holy gratitude,
Warm as the contrite Mary's, when — forgiven —
An angel smiled, recording it in heaven!

A SKETCH FROM REAL LIFE.

BY ALARIC A. WATTS.

I saw her in her morn of hope, in life's delicious spring,
A radiant creature of the earth, just bursting on the wing,
Elate and joyous as the lark when first it soars on high,
Without a shadow in its path, — a cloud upon its sky.
I see her yet — so fancy deems — her soft, unbraided hair,
Gleaming like sunlight upon snow, above her forehead fair;—
Her large dark eyes, of changing light, the winning smile that played,
In dimpling sweetness, round a mouth Expression's self had made!
And light alike of heart and step, she bounded on her way,
Nor dream'd the flowers that round her bloom'd would ever know decay;—
She had no winter in her note, but evermore would sing
(What darker season had she proved?) of spring — of only spring!
Alas, alas, that hopes like hers, so gentle and so bright,
The growth of many a happy year, one wayward hour should blight; —
Bow down her fair but fragile form, her brilliant brow o'ercast,
And make her beauty — like her bliss — a shadow of the past!
Years came and went — we met again, — but what a change was there
The glossy calmness of the eye, that whisper'd of despair; —
The fitful flushing of the cheek, — the lips compress'd and thin, —
The clinch of the attenuate hands, — proclaim'd the strife within!
Yet, for each ravaged charm of earth some pitying power had given
Beauty, of more than mortal birth, — a spell that breathed of heaven; —
And as she bent, resign'd and meek, beneath the chastening blow,
With all a martyr's fervid faith her features seem'd to glow!
No wild reproach, no bitter word, in that sad hour was spoken,
For hopes deceived, for love betray'd, and plighted pledges broken; —
Like Him who for his murderers pray'd, — she wept, but did not chide,
And her last orisons arose for him for whom she died!
Thus, thus, too oft the traitor man repays fond woman's truth;
Thus blighting, in his wild caprice, the blossoms of her youth:
And sad it is, in griefs like these, o'er visions loved and lost,
That the truest and the tenderest heart must always suffer most!

THE HEBREW MOTHER.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

The rose was in rich bloom on Sharon's plain,
When a young mother, with her first-born, thence
Went up to Zion; for the boy was vow'd
Unto the temple service. By the hand
She led him, and her silent soul, the while,
Oft as the dewy laughter of his eye
Met her sweet serious glance, rejoiced to think
That aught so pure, so beautiful, was hers,
To bring before her God.

So pass'd they on,
O'er Judah's hills; and wheresoe'er the leaves
Of the broad sycamore made sounds at noon,
Like lulling rain-drops on the olive-boughs,
With their cold dimness, cross'd the sultry blue
Of Syria's heaven, she paused, that he might rest;
Yet from her own meek eyelids chased the sleep
That weigh'd their dark fringe down, to sit and watch
The crimson deepening o'er his cheek's repose,
As at a red flower's heart; and where a fount
Lay, like a twilight star, midst palmy shades
Making its banks green gems along the wild,
There too she linger'd from the diamond wave
Drawing clear water for her rosy lips,
And softly parting clusters of jet curls,
To bathe his brow.

At last the Fane was reach'd,
The earth's one sanctuary: and rapture hush'd
Her bosom, as before her, through the day
It rose, a mountain of white marble, steep'd
In light like floating gold. — But when that hour
Waned to the farewell moment, when the boy
Lifted, through rainbow-gleaming tears, his eye
Beseechingly to hers, and half in fear,
Turn'd from the white-robed priest, and round her arm
Clung e'en as ivy clings; the deep spring-tide
Of nature then swell'd high; and o'er her child
Bending, her soul brake forth, in mingled sounds
Of weeping and sad song — "Alas!" she cried,

"Alas, my boy! thy gentle gasp is on me,
The bright tears quiver in thy pleading eyes,
And now fond thoughts arise,
And silver cords again to earth have won me,
And like a vine thou claspest my full heart —
How shall I hence depart? —

How the lone paths retrace, where thou wert playing
So late along the mountains at my side?
And I, in joyous pride,

By every place of flowers my course delaying,
Wove, e'en as pearls, the lilies round thy hair,
Beholding thee so fair!

And, oh! the home whence thy bright smile hath parted!
Will it not seem as if the sunny day
Turn'd from its door away,
While, through its chambers wandering weary hearted,
I languish for thy voice, which past me still,
Went like a singing rill?

Under the palm-trees thou no more shalt meet me,
When from the fount at evening I return,
With the full water urn!
Nor will thy sleep's low dove-like murmurs greet me,
As midst the silence of the stars I wake,
And watch for thy dear sake.

And thou, will slumber's dewy cloud fall round thee,
Without thy mother's hand to smooth thy bed?
Wilt thou not vainly spread
Thine arms, when darkness as a veil hath wound thee,
To fold my neck; and lift up, in thy fear,
A cry which none shall hear?

What have I said, my child? — will He not hear thee
Who the young ravens heareth from their nest?
Will He not guard thy rest,
And, in the hush of holy midnight near thee,
Breathe o'er thy soul, and fill its dreams with joy?
Thou shalt sleep soft, my boy!

I give thee to thy God! — the God that gave thee,
A well-spring of deep gladness to my heart!
And, precious as thou art,
And pure as dew of Hermon, He shall have thee,
My own, my beautiful, my undefiled!
And thou shalt be His child!

Therefore, farewell! — I go; my soul may fail me,
As the stag panteth for the water-brooks,
Yearning for thy sweet looks!
But thou, my first-born! droop not, nor bewail me;
Thou in the shadow of the Rock shalt dwell,
The Rock of Strength — farewell!"

AN EVENING WALK IN BENGAL.

BY BISHOP HEBER.

Our task is done! — on Gunga's breast
The sun is sinking down to rest:
And, moor'd beneath the tamarind bough,
Our bark has found its harbour now.
With furled sail, and painted side,
Behold the tiny frigate ride.

Upon her deck, 'mid charcoal gleams,
The Moslems' savoury supper steams,
While all apart, beneath the wood,
The Hindoo cooks his simpler food.

Come walk with me the jungle through;
If yonder hunter told us true,
Far off in desert dank and rude,
The tiger holds his solitude;
Nor (taught by recent harm to shun
The thunders of the English gun)
A dreadful guest, but rarely seen,
Returns to scare the village green.
Come boldly on! no venom'd snake
Can shelter in so cool a brake;
Child of the sun! he loves to lie
'Mid Nature's embers, parch'd and dry,
Where o'er some tower in ruin laid,
The peepul spreads its haunted shade,
Or round a tomb his scales to wreathe,
Fit warder in the gate of death!
Come on! Yet pause! behold us now
Beneath the bamboo's arched bough,
Where gemming oft that sacred gloom,
Glows the geranium's scarlet bloom,
And winds our path through many a bower,
Of fragrant tree and crimson flower;
The ceiba's crimson pomp display'd
O'er the broad plantain's humbler shade,
And dusk anana's prickly blade;
While o'er the brake, so wild and fair,
The betel waves his crest in air.
With pendent train and rushing wings,
Aloft the gorgeous peacock springs;
And he, the bird of hundred dyes,
Whose plumes the dames of Ava prize,
So rich a shade, so green a sod,
Our English fairies never trod;
Yet who in Indian bower has stood,
But thought on England's good green-wood?
And bless'd, beneath the palmy shade,
Her hazel and her hawthorn glade,
And breathed a prayer (how oft in vain)
To gaze upon her oaks again.
A truce to thought! the jackal's cry
Resounds like sylvan revelry;
And through the trees yon falling ray
Will scantly serve to guide our way.
Yet mark! as fade the upper skies,
Each thicket opes ten thousand eyes;
Before, beside us, and above,
The fire-fly lights his lamp of love,
Retreating, chasing, sinking, soaring,
The darkness of the copse exploring;
While to this cooler air confess'd
The broad Dhatura bares her breast

Of fragrant scent and virgin white,
A pearl around the locks of night!
Still as we pass, in soften'd hum,
Along the breezy alleys come
The village song, the horn, the drum,
Still as pass, from bush and brier,
The shrill cigala striks his lyre;
And what is she, whose liquid strain
Thrills through yon copse of sugar-cane!
I know that soul-entrancing swell!
It is — it must be — Philomel.

Enough, enough, the rustling trees
Announce a shower upon the breeze, —
The flashes of the summer sky
Assume a deeper, ruddier dye;
Yon lamp that trembles on the stream,
From forth our cabin sheds its beam;
And we must early sleep, to find
Betimes the morning's healthy wind.
But oh! with thankful hearts confess
E'en here there may be happiness;
And he, the bounteous Sire, has given
His peace on earth — his hope of heaven.

ON SEEING A DECEASED INFANT.

BY WILLIAM B. PEABODY.

And this is death! how cold and still,
And yet how lovely it appears!
Too cold to let the gazer smile,
And yet too beautiful for tears.
The sparkling eye no more is bright,
The cheek hath lost its roselike red;
And yet it is with strange delight
I stand and gaze upon the dead.

But when I see the fair wide brow,
Half shaded by the silken hair,
That never looked so fair as now,
When life and health were laughing there,
I wonder not that grief should swell
So wildly upward in the breast,
And that strong passion once rebel,
That need not, cannot be suppress'd.

I wonder not that parents' eyes
In gazing thus grow cold and dim,
That burning tears and aching sighs
Are blended with the funeral hymn;
The spirit hath an earthly part,
That weeps when earthly pleasure flies,
And heaven would scorn the frozen heart
That melts not when the infant dies.

And yet why mourn? that deep repose
Shall never more be broke by pain;
Those lips no more in sighs unclose,
Those eyes shall never weep again.
For think not that the blushing flower
Shall wither in the churchyard sod,
'T was made to gild an angel's bower
Within the paradise of God.

Once more I gaze -- and swift and far
The clouds of death in sorrow fly,
I see thee, like a new-born star,
Move up thy pathway in the sky:
The star hath rays serene and bright,
But cold and pale compared with thine;
For thy orb shines with heavenly light,
With beams unfading and divine.

Then let the burthen'd heart be free,
The tears of sorrow all be shed,
And parents calmly bend to see
The mournful beauty of the dead;
Thrice happy — that their infant bears
To heaven no darkening stains of sin;
And only breathed life's morning airs
Before its noonday storms begin.

Farewell! I shall not soon forget!
Although thy heart hath ceased to beat,
My memory warmly treasures yet
Thy features calm and mildly sweet;
But no, that look is not the last,
We yet may meet where seraphs dwell,
Where love no more deplores the past,
Nor breathes that withering word — farewell.

HYMN OF THE MORAVIAN NUNS,

AT THE CONSECRATION OF PULASKI'S BANNER.

The standard of Count Pulaski, the noble Pole who fell in the attack upon Savannah, during the American Revolution, was of crimson silk, embroidered by the Moravian Nuns of Bethlehem, in Pennsylvania.

When the dying flame of day,
Through the chancel shot its ray,
Far the glimmering tapers shed
Faint light on the cowled head,
And the censer burning swung,
Where before the altar hung
That proud banner, which with prayer,
Had been consecrated there.
And the nuns' sweet hymn was heard the while,
Sung low in the dim mysterious aisle.

Take thy banner! — may it wave
Proudly o'er the good and brave,
When the battle's distant wail
Breaks the sabbath of our vale, —
When the clarion's music thrills
To the hearts of these lone hills, —
When the spear in conflict shakes,
And the strong lance shivering breaks.

Take thy banner! — and beneath
The war-cloud's encircling wreath,
Guard it — till our homes are free —
Guard it — God will prosper thee!
In the dark and trying hour,
In the breaking forth of power,
In the rush of steeds and men,
His right hand will shield thee then.

Take thy banner! but when night
Closes round the ghastly fight,
If the vanquished warrior bow,
Spare him! — By our holy vow,
By our prayers and many tears,
By the mercy that endears;
Spare him — he our love hath shared —
Spare him — as thou wouldst be spared!

Take thy banner! — and if e'er
Thou shouldst press the soldier's bier,
And the muffled drum should beat
To the tread of mournful feet,
Then this crimson flag shall be
Martial cloak and shroud for thee!

And the warrior took that banner proud,
And it was his martial cloak and shroud.

ELLEN.

A FRAGMENT.

BY MISS LANDON.

Is she not beautiful, although so pale?
The first May flowers are not more colourless
Than her white cheek; yet I recall the time
When she was call'd the rose-bud of our village.
There was a blush, half modesty, half health,
Upon her cheek, fresh as the summer morn
With which she rose. A cloud of chestnut curls
Like twilight darken'd o'er her blue-vein'd brow;
And through their hazel curtains eyes whose light
Was like the violets when April skies
Have given their own pure colour to the leaves,
Shone sweet and silent as the twilight star.
And she was happy; innocence and hope

Make the young heart a paradise for love.
And she loved and was loved. The youth was one
That dwelt upon the waters. He had been
Where sweeps the blue Atlantic a wide world —
Had seen the sun light up the flowers like gems
In the bright Indian isles — had breathed the air
When sweet with cinnamon and gum and spice,
But he said that no air brought health or balm
Like that on his own hills, when it had swept
O'er orchards in their bloom, or hedges, where
Blossom'd the hawthorn and the honeysuckle; —
That, but one voyage more and he would come
To his dear Ellen and her cottage home —
Dwell there in love and peace. And then he kiss'd
Her tears away, talk'd of the pleasant years
Which they should pass together — of the pride
He would take in his constancy; Oh, hope
Is very eloquent! and as the hours
Pass'd by their fireside in calm cheerfulness,
Ellen forgot to weep.

At length the time
Of parting came; 't was the first month of spring.
Like a green fan spread the horse-chestnut leaves,
A shower of yellow bloom was on the elm,
The daisies shone like silver, and the boughs
Were cover'd with their blossoms, and the sky
Was like an augury of hope, so clear
So beautifully blue. Love! O young Love!
Why hast thou not security? Thou art
Like a bright river, on whose course the weeds
Are thick and heavy; briers are on its banks,
And jagged stones and rocks are mid its waves
Conscious of its own beauty, it will rush
Over its many obstacles, and pant
For some green valley as its quiet home.
Either it rushes with a desperate leap
Over its barriers, foaming passionate,
But prison'd still; or winding languidly
Becomes dark, like oblivion, or else wastes
Itself away. — This is Love's history!

They parted one spring evening: the green sea
Had scarce a curl upon its wave; the ship
Rode like a Queen of Ocean. — Ellen wept,
But not disconsolate, for she had hope;
She knew not then the bitterness of tears.
But night closed in, and with the night there came
Tempest upon the wind; the ocean light
Glared like a funeral pile; all else was black
And terrible as death. We heard a sound
Come from the ocean — one lone signal gun,
Asking for help in vain — follow'd by shrieks,
Borne by the ravening gale; then deepest silence:
Some gallant souls had perish'd. With the first
Dim light of morn we sought the beach; and there
Lay fragments of a ship, and human shapes

Ghastly and gash'd. But the worst sight of all,
A sight of living misery, met our gaze;
Seated upon a rock, drench'd by the rain,
Her hair torn by the wind, there Ellen sat,
Pale, motionless. How could love guide her there?
A corpse lay by her, in her arms its head
Found a fond pillow; and o'er it she watch'd,
As the young mother watches her first child.
It was her lover.

A LAMENT FOR CHIVALRY.

Alas! the days of Chivalry are fled!
The brilliant tournament exists no more!
Our loves are cold and dull as ice or lead,
And courting is a most enormous bore!

In those good "olden times," a "ladye bright"
Might sit within her turret or her bower,
While lovers sang and play'd without all night,
And deemed themselves rewarded by a flower.

Yet, if one favour'd swain would persevere,
In despite of her haughty scorn and laugh,
Perchance she threw him, with the closing year,
An old odd glove, or else a worn-out scarf.

And he a thousand oaths of love would swear,
As, in an ecstasy, he caught the prize;
Then would he gallop off, the Lord knows where,
Telling another thousand monstrous lies:—

All picturing her matchless beauty, which
He might discern, I ween, not much about,
Seeing he could but see her 'cross the ditch,
As she between the lattice peeped out.

Off then, away he 'd ride o'er sea and land,
And dragons fell and mighty giants smite,
With the tough spear he carried in his hand:
And all to prove himself her own true knight.

Meanwhile, a thousand more, as wild as he,
Were all employed about the selfsame thing;
And when each had rode hard for his "ladye,"
They all came back and met within a ring.

Where all the men who were entitled "syr"
Appear'd with martial air and haughty frown,
Bearing "long poles, each other up to stir,"*
And, in the stir up, thrust each other down.

* See Lady Morgan's chivalric defiance to the knights of the inky plume.

And then they gallop'd round with dire intent,
Each knight resolved another's pride to humble;
And laughter rang around the tournament
As oft as any of them chanced to tumble.

And when, perchance, some ill-starr'd wight might die,
The victim of a stout unlucky poke,
Mayhap some fair one wiped one beauteous eye,
The rest smiled calmly on the deadly joke.

Soon then the lady, whose grim stalwart swain
Had got the strongest horse and toughest pole,
Bedeck'd him kneeling with a golden chain,
And plighted troth before the motley whole.

Then trumpets sounded, bullocks whole were dress'd,
Priests with shorn heads and lengthy beards were seen;
'Mid clamorous shouts the happy pair were bless'd,
For Chivalry won Beauty's chosen queen.

And when fair daughters bloom'd like beauteous flowers,
To bless the gallant knight and stately dame,
They shut them up within their lonely towers,
That squires might fight for them and win them fame.

But maidens now from hall and park are brought,
Like Covent Garden flowers, in lots, to town:
No more by prowess in the lists 't is sought —
Beauty 's the purchase of the wealthiest clown!

Alas! the days of Chivalry are fled!
The brilliant tournament exists no more!
Men now are cold and dull as ice or lead,
And even courtship is a dreadful bore!

THE STORM.

The sun went down in beauty — not a cloud
Darken'd its radiance — yet there might be seen
A few fantastic vapours scatter'd o'er
The face of the blue heavens; — some fair and slight
As the pure lawn that shields the maiden's breast;
Some shone like silver — some did stream afar,
Faint and dispersed, like the pale horse's mane
Which Death shall stride hereafter, — some were glittering
Like dolphin's scales, touch'd out with wavering hues
Of beautiful light — outvying some the rose,
And some the violet, yellow, white, and blue,
Scarlet, and purpling red. — One small lone ship
Was seen, with outstretch'd sails, keeping its way
In quiet o'er the deep; — all nature seem'd
Fond of tranquillity; — the glassy sea
Scarce rippled — the halcyon slept upon the wave;
The winds were all at rest, — and in the east
The crescent moon, then seen imperfectly,

Came onwards, with the vesper star, to see
A summer day's decline.

The sun went down in beauty; but the eyes
Of ancient seamen trembled when they saw
A small black ominous spot far in the distance: —
It spread, and spread — larger and dark — and came
O'ershadowing the skies; — the ocean rose;
The gathering waves grew large, and broke in hoarse
And hollow sounds; — the mighty winds awoke,
And scream'd and whistled through the cordage; — birds,
That seem'd to have no home, flock'd there in terror,
And sat with quivering plumage on the mast.
Flashes were seen, and distant sounds were heard —
Presages of a storm.

The sun went down in beauty, — but the skies
Were wildly changed. — It was a dreadful night —
No moon was seen, in all the heavens, to aid
Or cheer the lone and sea-beat mariner —
Planet nor guiding star broke through the gloom; —
But the blue lightnings glared along the waters,
As if the *Fiend* had fired his torch to light
Some wretches to their graves; — the tempest winds
Raving came next, and in deep hollow sounds,
Like those the spirits of the dead do use
When they would speak their evil prophecies,
Mutter'd of death to come; — then came the thunder
Deepening and crashing as 't would rend the world;
Or, as the Deity pass'd aloft in anger,
And spoke to man — Despair! — The ship was toss'd,
And now stood poised upon the curling billows,
And now midst deep and watery chasms, that yawn'd
As 't were in hunger, sank; — behind there came
Mountains of moving water, — with a rush
And sound of gathering power, that did appal
The heart to look on; — terrible cries were heard;
Sounds of despair some, — some like a mother's anguish
Some of intemperate, dark, and dissolute joy —
Music and horrid mirth — but unallied
To joy; — and madness might be heard amidst
The pauses of the storm — and when the glare
Was strong, rude savage men were seen to dance
In frantic exultation on the deck,
Though all was hopeless. — Hark! the ship has struck,
And the fork'd lightning seeks the arsenal —
'T is fired — and mirth and madness are no more!
'Midst column'd smoke, deep red, the fragments fly
In fierce confusion — splinters and scorch'd limbs,
And burning masts, and showers of gold, — torn from
The heart that hugg'd it e'en till death. — Thus doth
Sicilian Etna in her angry moods,
Or Hecla, 'mid her wilderness of snows,
Shoot up their burning entrails, with a sound
Louder than that the Titans utter'd from
Their subterranean caves, when Jove enchain'd
Them, daring and rebellious. The black skies,

Shock'd at excess of light, return'd the sound
In frightful echoes, — as if an alarm
Had spread through all the elements — then came
A horrid silence — deep — unnatural — like
The quiet of the grave!

POETRY.

BY JAMES G. PERCIVAL.

The world is full of Poetry — the air
Is living with its spirit; and the waves
Dance to the music of its melodies,
And sparkle in its brightness. Earth is veil'd
And mantled with its beauty; and the walls,
That close the universe with crystal in,
Are eloquent with voices, that proclaim
The unseen glories of immensity,
In harmonies, too perfect, and too high,
For aught but beings of celestial mould,
And speak to man in one eternal hymn
Unfading beauty, and unyielding power.

The year leads round the seasons, in a choir
For ever charming, and for ever new;
Blending the grand, the beautiful, the gay,
The mournful, and the tender, in one strain,
Which steals into the heart, like sounds, that rise
Far off, in moonlight evenings, on the shore
Of the wide ocean resting after storms;
Or tones, that wind around the vaulted roof,
And pointed arches, and retiring aisles
Of some old, lonely minster, where the hand
Skilful, and moved, with passionate love of art,
Plays o'er the higher keys, and bears aloft
The peal of bursting thunder, and then calls
By mellow touches, from the softer tubes,
Voices of melting tenderness, that blend
With pure and gentle musings, till the soul,
Commingling with the melody, is borne,
Rapt, and dissolved in ecstasy, to Heaven.

'T is not the chime and flow of words, that move
In measured file, and metrical array;
'T is not the union of returning sounds,
Nor all the pleasing artifice of rhyme,
And quantity, and accent, that can give
This all pervading spirit to the ear,
Or blend it with the movings of the soul.
'T is a mysterious feeling, which combines
Man with the world around him, in a chain
Woven of flowers, and dipp'd in sweetness, till
He tastes the high communion of his thoughts,
With all existences, in earth and heaven,
That meet him in the charm of grace and power.

'T is not the noisy babbler, who displays,
In studied phrase, and ornate epithet,
And rounded period, poor and vapid thoughts,
Which peep from out the cumbrous ornaments
That overload their littleness. Its words
Are few, but deep and solemn; and they break
Fresh from the fount of feeling, and are full
Of all that passion, which, on Carmel, fired
The holy prophet, when his lips were coals,
His language wing'd with terror, as when bolts
Leap from the brooding tempest, armed with wrath,
Commission'd to affright us, and destroy.

MY OWN FIRESIDE.

BY ALARIC A. WATTS.

Let others seek for empty joys,
At ball, or concert, rout, or play;
Whilst, far from fashion's idle noise,
Her gilded domes, and trappings gay,
I while the wintry eve away, —
'Twixt book and lute the hours divide;
And marvel how I e'er could stray
From thee — my own Fireside!

My own Fireside! Those simple words
Can bid the sweetest dreams arise;
Awaken feeling's tenderest chords,
And fill with tears of joy my eyes!
What is there my wild heart can prize,
That doth not in thy sphere abide,
Haunt of my home-bred sympathies,
My own — my own Fireside!

A gentle form is near me now;
A small white hand is clasp'd in mine;
I gaze upon her placid brow,
And ask what joys can equal thine!
A babe, whose beauty 's half divine,
In sleep his mother's eyes doth hide; —
Where may love seek a fitter shrine,
Than thou — my own Fireside?

What care I for the sullen roar
Of winds without, that ravage earth;
It doth but bid me prize the more
The shelter of thy hallow'd hearth; —
To thoughts of quiet bliss give birth;
Then let the churlish tempest chide,
It cannot check the blameless mirth
That glads my own Fireside!

My refuge ever from the storm
Of this world's passion, strife, and care;

Though thunder clouds the sky deform,
Their fury cannot reach me there.
There all is cheerful, calm, and fair,
Wrath, Malice, Envy, Strife, or Pride,
Hath never made its hated lair,
By thee — my own Fireside!

Thy precincts are a charmed ring,
Where no harsh feeling dares intrude;
Where life's vexations lose their sting;
Where even grief is half subdued;
And Peace, the halcyon, loves to brood.
Then let the pamper'd fool deride,
I 'll pay my debt of gratitude
To thee — my own Fireside!

Shrine of my household deities!
Fair scene of home's unsullied joys!
To thee my burthen'd spirit flies,
When fortune frowns, or care annoys:
Thine is the bliss that never cloys;
The smile whose truth hath oft been tried;
What, then, are this world's tinsel toys
To thee — my own Fireside!

Oh, may the yearnings, fond and sweet,
That bid my thoughts be all of thee,
Thus ever guide my wandering feet
To thy heart-soothing sanctuary!
Whate'er my future years may be;
Let joy or grief my fate betide;
Be still an Eden bright to me
My own — MY OWN FIRESIDE!

CONSUMPTION.

BY JAMES G. PERCIVAL.

THERE is a sweetness in woman's decay,
When the light of beauty is fading away,
When the bright enchantment of youth is gone,
And the tint that glow'd, and the eye that shone,
And darted around its glance of power,
And the lip that vied with the sweetest flower,
That ever in Pæstum's* garden blew,
Or ever was steep'd in fragrant dew,
When all that was bright and fair is fled,
But the loveliness lingering round the dead.

Oh! there is a sweetness in beauty's close,
Like the perfume scenting the wither'd rose;
For a nameless charm around her plays,
And her eyes are kindled with hallow'd rays,

* Biferique rosaria Pæsti.—VIRG.

And a veil of spotless purity
Has mantled her cheek with its heavenly dye,
Like a cloud whereon the queen of night
Has pour'd her softest tint of light;
And there is a blending of white and blue,
Where the purple blood is melting through
The snow of her pale and tender cheek;
And there are tones, that sweetly speak
Of a spirit, that longs for a purer day,
And is ready to wing her flight away.

In the flush of youth and the spring of feeling,
When life, like a sunny stream, is stealing
Its silent steps through a flowery path,
And all the endearments that pleasure hath
Are pour'd from her full, o'erflowing horn,
When the rose of enjoyment conceals no thorn,
In her lightness of heart, to the cheery song
The maiden may trip in the dance along,
And think of the passing moment, that lies,
Like a fiery dream, in her dazzled eyes,
And yield to the present, that charms around
With all that is lovely in sight and sound,
Where a thousand pleasing phantoms flit,
With the voice of mirth, and the burst of wit,
And the music that steals to the bosom's core,
And the heart in its fulness flowing o'er
With a few big drops, that are soon repress'd,
For short is the stay of grief in her breast:
In this enliven'd and gladsome hour
The spirit may burn with a brighter power;
But dearer the calm and quiet day,
When the Heaven-sick soul is stealing away.

And when her sun is low declining,
And life wears out with no repining,
And the whisper, that tells of early death,
Is soft as the west wind's balmy breath,
When it comes at the hour of still repose,
To sleep in the breast of the wooing rose;
And the lip, that swell'd with a living glow,
Is pale as a curl of new-fallen snow;
And her cheek, like the Parian stone, is fair,
But the hectic spot that flushes there,
When the tide of life, from its secret dwelling,
In a sudden gush, is deeply swelling,
And giving a tinge to her icy lips,
Like the crimson rose's brightest tips,
As richly red, and as transient too,
As the clouds, in autumn's sky of blue,
That seem like a host of glory met
To honour the sun at his golden set:
Oh, then, when the spirit is taking wing,
How fondly her thoughts to her dear one cling,
As if she would blend her soul with his,
In a deep and long imprinted kiss;

So fondly the panting camel flies,
Where the glassy vapour cheats his eyes,
And the dove from the falcon seeks her nest,
And the infant shrinks to its mother's breast.
And though her dying voice be mute,
Or faint as the tones of an unstrung lute,
And though the glow from her cheek be fled,
And her pale lips cold as the marble dead,
Her eye still beams unwonted fires
With a woman's love and a saint's desires,
And her last fond lingering look is given
To the love she leaves, and then to Heaven,
As if she would bear that love away
To a purer world and a brighter day.

NAPOLEON MORIBUNDUS.

BY CHARLES MACARTHY.

Sume superbiam
Quæsitam meritis.

Yes! bury me deep in the infinite sea,
Let my heart have a limitless grave;
For my spirit in life was as fierce and free
As the course of the tempest-wave.

As far from the stretch of all earthly control
Were the fathomless depths of my mind;
And the ebbs and flows of my single soul
Were as tides to the rest of mankind.

Then my briny pall shall engirdle the world,
As in life did the voice of my fame;
And each mutinous billow that 's sky-ward curl'd
Shall seem to re-echo my name.

That name shall be storied in annals of crime
In the uttermost corners of earth;
Now breathed as a curse — now a spell-word sublime,
In the glorified land of my birth.

Ay! plunge my dark heart in the infinite sea;
It would burst from a narrower tomb;
Shall less than an ocean his sepulchre be
Whose mandate to millions was doom?

THE END OF TIME.

And I saw another mighty Angel come down from Heaven, clothed with a cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head; and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, and cried with a loud voice. And the Angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to Heaven: and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created Heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things that therein are, that there should be time no longer!

REVELATIONS, Chap. x.

I saw an Angel on a cloud,
Come floating through the air;
The Heaven's look'd like the world's dark shroud,
All blacken'd with despair:
With mighty stride he stalked forth,
Encompassing the south and north,
And eke the middle clime;
Earth reel'd beneath his ponderous weight,
The ocean roll'd all agitate,
Tumultuous and sublime.

A garb of light he round him cast,
Blended with Heaven's pure blue;
And thunder's blighting, withering blast,
He round his pathway threw:
Heaven's radiant, arch entwined his brow
(Which shone forth with a heavenly glow
Of majesty divine),
Seal of the Covenant firm and sure,
That through all ages shall endure,
Until the end of time.

The Heavens drew back to let him pass,—
With terror hence they fled;
All wither'd was the vernal grass,—
The sea laid bare its bed:
The mountains skipped to and fro,
Threat'ning the vales to overthrow,—
The troubled world did groan;
The sun withdrew his glittering rays,
Quenched beneath the brighter blaze,
That round the Angel shone.

Upon a mountain's rugged height
He fix'd his left foot sure,—
And on the ocean's waves so bright
Planted his right secure:
With arms uplifted to the sky,
He swore, by Him who reigns on high,
Girded with might and power:
And who created earth and sea
In all their vast immensity,—
That—Time should be no more!

Earth quaked at the fatal sound,
And to its centre shook, —
It reach'd creation's utmost bound;
Then with majestic look,
He stretch'd his arm up to the sun,
And thence pull'd forth that mighty one,
And hurl'd him to the sea:
The moon grew pale with wild affright,
The stars withdrew their glimmering light, —
For light no more could be!

The mountains melted to their base,
The Heavens fled away;
The sea could find itself no place,
Where it might longer stay:
Mankind in wild confusion fled,
The living mingling with the dead, —
Thrones and dominions fell:
The huge ship sank into the wave,
Ingulf'd in ocean's yawning grave, —
Buried beneath its swell!

The light still dim and dimmer grew,
Till swallowed up in night;
And then the Angel, to my view,
Shone like a meteor bright;
The tempest ceased its raging breath, —
All nature yielded up to death,
The earth, the sky, the sea:
A dark cloud rose upon my sight,
And shrouded all in tenfold night, —
'T was blank Eternity!

LOVE.

BY HENRY NEELE.

Love is a plant of holier birth,
Than any that takes root on earth;
A flower from heaven, which 't is a crime
To number with the things of time;
Hope in the bud is often blasted,
And beauty on the desert wasted;
And joy, a primrose early gay,
Care's lightest foot-fall treads away.

But love shall live, and live for ever,
And chance and change shall reach it never;
Can hearts in which true love is plighted,
By want or wo be disunited?
Ah! no; like buds on one stem born,
They share between them even the thorn
Which round them dwells, but parts them not;
A lorn, yet undivided lot.

Can death dissever love, or part
The loved one from the lover's heart?
No, no; he does but guard the prize
Sacred from moral injuries,
Making it purer, holier seem,
As the ice closing o'er the stream,
Keeps, while storms ravage earth and air,
All baser things from mingling there.

THE DYING EXILE.

BY EDMUND READE.

Farewell — a long farewell to thee,
My own, my native land!
Now would to God that I were free
Upon thy rugged strand!
If but for one last look to bless
Thy hills and deep-blue sky,
And all my love for thee confess:
Then lay me down and die.

But now I am alone, and none
Will hear when I am dead:
Perchance ere sets that glorious Sun,
My spirit shall be fled!
I watch him yet — and faintly smile
In death, to think that he
Will rise so bright upon that isle,
Where I may never be!

My Country! while I bless thee, how
My feelings in me swell:
Alas, I never knew till now
I loved thee half so well!
But when alone among strange men,
When friends forget, and false ones flee;
Something the heart *must* love, and then
It can but turn to thee!

Farewell, farewell! the sun's last gleams
Are sinking in the sea;
Along the shore the sea-bird screams,
Unheard, unreck'd by me;
I feel my ebbing breath decay,
And fail my darkening sight:
Yet ere I pass away, away,
My native land — good night!

THE END.

OH! LET US NEVER MEET AGAIN!

BY MISS LOUISA H. SHERIDAN.

Nay, seek no more with soothing art
(Since all our hours of love are vanished,)
To cheer with hope this aching heart,
From which all thought of joy is banished!
Thou lov'st no more! too well I know,
All hope to bring thee back is vain:
And, as I'd hide, from all, my wo,
Oh! let us never meet again!

I'll shun thee in the festive hall,
Where joyous forms around are seen,
Lest I might weep to think of all
Those scenes where we've together been!
I'll shun thee where the tide of song
Comes o'er my ear with well-known strain:
Thy tones would on my mem'ry throng —
So let us never meet again!

No more my favourite bard I'll read,
For *thou* hast marked each well-known page:
'Tis cold forgetfulness I need;
Nought else my sorrow could assuage.
I cannot seek my pencil's aid,
'T would sadly call forth mem'ry's train;
With *thee* I've sketched each hill and glade,
Where we shall never meet again!

And e'en my pen is faithless now;
To seek new themes 't will not be taught: —
It still would keep my early vow
To write to *thee* my inmost thought.
But I will ne'er address thee more!
My proud and wounded heart 't would pain,
If thou shouldst *now* my grief deplore.
Oh! may we never meet again!

STARS OF SONG.

Byron and Shelley, comets of our sphere,
Have swept their course erratic through the sky;
Now to the Empyrean soaring high,
Now down through darkest Chaos plunging sheer.
Two other Lights of Song, whose lustre clear
Was calm, — though quaint and coloured diversely, —
Stern Crabbe and stately Scott, (names ne'er to die!),
Have closed on our sad eyes their bright career.

Now sets a fifth — in whom the flame divine
Burnt with a pure and high, though fitful beam:
Enthusiast Coleridge! favourite of the Nine!
Hast thou too left us, like a twilight dream?
— Yes, gone — but in a higher sphere to shine,
Where Heavenly Love shall be the endless theme!

THE UNWILLING BRIDE.

BY THOMAS HAYNES BAYLY, ESQ.

The joy-bells are ringing — oh! come to the church:
We shall see the bride pass, if we stand in the porch.
The bridegroom is wealthy: how brightly arrayed
Are the menials who wait on the gay cavalcade,
The steeds with the chariots prancing along,
And the peasants advancing with music and song!

Now comes the procession; the bridemaids are there,
With white robes, and ribbons, and wreaths in their hair.
Yon feeble old knight the bride's father must be,
And now, walking proudly, her mother we see;
A pale girl in tears slowly moves by her side:
But where is the bridegroom, and where is the bride?

They kneel round the altar, — the organ has ceased,
The hands of the lovers are joined by the priest; —
That bond! — which death only can sever again!
Which proves ever after life's blessing or bane!
A bridal like *this* is a sorrowful sight:
See! the pale girl is bride to the feeble old knight.

Her hand on her husband's arm passively lies,
And closely she draws her rich veil o'er her eyes.
Her friends throng around her with accents of love:
She speaks not — her pale lips inaudibly move.
Her equipage waits, — she is placed by the side
Of her aged companion — a sorrowing bride!

Again the bells ring, and the moment is come
For the young heart's worst trial, the last look of home!
They pass from the village — how eagerly still
She turns and looks back from the brow of the hill!
She sees the white cottage — the gardens she made —
And she thinks of her lover, abandoned — betrayed!

But who, with arms folded, hath lingered so long
To watch the procession, apart from the throng?
'Tis he! the forsaken! The false one is gone —
He turns to his desolate dwelling alone;
But happier *there*, than the doom that awaits
The bride who must smile on a being she hates!