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W. G. Herbert Esq
November 11th 1873

OLIVER CROMWELL:

AN

Historical Romance.

William Henry Herbert

EDITED

BY HORACE SMITH, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

“BRAMBLETYE HOUSE.”

Yet is this tale, *true* though it be, as strange,
As full, methinks, of wild and wondrous change,
As any that the wandering tribes require,
Stretched in the desert round their evening fire;
As any sung of old in hall or bower
To minstrel harps at midnight's witching hour.

Rogers's Poems.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MAIN

CROMWELL.

BOOK II.

“They have drawn to the field
Two royal armies full of fiery youth,
Of equal spirit to dare, and power to do :
So near intrench'd that 'tis beyond all hope
Of human counsel they can e'er be sever'd,
Until it be determined by the sword
Who hath the better cause ; for the success
Concludes the victor innocent, and the vanquish'd
Most miserably guilty.”

MASSINGER.—*The Duke of Milan.*

CROMWELL.

CHAPTER I

Mal. Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there
Weep our sad bosoms empty—

Macd. Let us rather

Hold fast the mortal sword, and like good men
Bestride our downfallen birthdom.

SHAKESPEARE.—*Macbeth.*

A YEAR had passed since Ardenne's landing on his native shores, unfixed of purpose, and, above all, an advocate for peace!—a year in which events had taken place that rendered

hopeless all accommodation between the hostile parties, until one should have been proved decidedly superior. The very day on which the King had fled from London lest he should witness the return of the five members to the House, having been signalized by a most wild and ill-digested movement of the fiery Lunsford, sufficiently disclosed the intentions of the royalists by an attempt to seize a magazine of arms at Kingston—Then came the treachery of Goring—the King's fruitless effort against Hull—the calling out of the militia, the arming on both sides, and all the desultory skirmishes of small parties that were occurring daily for some months previous to the nominal commencement of the war.

The Queen, who had escaped to Holland, stealing and bearing with her the crown-jewels which were pawned at once to furnish arms, and men and money, was setting every spring in motion on the continent.—Rupert and Maurice had arrived in England, and the former was,

on his first interview, appointed general of the cavalry. The royal standard had been raised, some two months past, at Nottingham, with evil omens, and under auspices the most unfavourable—a mighty tempest having poured its fury on the gathering of the troops, dispirited, and few in number, and unfurnished with the most evident and indispensable equipments of an army—weapons, clothes, and ammunition. The flag itself, displaying, in addition to the wonted quarterings of England, a small escutcheon charged with the royal bearings and the crown, and compassed by a scroll with the proud motto “Render his due to Cæsar,” was scarcely elevated, ere a heavier gust of wind, accompanied with floods of rain and a fierce crash of thunder, shivered the staff in twain and dashed the ensign violently to the ground, while such was the increasing fury of the tempest that two whole days elapsed before it could be reared again.

Still, although by this overt act the King had

most unquestionably issued his appeal to the sword, as to the sole remaining arbiter, matters went on but heartlessly and slowly. Each side, averse to throw away the scabbard, paused in grim and terrible suspense, irreconcilably hostile to the other, yet unwilling to incur the blame of being first to strike, or foremost to refuse accommodation. The royal forces, far too weak to court the brunt of battle, aimlessly marched and counter-marched, levying contributions in this place, and mustering volunteers in that; while the superior party of the parliament, already strong enough to have surprised and crushed the royalists at a single blow, lay in their quarters waiting, as it would seem, till they should muster resolution to commence hostilities.

The truth, which has been strangely overlooked by all historians of these turbulent and most important times, was simply this—that, in the outset of that fearful strife, there was but little difference between the views and

hopes and fears of the most eminent and upright men of either party. How it should ever have been fancied, much less gravely argued, that the great body of the English gentry and nobility was anxious to subvert the constitution, which had been freed from the arbitrary power of the Norman princes by the sole efforts of their order, and to erect an absolute and unchecked despotism, which must have necessarily ruined their own caste, it is most difficult indeed to comprehend or to conjecture. Nor is it less absurd to hold, that the more liberal peers, who, neither few in number nor deficient in sagacity, enlisted on the people's side, were in the least degree prepared to overthrow that ancient monarchy from which they all derived their greatness, and to descend at once from their exalted grade to mere equality with their less elevated countrymen.

In simple fact, the leading men of either party dreaded both defeat and victory, with a nearly equal apprehension ; knowing that such

an overthrow befalling either host, as should conclude the other absolutely masters of the game, would be most hopelessly destructive to the liberties of England. It was then in this spirit that the councillors of Charles, scarcely more fearful of reverses which should deliver them a prey to their stern foemen, than of success which would inflame and aggravate the monarch's native haughtiness, laboured with all their powers to bring about some reconciliation; but in vain, their every effort being frustrated by the imbecile insincerity and double-dealing of their principal.

At length, when the last hopes were quenched of peace unbought by victory, the fiery Rupert, who from the first had been the open advocate of instant battle, acting with indefatigable and almost sleepless energy, collected horses, men, and cannon, from the northern and the midland counties, until the royal army amounted to the number of ten thousand—three foot brigades under Sir Jacob Astley, and the Earl of Lindsey,

an officer experienced in the wars of the Low Countries—three dragoon regiments, to act as horse or infantry, as need might be, under Sir Arthur Aston—Lord Bernard Stuart commanding the King's guards, a *troupe dorée* composed entirely of gentlemen whose annual incomes are said to have exceeded the united fortunes of all the members, who at the out-breaking of the war were voters in both Houses—a good park of artillery under the trusty Sir John Heydon—and the adventurous prince (himself a host) leading the cavalry, consisting of the very flower of the youthful gentry, practised in arms, and high in chivalrous and daring spirit. Then, early in October, having resolved to strike a blow, and anxious to give battle to his enemies, the King marched hastily from Shrewsbury upon the capital.

Meantime the Earl of Essex, who had been recently appointed by the parliament their general-in-chief, left the metropolis with an army, some fifteen thousand strong, more thoroughly

equipped and better armed than were the gentlemen of the opposing host; but far inferior to them in that sustained and burning spirit which is of more avail than tenfold numbers in the day of battle. The earl's instructions were to tender to the King a joint petition of the Houses, beseeching him to leave the gathering of malignants, whose ill counsels had so far prevailed to alienate him from his loving subjects, and to repair at once to the vicinity of his most loyal parliament; and, in the case that this petition should prove of none effect, to rescue him by force of arms from the foul traitors who surrounded and misled him. To this intent he was provided with all the requisites that constitute an army—a heavy train of well-arranged artillery, with ammunition and supplies of all kinds in profuse abundance—a powerful brigade of horse under the Earl of Bedford, and Sir William Balfour; and a picked body of the London trainbands, well disciplined and admirably well appointed.

Among the numerous nobles who accompanied the general of the parliament, two perhaps merit an especial notice, the young Lords Rochfort and Fielding—as being destined soon to meet, as foemen in the shock of battle, their own fathers, the Earls of Dover and of Denbigh, who were enrolled as volunteers in the King's guard of horse. Many there were indeed in this array who yielded not in spirit or in valour to the proudest cavalier of Charles, many who panted for the onset with all the patriotic zeal of freemen trampled and oppressed, with all the bitter and fanatic rancour of religious prejudice, and these were more than matches for the best of Rupert's soldiery.—But more were doubtful, and reluctant, and affected by the cold and backward spirit of their leaders, who felt perhaps a secret apprehension that, in battling for the liberty and constitution of their land, they might in some degree be warring with the interests of their order.

Such was the aspect of affairs, and such the state of parties, when on a brilliant morning toward the last days of October, a gallant

regiment of horse was winding through the deep green lanes and devious woodlands of Northampton, towards the small town of Keinton, distant perhaps some twenty miles, at which it was beginning to be understood that Essex had established his head-quarters. An animating spectacle they formed as they gleamed out, or disappeared among the lofty hedges and dense coppices, still glorious in the leafy garniture of unchanged autumn, their polished armour glinting back the cloudless sunshine in long and dazzling flashes, their colours fluttering in the cheerful breeze, their videttes warily surveying every thicket, the matches of their arquebuses ready kindled, and their extended lines sweeping along the irregular wood-roads in serpentine and wavy order, or pausing at each brook or dell—where they might possibly be set upon at disadvantage until their advanced guard should fall back with tidings that their path was unobstructed—and varying their array from open file to solid column as the nature of the ground might dictate.

The leader of this splendid body, was a fine-looking figure in the prime of life, well-formed and stately, and far above the ordinary height of men. He wore a military coat of strong buff leather, garnished with fringe of tawney silk three inches broad, and loops of golden braid, partially covered by a breast-plate, with its corresponding back-piece, polished till they shone bright as silver. He had no gorget, but a rich cravat of Flanders lace with long transparent ends half veiling the clear steel on which it fell. His dark curled hair flowed down his neck beneath the rim of a steel cap, or morion, exquisitely damasked but without crest or feather; his hands were guarded by high gauntlets, and his lower limbs by breeches of the same material similarly ornamented with his cassoc, and strong jack-boots, that would have set a sabre-cut at nought. His sword, a two-edged, basket-hilted rapier of uncommon length, hung from an orange-coloured scarf, betokening his adherence to the parliament—its army having

adopted for their badge that colour from the . the ancient liveries of Essex, as the cavaliers had assumed for their distinctive uniform, black feathers, and blue shoulder-knots—although the fashion of his garments and the general bearing of the wearer were more in character with the demeanour and the principles of their opponents, than of those stern and gloomy fanatics, who are so generally and so erroneously believed to have composed the great numerical strength of the liberal, or, to speak more justly, constitutional party. The animal he rode, a mare of splendid action symmetry and size, was evidently a practised charger, and accoutred as became one, with demipique and holsters, and all that goes to the equipment of a war-horse.

In these minutiae, no less than in the accurate array and perfect discipline of the tall hardy-looking youths, who rode along behind him in the strictest silence—in the condition and the biting of the horses—and above all in the cool intelligence with which he listened to the vary-

ing reports of his subordinates; the quick decisive firmness which made known, and the prompt energy which carried out his orders,—might be discovered at a glance the officer of many actions—the soldier on whose mind no lesson of experience had been lost, until his very nature was no more the same; that which was once an effort—once the result of intricate and thoughtful calculation, arising now from an intuitive foreknowledge, more like the wondrous instinct of an animal than the deep reasoning combinations of a man!

It lacked perhaps an hour of noon, when this detachment having extricated itself, without so much as hearing of an enemy, from the wide extent of woodland, portions of which may still be seen in the adjacent counties of Huntingdon and Bedford, had reached the summit of a considerable eminence; which falling away steeply toward the west commanded an extensive view over the velvet pastures of Northampton, checkered with corn-fields and dark tracts of

fallow—with many a whitewashed cottage peering from out the foliage of its orchards, and many a village steeple with its mossy graves and tufted yew-trees, and here and there some castellated mansion scarce seen amid its shadowy plantations—stretching away till they were bounded far to westward by the blue hills of Warwickshire.

Just on the brow of the declivity there stood a large and isolated farm with stabling and out-houses sufficient to accommodate a hundred head of cattle, upon the green before which the leader of the party drew his bridle, and, after a quick glance across the champaign at his feet, and another toward the sun which had already passed its height, entering the dwelling, he held short consultation with the sturdy yeoman who possessed the fertile acres.

Before five minutes had elapsed, he issued from the lowly doorway, ordering his party to dismount and pile their arms, and take what brief refreshment the farm-house might offer

during an hour's halt. A hasty bustle followed, as down the troopers sprang with jingling spur and scabbard, and merriment suppressed no longer by the rigid discipline enforced upon the march. No oaths, however, or profane and godless clamours were heard, disgracing equally the officers who tolerated and the men who uttered them. Gaiety there was, and decent sober mirth, but nought of boisterous, much less licentious revelling :—videttes were stationed on commanding points, patrols detailed — and then, the horses picketed and well supplied with provender, fires were lighted and canteens produced with all their savory stores ; and the men, stretched at length on the smooth green sward, chatted and laughed as gaily over their hurried meal, as though they were engaged in some exciting sylvan exercise, and not in the tremendous toil of warfare.

The hour allotted for their stay had well-nigh passed — when from their further outpost a horseman galloped in, bloody with spurring,

and, making way through the scattered groups, flung his rein heedlessly upon his charger's neck, and turned him loose before the door, while with an air betokening the consciousness of high bearing and stern intelligence he hastened to convey his tidings to his officer.

There needed not, however, words to tell the men that danger was at hand. A moment's anxious gaze at the vidette, and the jest ceased, the flagon was suspended ere it reached the thirsty lip, the laugh was not laughed out. Another moment, and the fires were all deserted—the remnants of the meal laid hastily aside—horses recruited by their feed were bridled, swords buckled on, and helmets braced, and firearms inspected; and, ere their leader came again among them in anxious conversation with the messenger—they waited to mount, only till the ready trumpets should sound boot and saddle!

“Get you to horse!”—he said—“Get you to horse, as silently as may be! But spare your

breath"—he added, turning abruptly to the bugler, who was already handling his instrument—"till it be needed for a charge, which, an we be so lucky as I deem we are, we may make, and right early. Sir Edmund Winthrop, have your men into line as speedily as may be; but move not, until further signal! My charger, Anderton, and let a serjeant's guard mount instantly!—I go to reconnoitre—a bugler with the subaltern!—Steady, men, steady!"—and, without further pause, he leaped into the saddle, and, followed by the small detachment, galloped at a fierce pace down the hill-side, rugged and broken as it was, in company with the patrol who had brought in the tidings.

Close to the bottom of the hill, whereon the troops were halting, there ran a deep and hollow gorge, cutting across the road, which they had kept thus far, directly at right angles, and screened from observation on the upper side by a long straggling belt of furze and underwood, with here and there a huge and weather-beaten

oak or glossy beech, forming the outskirts of a heavy mass of forest that fringed for several miles in length, the extreme left of the level country across which their line of march would lead them. Through this gorge, as the sentinel reported, a powerful force of cavalry was moving toward the high road, at scarcely two miles distance, but whether friends or foes he might not, as he said, determine.

Checking his charger at the junction of the roads, the officer dismounted, and taking off his headpiece, lest its glitter should betray him, stole forward through the trees to a high sandstone bluff commanding the whole gorge. From this he instantly discovered the approaching troops, who had so nearly come upon him unawares. There were at least five hundred horse in view, all cuirassiers completely cased in steel, escorting, as it seemed, a strong brigade of field artillery. When first they had been seen by the vidette they were emerging from the forest-land alluded to before; and had

attempted, as he said, a cross-road visible from the hill-side ; but it had proved so miry, as he judged from the slow progress of the guns, that they had countermarched, and were advancing steadily, as now beheld, under the guidance of a countryman who rode beside their leader, toward the sandy gorge by which they evidently hoped to gain the practicable road.

Earnestly did the wary partisan gaze on the glittering columns, searching their movements, and examining their dress and arms with eager scrutiny, and ever and anon sweeping the country in their rear with an inquiring glance, that seemingly expected further indications from that quarter. But it was all in vain. The regiment in view wore neither scarfs nor any badge that might inform him of their politics or party—their colours were all furled around their staves and cased in oil-skin—and all, from which he might in anywise conjecture of which host they formed a portion, was the exact and veteran discipline their movements indicated—far too exact, as he supposed, from the reports prevailing through

the country, for the tumultuary levies of the puritans.

The hollow way on which they were advancing opened at a mile's distance on the plain, and it appeared that the new-comers were about to enter it, unthinking of surprise, and confident, perhaps, in their own power.

“If they be foes, we have them!” cried the partisan. “Back, Anderton, back to the regiment—ride for your life!—Tell Armstrong to lead down three troops, dismounted, with their arquebuses ready, and their matches lighted, beneath the cover of yon dingle, on the hill-side, till he shall reach this gorge, then line it with his musketry! Let Anstruther wheel, with three more, about yon round-topped hillock—in half an hour he may debouche upon the plain—or sooner if he hear our shot—and charge upon the rear of yon horse regiment—they will be in the trap ere then! Sir Edmund Winthrop will lead down the rest by the same road we came—I tarry for him! away! Be swift and silent! Away! for more than life is on your speed!”

And with the word the subaltern dashed furiously away, spurning the pebbles high into the air at every bound, and instantly was lost to sight behind the angle of the sandy banks; while he who had commanded, after another wistful gaze toward the approaching squadron, returned with leisurely and quiet steps to his good charger. With his own hand he drew the girths more tight, looked to each strap and buckle of the rein and stirrups, patted her arched crest with a fleeting smile, and mounting rode with half a dozen followers sharply along the gorge, as if to meet the strangers, who now seemed disposed to pause upon the plain and reconnoitre, ere they should enter a defile so perilous and narrow.

Just at this moment—while a score or two of troopers rode out from the advanced guard of the horse which had now halted, and warily dispersing themselves among the broken ground began to beat the thickets with deliberate and jealous scrutiny—a low, stern hum arose from the dark corps of cuirassiers—increasing still

and swelling on the ear, till it was clearly audible for a full mile around, a burst of deep-toned manly voices—harsh perhaps in themselves and tuneless, but harmonized by distance, and the elastic atmosphere on which they floated, till they were blent at last into a solemn and melodious sound. Louder they rose and louder on the breeze, and now were answered by a faint echo from out the dim aisles of the forest in their rear, among the leafy screens of which the arms and standards of another and another band might fitfully be seen to glitter. It was the soul-inspiring crash of sacred music, the peal of choral voices untaught and undirected save by the impulse of a thousand hearts attuned to one high key of patriotic piety—unmixed with instruments of wind or string—a deep sonorous diapason—the soldier’s anthem to the God of Battles and the Lord of Hosts!

“Arise! arise!” the mighty sound went forth, its every syllable distinctly audible to the excited listener—

‘ Arise !—arise ! oh God—our God arise !
Ride on in night, in terror, and renown—
A kindling flame, their nobles to consume—
A two-edged sword, to smite their princes down !

“ Thou, that dost break the arrows and the bow—
Thou, that dost knap the ashen spear in sunder—
Thou, Lord of Hosts, that gavest the horse his strength,
And clothed’st the volume of his neck in thunder—

“ Be thou our rock—our fortress of defence—
Our horn of safety, in whose strength we trust—
So shall their hosts be chaff before the wind—
So shall their thousands grovel in the dust !

“ So shall our feet be crimson with their blood—
Their tongues our dogs shall purple with the same—
The fowls of air shall have them for a spoil—
Their pride shall be a mock—a curse their name !

“ For not in armour, nor the winged force
Of chargers do we hope—but only see
Thee, by whose aid their vauntings to outspeed—
Most merciful !—most mighty !—only Thee !”

Scarce had the first sounds reached the leader’s ear, before he checked his mare abruptly—“Walters,” he cried at once, “away

with you, and overtake him ere he gain the regiment! These be no enemies, but friends! Let not a troop descend from the hill-side—bid them await me, as they be, in order!—spare not your spurs, nor fear to spoil your horseflesh—we have no time to lose! I well had deemed,” he added, muttering to himself, after the orderly had galloped off with his commands, “I well had deemed their rear was many a mile advanced past this ere now. Pray Heaven, that Essex lack not men to hold the King in check, as he is like to do, if that this news be sooth how he hath gathered head toward Keinton and Edgehill!”

Without further words, he hastened down the road, to be, as soon as he had cleared the first projection of the broken banks, discovered by the reconnoitring party in advance. A dozen carbines were presented on the instant, at a short range—“Stand-ho!”

“Friends! friends!” he shouted in reply, but without altering his pace, “can you not see our

colours," waving his orange scarf abroad, as he closed with the foremost trooper.

"Stand, friend, then!—if that friend you be—stand, friend, and give the word!" returned the other gruffly—"Stand! or I do profess that I will shoot—yea! shoot thee to the death!"

"How now, thou peevish knave," replied the officer in high and ireful tones, "recover instantly thy carbine—marshal me straight unto the leader of yon horse! Who is he that commands them?"

For a moment's space the grim parliamentarian stubbornly gazed upon the features of the gallant who addressed him, as if reluctant to obey his mandate, but then a gleam of recognition flashed across his sunburnt features. "I crave your pardon," he said, half abashed, "it is, an I mistake not, Lieutenant-colonel Ardenne, of the Parliaments?"

"Lead on, then, sirrah! since thou knowest me," interrupted Edgar, shortly, "lead on, an

thou wouldst not repent it—and tell me who commands yon horse brigade?”

“Stout Colonel Cromwell,” answered the soldier more respectfully, “stout and courageous Colonel Cromwell! He will, I do believe, rejoice at this encounter. This way, good sir, yonder he sits on the black horse beside the standard, awaiting our return. Lo you, he sees us, and the files move onward!”

And he spoke truly, for as the cavalry perceived the videttes moving orderly and slowly back they filed off, troop succeeding troop, toward the entrance of the lane, advancing on a gentle trot in regular and beautiful array. As they passed Ardenne, many a scrutinizing eye perused his figure and equipments, and in most instances a sanctified and solemn sneer disturbed the dark repose of their grave features—called up, as it would seem, by the rich dress and courtly air of the young officer, which in their wonted parlance were denounced as “fleshly lusts that war against the soul,”

devices of the evil one, fringes, phylacteries, and trappings of the beast.

Nor, in the meanwhile, did Edgar turn a heedless or incurious glance toward those with whom, discarding friends and kindred, birth-right, and rank, and chivalrous association, as things of small avail compared to the great common weal, he had now cast his lot for ever. The first emotion of his mind was deep anxiety—the second wonder—and the third unqualified and unmixed admiration. Never he thought, in Germany or France, never among the veteran legions of the Lion of the North, the Protestant Gustavus, had he beheld superior discipline, or men more soldier-like and promising. Mounted on strong black chargers, of full sixteen hands in height, their furniture of the most simple kind, but well designed and in the best condition—their iron panoply, corslet and helm and taslets, stainless and brilliant—and above all, their bearing and demeanour—their seats upon their horses, firm yet easy—their muscular and well-

developped limbs—their countenances full of resolution and breathing all—despite the difference of individual character, and the various operations of the same affection on minds of different bias—a strange expression of religious sentiment—solemn in some, and stern, or even sullen—in others wild, fanatical, exalted, and triumphant—yet in all more or less apparent as evidently forming the great spring and motive of their action.

Still, though attentive in the first degree to the essential rules of military discipline, keeping an accurate and well-dressed front, and, managing their heavy chargers with precision, there was not any of that deep respectful silence among these military saints which Edgar had been used to look for in the strictly-ordered service of the Netherlands, and to esteem a requisite of soldiership;—but on the contrary, as every troop rode past him, there was a constant hum, suppressed indeed and low, but still distinctly audible, of conversation; and he might

mark the knotted brows and clenched hands of the vehement disputers, arguing—as it would seem from the decided gestures, and the texts which he occasionally caught, lending an elevated savour to their homely language, and more than all from the continual appeal to the well-worn and greasy bibles which each of these stern controversialists bore at his girdle—on questions of religious discipline, or points of abstruse doctrine.

Although this mixture of the soldier and religionist, this undue, and, as it seemed to him, irreverend blending of things good and holy with the dreadful trade of blood, jarred painfully on his correct and feeling mind, he could not but acknowledge that this dark spirit of religious zeal, this confidence in their own overweening righteousness, this fixed unwavering belief that they were the elected and predestined instruments of the Most High—“to execute,” as he could hear them cry aloud, “vengeance upon the Heathen, and punishment upon the

people! To bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron!"

Here was indeed a mighty and effective agent to oppose that chivalrous enthusiastic bravery, that loyal self-devoting valour, which inflamed the highborn army of the cavaliers to deeds of noble daring. Nor did he entertain a doubt, when he perceived the extraordinary person who commanded them occupied in preaching, or expounding rather the mysterious prophecies of the Old Testament—to which especially the puritans inclined their ear—to an attentive knot of officers, grouped, some upon their horses, and yet more dismounted, around the regimental standard,—but that he had some reason far more cogent than mere feelings of devotion for thus encouraging a spirit so unusual in the breasts of his stout followers.

The colonel—for to such rank had Cromwell recently been elevated, more even in consideration of the powerful and trusty regiment which he had levied from the freeholders and yeomanry

of Huntingdon by his own personal and private influence, than of his services performed already, not either few or inconsiderable, keeping the cavaliers in check, surprising many of their leaders, anticipating all their meditated risings, and cutting off all convoys whether of money or munitions, throughout the counties of the Eastern association—the colonel, as he met the eye of Ardenne, was seated on his powerful black war-horse, bestriding him, as it would seem, with giant strength and perfect mastery of leg and hand, but with an air wholly unmilitary and devoid of ease or grace—sheathed nearly cap-à-pie in armour of bright steel, heavy and exquisitely finished, but utterly without relief or ornament of any kind. A band or collar of plain linen with a broad hem fastened about his short herculean neck varied alone the stern simplicity of his attire. No feather waved above his low and graceless casque—no shoulder-knot or scarf bedecked his weapon, which was girt about his middle, by a

belt of buff three inches at least in width, and balanced on the right side by a formidable dudgeon and the brass-bound case of the familiar bible, which he now held extended in his left hand, while with the finger of his right he vehemently smote the open pages at each emphatic pause of his discourse.

Cromwell's features showed not now so sanguine or so kindled as when Ardenne last beheld them ; but on the contrary there was a mild half-veiled expression about the heavy eye, and though the lines were strong and marked as ever, there was more of deliberate and quiet resolution than of imperiousness denoted by the firmness of his mouth. It was the countenance he thought of a calm visionary, pensive and meditative in his mood, and rather steady in the maintenance of his own fixed opinions, than zealous to prescribe or controvert the fancies or the rights of others.

But Edgar had little time for noting the expression, changed as he fancied it to be, of

his superior—much less for marking the diverse features of the martial auditors—for, as he drew nigh to the spot whereon they stood, Cromwell had ended his discourse, and with a word or two of military precept was dismissing his attendants to their several stations. Several dashed past him as he rode up to the little eminence on which the colours were erected, and but two were waiting near the colonel when he reached him—one, a bull-necked, coarse-featured, and ungainly-looking person with a gay feather in his morion, a tinsel tassel on his rapier's hilt, and a falling collar of some low-priced lace hanging above his gorget;—the other an erect and well-made man, not past the prime of youth, with features singularly noble and expressive, though of an almost Spanish swarthiness, and tinctured with a deep and melancholy gravity.

“Ha! Master Ardenne!” exclaimed Oliver, his eye joyfully flashing as he recognized him—
“Right glad am I to see you—not carnally, nor

with a worldly-minded and selfish pleasure, but in that there will be work to do anon, in which the righteous cause shall need all arms of its supporters! Have you a power at hand?—Where be they—in what force?—Not travel-worn, I trust me!”

“Three hundred horse,” Edgar replied, “on the height yonder—but for those trees you might behold them where we stand!—I left them but just now to reconnoitre your advance, under Sir Edward Winthrop my lieutenant.”

“Good! good!” cried Cromwell eagerly, “and how far have you marched to-day—be your men travel-toiled—your steeds leg-weary?—for verily we have a march before us.”

“We have but travelled six brief miles this forenoon—and barely sixteen yesterday—my men are in right spirits, and my horses fresh! I could accomplish twenty miles ere nightfall, and that without fatigue!”

“Surely the Lord is gracious,” was the answer, “and of His grace too shall we right soon

make trial. My Lord of Essex hath ere now his post at Keinton—and the man Charles Stuart hath at length mustered head to face him. 'Tis marvel that they be not at it even now. I fear me the lord-general shall lack both horse and cannon, but we have marched already a sore distance with our ponderous guns and heavy armature, nor may I now adventure to press on more hastily without dispersing my command. Ride with me to your regiment, good sir—I trow you were best speedily move forward.—Keinton is barely twelve miles distant, and the roads, they tell me, sound and passable.”

As he spoke, touching his charger lightly with the spur, he broke into a managed canter.

“Cornet, advance your colours,” he exclaimed in short keen accents, strangely at variance with the monotonous and inexpressive tones of his discourse when unexcited; “Sound kettledrums, and march!” and riding briskly forward easily passed the troops while filing through the lane;

“ Halt them here, Ireton,” he said to the dark-favoured officer who had accompanied him, as he turned into the main road having outstripped the forces; “ Halt them in column, here, within the lane till I return—and Desborough, do thou ride back to Hampden’s regiment of foot—it is a mile or so in the rear—and bid him bring it up as rapidly as may be — now, Master Ardenne, I attend you !”

As they rode up to Edgar’s quarters, Cromwell informed him briefly and with none of those prolix and verbose sentences, with which he was at times accustomed to confuse the senses of his hearers, that he, as senior officer, and therefore in command of the brigade forming Lord Essex’s rear-guard, was marching up at his best pace with his own trusty cavalry, and two — the stoutest—of the Parliament’s foot regiments, beside a strong division of field guns—that by want of intelligence the general—as he had learned himself but yesterday—was hastening

right upon the King, and, he was fearful, would fall unawares, and unprepared for battle, upon his very outposts.

“ These tidings I received of a sure hand,” he added, “ though whence it needeth not to advertize you—Whom the Lord listeth to enlighten surely at his own time shall he inform him. But so it is—and it may be that Essex knoweth not his peril!—Wherefore I pray you—Ha! be these your men?—I do profess to you I hold them stout and soldierly—not like the drunken tapsters and vile turn-coat serving men, who (fy on it! that I should say so) do compose the bulk of our array! Truly these fellows shall do credit to the cause—so that the spirit—the right leaven be toward—and the Lord strike on our side!—Wherefore I pray you lead them, as swiftly as you find consistent with order, upon Keinton.—If that they have not yet joined battle, say thus to the lord-general, that I beseech him hold off from them so long as he may

—I shall be with him by nine of to-morrow's clock. Ha!—heard you nothing?"

He broke off abruptly, as a deep distant sound rolled heavily upon the air, and before Ardenne might reply, the sullen rumbling was again repeated, like the faint muttering of a rising thunderstorm or the premonitory growling of an earthquake.

“It was not thunder!” answered Edgar, but in the voice of one asserting, rather than questioning—“there are no clouds aloft, nor yet on the horizon!”

“Ordnance!” exclaimed the other—“Ordnance—and heavier too than ours!—Listen, now listen!”—And again the heavy rolling sound came surging down the wind, which freshened slightly from the westward—again it came, after a momentary pause, yet louder than before and more distinct, and then continued without interval the deep unquestionable voice of a hot cannonade.

“ Away, sir—God go with you !” cried the stern puritan, excited now beyond the bounds of self-restraint ; “ Tarry not on the way, nor loiter ! Gird up your loins, I say—Ride on !—ride on, and conquer ! Verily, but that it is the Lord’s own doing, verily, Edgar Ardenne, I would have envied thee thy fortune. Ride on !—thou shalt be yet in time. Ride on—Amen ! Selah !”

While he yet spoke, the officers and men, stirred up already by the near sound of battle, and almost maddened with excitement by the exulting and prophetic cries of Cromwell, were vieing with each other, these to give forth, those to obey, and almost to anticipate, the needful orders—and as he uttered the last words at the full pitch of his piercing voice, the trumpets rang a thrilling flourish—the squadron, with a single shout, unbidden and unanimous, that spoke the burning feelings of the troopers, swept on at a hard trot, and in an instant not a sound was to be heard save the thick-beating clatter

of the hoofs, mixed with the clang of spur and scabbard, and now and then a boom of the deep kettledrum timing the pace of the advance.

Onward! onward they hurried at the utmost speed which prudence would admit, and which nothing but the admirable quality and high condition of their chargers enabled them to prosecute. Mile after mile was passed, and still the dull and awful roar—the knell of many a gallant spirit—waxed clearer and more clear.

Having accomplished seven miles within the hour, they halted for ten minutes in a small hamlet to water and to breathe their horses, and there—when the confused and constant noise of their own rapid march was silent—they might distinguish the first sharp explosion of the leading gun in every rolling volley—and ever and anon, between the deep-mouthed cannon, the grinding rattle of the musketry was audible, though faintly.

Onward! onward again, and ere another hour elapsed, Ardenne had marked the clouds of

smoke surging and eddying above the distant hills. The squadron cleared the verge of a low eminence; a gentle valley slept below them in the still misty radiance of a rich autumnal sunset; a tranquil stream wound through it, crossed by a lofty one-arched bridge, built, as was evident from the bright ripples of the ford beside it, merely for use in times of wintry flood, and to the left, at a short mile above the bridge, nestled the whitewashed cottages of a neat country village. The ridge which bounded this fair dale toward the west, though cultivated at the base, and checkered with dark woods and golden stubbles, lay bare toward the rounded summits in unenclosed and open sheep-walks. Above these summits the volumes of smoke rose white as fleeces of the purest wool, and scarce less solid to the eye, relieving every object on the brow, as plainly as though it had stood out against a clear horizon; while all the mingled din of battle rolled up, a near and fearful contrast to the sweet peace of that secluded spot.

Just as they gained a fair view of the valley and the heights beyond, a single figure crossed the opposite swell, dark and distinctly seen; a horseman on a furious gallop!—as he descended, a slant sunbeam glanced upon his iron head-piece—he was a trooper—flying!—another rushed across the ridge—another, and another—a confused and panic-stricken group.

“Forward!—secure the passage of the stream—Forward! Ho! Forward!” and at a yet more rapid pace they plunged down the descent; they reached the causeway of the bridge—they lined the banks with their arquebusiers, and waited the arrival of the fugitives. On came the first, urging his jaded steed, but urging him in vain—his sword was gone—his holsters empty—his buff coat soiled and splashed with many a miry stain. His spurs alone were bloody.

Long ere he reached the bridge, Ardenne’s quick eye had caught the orange scarf, and he rode forth alone to meet him. At first the fugitive drew up his horse, as though he would

have turned, but a fresh roar of cannon from behind decided him. "All's lost!—all's lost!"—he cried—"all's lost—Fly! fly! Rupert is close behind!"

"Silence, for shame!"—shouted the partisan—"coward and slave, be silent, or I cleave thee to the earth! If all be lost, why rages yon hot cannonade?—How far from this to the field?"

"A short three miles," replied the other, trembling and fearful no less of new acquaintance, than of the foes he fled. Meanwhile on came the rest—all panic-stricken, travel-soiled and weaponless; but not one man was wounded.

"The cowards!"—Edgar muttered, as if carelessly, when he rejoined his men, fearful lest they might be disheartened. "The vile dastard hounds! that fled without blow stricken, or blood drawn! But that 'twere loss of time, I would draw out a file for execution. We will advance, and win more easily, that none are left to cumber us with heartless counsels! Fly on, ye dogs"—he said more loudly, as he wheeled

his men once more into their column—"Fly on, and pray, the while ye fly, that ye meet not with Cromwell on your route, else shall ye but repent that the cavaliers made not an end of ye before your race began, for, an I know him, he will cut it right short with a halter or a volley!"

And with a scornful laugh he cantered on, eager to gain the vantage of the hill, and seeing at a glance that no more runaways poured over it.

"It cannot be"—he said to his lieutenant,—
"it cannot be, that the day goes utterly against us, else how should these have fled three miles from the encounter, and still the firing on both sides continue? Continue?—said I,—nay, but it waxes warmer!"

They reached the summit of the ridge, and, at first sight, Edgar indeed believed that all was over. A long broad valley lay outstretched beneath him, that might almost be called a plain—the foreground scattered thick with groups of roundheads, flying—here singly, here

in bodies—to the south toward the town of Keinton, in a line nearly parallel to the range of heights on which he stood, while in the middle distance he might see a torrent of dispersed pursuing cavalry with flaunting plumes and fluttering scarfs, swords brandished to the sun, and pistol shots all redly flashing out through the dense smoke, as unrelentingly they urged the massacre. But as he looked more stedfastly upon the scene, he could distinguish, at some two or three miles' distance toward the northern verge of the unbroken valley, two dark uninterrupted lines whence rose the smoke, and burst the vivid flashes of artillery, with undiminished vigour; he could discern, between the cloudy screens, the wavering and wheeling masses that still waged the balanced fight; and he could hear the rattling volleys of the musketry sharp and incessant.

“ ’Tis but our cavalry”—he said—“ ’tis but our cavalry that fly, and their horse-general has lost a golden opportunity; had he but wheeled

upon our flank, when the dog troopers fled, he might have gained the battle! but it is now too late, and, an he look not out the sharper, we may yet give him a rebuff he dreams not of. Sound trumpets—ha! sound merrily, a rally and a charge! Advance, brave hearts, we will redeem the day. For lo!” he added with rare tact, as he perceived the royal horse relaxing their pursuit, and heard their bugles winding a recall. “For lo! they have perceived us, and retreat already”

And down the slope he moved in admirable order, interposing a small wood between his force and the retiring cavalry of the victorious royalists, whom, notwithstanding his most politic vaunt, he little wished at that time to encounter.

Just ere he came upon the level ground, he carefully reviewed the scene before him, and was even more convinced than ever, that the battle was indeed yet undetermined, and further yet that the royalist horse were at the last

aware of their mistake in urging the pursuit too far; for he might see them straining every nerve now to repair their error, as they swept back toward the left-hand rear of the contending parties, leaving thereby the access to the right wing of Lord Essex, whom Ardenne justly deemed to lie between himself and the King's forces, easy and unobstructed.

Instantly he perceived, and profited as instantly, by this advantage, of marching at a sharp trot across the field strewn with the mangled carcases of those who, by their dastard flight, had lost the wretched lives they sacrificed their honour to preserve, and forfeited all claim to that precarious boon—a soldier's pity.

Once on the level ground, he could discover nothing further, and the suspense was fearful—and now the cannonading ceased—the musketry fell thicker and more constant—then that ceased likewise, and was followed by the faintly-heard hurrah of charging horse, and the wild chorus of a psalm.

“The day is ours!” he shouted, as he recognised the sounds; “on! on! to share the glory!”

Faster they hurried; and but little time elapsed, ere he brought up his squadron without the slightest opposition, or, indeed, notice on the King’s part, to the extreme right of the position occupied in the commencement of the action by the army of the Parliament. The moment was indeed most critical, and Edgar could not but perceive—as having left his squadron for the moment in command of his lieutenant, he rode up and reported to the general—that his arrival was deemed singularly opportune.

Never, perhaps, had been a field more nearly lost—never a victory more madly cast away—never a battle poised more equally. The base desertion of Sir Faithful Fortescue, the terror-stricken flight of Waller’s horse on the left wing before the fiery charge of Rupert, and the defeat of the right wing by Wilmot and Sir Arthur Aston, had left both flanks of the Parliamenta-

rians utterly naked and unguarded ; so that a single charge by either of the royalist commanders upon their flank or rear, which they had gained, must have annihilated all of their array which yet stood firm—the foot under the earl in person, and a reserve of horse under Sir William Balfour.

But with that desperate and selfish fury which neutralized, in every instance, the effects of his undaunted valour, Rupert passed the left as Wilmot passed the right of Essex, trampling and cutting down their unresisting adversaries for several miles' distance from the field, the former suffering his men to sack the town of Keinton, and to disperse among the baggage of the enemy, while his desertion had not only robbed the King of all his hopes of victory, but actually placed him in a more evil plight, and peril far more imminent, than that in which defeat had placed the foe. For Balfour, with his squadron of reserve, seeing the plain entirely clear of horse, had charged the royal foot with such a

steadiness of persevering courage, that he had cut the Earl of Lindsey's regiment to pieces, taking that nobleman with his brave son, Lord Willoughby, both desperately wounded, prisoners—winning the King's own standard—throwing the centre into perilous confusion, and hewing his way almost to the person of the monarch.

Just at this moment, when a bold advance of his own line must have completed the King's ruin, Lord Essex was compelled, by Rupert's re-appearance on his rear with his fast-rallying cavalry, who, though in disarray and tired, both horse and man, were flushed with their success and high in spirit, to recal Balfour to make head against him; and that bold leader's trumpets were calling off his troopers from their half-achieved success, when Ardenne reached the field, and was directed instantly to move his fresh men forward to protect the left wing of the infantry, till Balfour should draw off and relieve him.

Edgar's troops, though new to service, were

admirably disciplined, and full of daring confidence in their tried leader, and with such promptitude and regularity did they manœuvre and deploy in face of a superior body, that he almost regretted that there was no better opportunity to prove their mettle, and to flesh their maiden swords.

His duty quietly performed, and the reserve of Balfour being re-formed in haste and fronting Rupert, he was commanded once again to occupy his first position on the right; and now, instinctively, he saw that either army might be deemed half conquered; that a single charge—nay, but a single demonstration—would suffice to win an absolute and undisputed victory. Each host was spiritless and disarrayed—the leaders on each side confused and doubtful—the troops exhausted, slack, and heartless.

Vainly he prayed the general-in-chief to suffer him to risk his single regiment in but one charge on Rupert's half-collected squadrons; pointing out to him clearly, but without effect, the strong

presumption that his fresh men and vigorous horses must sweep away, like dust, the cavaliers worn out with the lassitude for ever consequent on over-fierce excitement, and troubled further at finding themselves assailed, from having of late been assailants, and the certainty that if such should be the case, undoubted conquest must ensue.

The earl was cold and dubious: "we may not hope," he said, "we may not hope for victory to-night. It is a mercy from on high—I had right nearly said a miracle—that we stand here as now, at vantage, holding the better of a doubtful day! An hour ago methought all was lost. Moreover, it has gone tenfold more fatally with them than us. We have lost privates—men neither high of heart, nor strong of hand, much less of eminence or wisdom—they the first flowers of England. Oh! I could well-nigh weep, but that 'twere treason to our cause, for the pure blood that has been shed like water—Lindsey, and Aubigny, and Stewart, and Ed-

mund Verney, the bravest and the best of the army, all lost—all lost in this accursed quarrel! Two more such fields as this were fatal to the King, while ten such would but leave us, at the worst, where now we are!”

Slowly and unconvinced Edgar rode back to his command, and as he watched the movements of the enemy now holding the precise position they had occupied three hours before, whatever doubt he might have entertained till then, vanished at once, for he beheld the hapless Charles—armed as becomes a King to battle for his crown, all steel from spur to helmet, a mantle of black velvet with the star and George of diamonds floating above his armour—to rein his snow-white charger gallantly along his wavering lines, beseeching them—“Once more,” with energetic gestures; “once more to charge the rebels!” and he beheld the faint and false-hearted denial; for not by any prayer or promise could those to whom he spoke with words of

fire be wrought upon a second time to dare the onset.

Meanwhile, the sun set gloriously in a dense bank of clouds ; the night, “ that common friend to wearied and dismantled armies,” sank darkly down upon the plain, and all its sights and sounds of agony and horror ; and the two hosts, each upon the ground whereon they fought, slept anxious and uneasy on their arms—uncertain of their present safety, and unresolved as to their proceedings for the morrow.

CHAPTER II.

Behold ! our swords are drawn !
Not for the bubble fame, nor at thy call,
Vaulting ambition, who o'erstrid'st the neck
Of prostrate kings, to mount with foot profane
Thrones of usurp'd dominion; but for right,
For freedom, for our country, for our God !
And think ye they shall e'er be sheathed again,
Till that this solemn cause adjudged be,
In high heaven's sight, by victory or death ?

THE morning was yet gray and gloomy, after a night of frost—felt the more bitterly by those who bivouacked upon the field, since there was neither tree, nor hedge, nor any other covert

nigh to fence them from the piercing wind—when Ardenne started from the disturbed and unrefreshing slumbers which had crept upon him beneath the partial shelter of an ammunition tumbrel, overturned and broken. He was aroused by the loud trumpets of the powerful reinforcement brought up before the promised hour by Cromwell, consisting of two thousand foot, Hampden's and Grantham's regiments, and his own ironsides, whose presence might, on the preceding day, have turned the doubtful scale, and ended at a single stroke the war, unfortunately destined to no such speedy termination.

It was a strange and melancholy, though exciting scene, that met his gaze as he arose; the dark skies scarcely dappled in the east by the first streaks of dawn; the faint stars waning one by one, as the cold light increased; the black brow of the neighbouring hills cutting distinct and sharp against the horizon; the white mist creeping in wreaths along their bases,

and curtaining the plain with a thick veil, through which the watchfires of the royal host, at scarcely a mile's distance, burned with dull and lurid redness; the foreground heaped with the carriages of the artillery, horses picketed in their ranks, and companies of men outstretched on the dank soil, sleeping upon no better couches than their dripping cloaks, beneath no warmer canopy than the overcast and gusty firmament.

Nor were the sounds that rose at intervals from the opposing camps, and the deserted battle-field between them, less wild and mournful than the images which crowded their nocturnal area. The measured tramp of the unwearied sentinels, now mingled with the clash of armour, and close beside the ear, now gradually sinking into silence as he visited his farther beat, the clang and clatter of the horse patrol, sweeping, at wider distances, around the guarded limits, and the deep cadence of his occasional "all's well"—the neigh and stamp of restless chargers—the baying of forsaken

hounds, and, sadder and more terrible than all beside, the feeble wailing, the half-heard distant groan, the long-drawn unavailing cry for succour, of maimed and miserable wretches, battling and wrestling with their mortal pangs throughout the live-long night, and cursing the unnatural strength that nerved their fainting and reluctant flesh to strive with that inevitable angel, whom their more willing spirit would have welcomed as a rescuer and friend.

While he was yet, with a sick heart and tortured ear, listening to these too numerous witnesses of human agony, and pondering upon the dread responsibility of him who, to indulge a lawless thirst after a little brief authority, had let loose on a happy land that most abhorred curse of nations, domestic war, an orderly rode up in haste to crave his presence at the quarters of the general.

After a short and rapid walk toward the rear, he reached the spot where Essex, like the meanest of his men, had passed the night be-

neath no other roof than the inclement sky. A dozen pikes, irregularly pitched into the ground, draped with horse-blankets and watch-cloaks offered a shelter rather nominal than real against the night air on the north and east, while a huge pile of logs sparkled and blazed in front, casting a wavering glare of crimson upon a group of tall and martial-looking officers collected round the person of their leader, which glittered less conspicuously on the arms and figures of a score or two of troopers, who sat motionless on their tall chargers, at some short distance in the rear.

The council, as it seemed to Edgar on his first approach, were absolutely silent; but, as he drew more near, he found that Essex was addressing them, although in tones so low and so subdued that they scarce reached the ears of those for whom they were intended. Nor, as he judged from the expression painted on every countenance (for the lord-general ceased from speaking just as he joined the circle), were his

words calculated to inspire his listeners with confidence or warlike spirit. A blank desponding gloom sat darkling on the brows of all, and every eye, save those of the new-comers who stood together and a little apart from the rest, dwelt gloomily upon the ground. It seemed a meeting rather of defeated and despairing fugitives, than of the bold and dauntless spirits who had but yester-even maintained a more than equal strife against the flower of England's nobles.

Suddenly, with his harsh features kindling into passionate and fiery animation, and his eye glancing wild-fire, Cromwell, whom Edgar had not hitherto observed, started up from a pile of housings and horse-furniture on which he had been seated.

“As the Lord liveth,” he exclaimed — “as the Lord liveth—we can smite them hip and thigh—if so be that your excellency will give me but command to charge upon them now, while they yet lie with faint hearts and with

heavy eyes about their watch-fires. I ask but for my own stout troop of ironsides—and Master Ardenne's horse here, if he list to join me—I ask but these, and verily I do profess to you, they shall not bide the changing of a buffet. Nay, but we may destroy them utterly, smiting them with the sword, as Joshua smote *them* beside the waters, even the waters of Merom, what time he did to them as the Lord bade him; he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire!”

“It is too late, sir!” returned Essex coldly—“it is too late! The morning will have broken, ere you can get your men to horse!”

“Nay, but not so, lord-general,” anxiously interrupted Cromwell—“my troopers be not yet dismounted, and of a truth I do assure you, that their spirits are athirst, ay, and their souls an hungered, to do this battle for the Lord!”

“We will not have it so, sir,” replied the Earl shortly and scarcely courteously—“We will not have it so. It might endanger our

whole host. I pray you, Colonel Cromwell, draw out your horse upon our furthest left, facing thereby Prince Rupert on the King's right wing. And you, fair gentlemen,"—turning to Hampden and to Grantham,—“move up your gallant foot to reinforce our centre. Had ye be been here, but yesterday, I had not feared to gain a complete victory—but now I hold it rash to offer or commence, though by God's help we will not shun, encounter. Sirs, to your posts. The council is at an end. The day is breaking—lo, there sounds the *reveillée!*”

“Cold council!” muttered Cromwell in the ear of Ardenne, as he left the presence. “Cold council, if not traitorous! and at the best false argument!—for an he could half-beat Charles Stuart without us yesterday—sure, with three thousands of fresh men, and those the best of his array, he might now trample him beneath his feet! Besides, with Verney slain outright, and Lindsey captive, and half their officers cut down or grievously entreated, stands it not cer-

tain that they must need be faint of heart?— Verily! verily! I say to you, there shall be no good thing befall the righteous cause, while such a leader marshals us.”

As he concluded, he turned off abruptly, mounted his horse, and rode away toward his troopers, who awaited their stout colonel in the rear—and, ere ten minutes had elapsed, Edgar might hear them chanting in subdued and sullen tones the melancholy psalm, “ Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul ! ”—as they marched gloomily away to occupy the post for which they were assigned.

At the same time, the regiments, which for the last half hour had been getting under arms, fell in, and faced the army of the King, which might be clearly seen, as the mists gradually rolled away before the growing daylight, resuming the position it had held before the action of the previous day. The instruments of music sounded indeed, and cheerily, and the bright colours fluttered gaily in the freshening breeze ;

but other sign of spirit or alacrity along the serried ranks Edgar saw none, before he reached his own brave troopers, already mounted, and in accurate array, under Sir Edmund Winthrop his lieutenant, and eager—as the heart-stirring shout, with which they greeted their commander, spoke them—for the onset of which they deemed his presence the immediate harbinger.

The sun rose broad and bright, kindling the whole expanse of heaven with his fair lustre, the mist-wreaths floated upward and dispersed themselves into the delicate and scale-like clouds, flecking the azure skies, which promise glorious days; the morning gradually passed away, and noon drew nigh, and still each army held its ground, facing the other in stern array of warfare, both as it seemed prepared and resolute to meet, but neither willing to commence, the onset. At times the trumpets on one side would breathe forth a wild flourish of defiance, and a shout or psalm would go up to

the peaceful heaven from the other, intended it might be to irritate or challenge the foe into some movement that should lay him open to attack.

The sun now rode high in heaven, and hour by hour the chances of a general action became less imminent. Suddenly, at a moment when all those leaders of the parliament, who deemed it no less for their interest than their honour to give battle, almost despaired of any opportunity for sealing their adherence to the cause—there was a movement on the right wing of the royal host. Directly in the centre of the field, midway between the lines of either army, four light field-pieces, sakers and culverines, had been abandoned on the previous day by the King's infantry, when shattered and disordered, though still fighting with their faces to the foe, by the repeated charge of Balfour's horse.

So rapidly had night set in upon the wearied hosts, and perhaps so fearful were both parties of then doing aught which might provoke re-

newal of the conflict, that these, the proofs and prizes of the victory, had been permitted to remain unmoved either by rescuer or captor through the long hours of darkness; and, until mid-day was at hand, no disposition was exhibited to bring them off whether by cavalier or puritan. But now—either disposed to fight, if needful, with courage gathered from the weak policy of Essex, or convinced by their inactivity that he should meet with no resistance from the despised and hated roundheads—Rupert dashed forth in person from the right, with a detachment of the King's horse-guard, that gallant troop of nobles whose impetuous and headlong daring—though at the first it had passed, like a torrent, sheer through the reeling ranks and weaker cavalry of its opponents—had yet done more against the final gaining of the day than had the fiercest struggles of the adversary.

Forward they came, mounted on horses that might each have borne a king to battle, rending the air with their repeated cheers, and with the

joyous clangor of their defying trumpets, a flood of waving plumes, and fluttering scarfs—the bravest and the best-born of the land. Midway between the hosts they galloped on, exposing, as it would seem in very wantonness of bold bravado, the flank of their advance to the stern iron-sides of Cromwell, who showed like a dark storm-cloud ready to burst upon their heads with all the crash and ruin of a tempest.

Already were these gloomy martialists exchanging their dull scowls of rigid and abstracted sanctity for the fierce flashings of enthusiastic joy, with which they never failed to clothe their features, when rushing down like eagles to the banquet of the sword.—Already were they brandishing their heavy blades aloft in savage exultation—already were they lifting up their voices in the triumphant psalm which should preface their thundering charge, and rising high above the din of battle strike terror and confusion to the hearts of those, whom as they sung—“The Lord—even the Lord of hosts—shall hunt, to

overthrow them!"—But, ere the word was given by their colonel, whose sword was in his hand, outstretched toward the flaunting cavaliers on whose destruction he securely counted, an officer came at the full speed of his spur-galled and foaming charger bearing the mandates of the general.

"Ha! Major Winton!" Cromwell exclaimed, with a raised voice and joyous intonation, "you bring us right glad tidings—tidings which my soul comprehendeth ere mine ear hath caught their import. Tarry thou but a little space, and call me coward then, an thou see them not performed unto the letter—aye! and those gay malignants yonder scattered like chaff before the wind of heaven! Sound trumpets, and——"

"Hold! Colonel Cromwell; in the Lord's name, hold!"—The other interrupted him with a half-frightened energy of zeal—"you do misapprehend! 'Tis the lord-general's command, that you stir not a foot!—He would avoid an action."

“Tush, man, it cannot be!” Oliver fiercely cried—“Nay stay me not!—forego thy grasp upon my rein!—Let me not now, I say, or truly I will—”

“Nay sir,” returned the officer, cutting again into his speech, as much chagrined by the impetuous gesture and half-uttered threat—“You shall do as you list, for me; but I do warn you, ’tis against express commandment of my Lord of Essex, if you shall charge these horse. See how they muster yonder to the front of the main host, dragoons and cavalry, for the support of this detachment. One charge must needs bring on a general action.”

“The better!” answered Cromwell, with a gloomy frown—“the better, an we had aught of faith in the good cause, or spirit in our carnal calling. But on his own head be it! Surely the Lord hath deadened his understanding, causing his heart to fail with terror, and with fainting! On his own head be it!”—and, as he spoke, he sheathed his rapier, driving it home so furiously

that the hilt rang against the iron scabbard, with a sharp angry clatter—"On his own head be the shame, the ruin, and confusion!"—and turning his charger's rein he rode away toward the rear, in a dark sullen reverie, determined not to look upon the capture of the guns, since he could not prevent it. Nor did he check, in anywise, or reprimand the deep and bitter murmurs of reviling, which the fierce zealots he commanded launched forth against the cold and cautious policy that thus forbid them "to arise and slay the enemy at Karkar, even as Gideon arose, when he slew Zebah and Zalmunnah!"

And in the sight of the whole host, the chivalry of Rupert dashed along with brandished weapons, and bright banners, unharmed at least if not unheeded. They pounced upon the cannon, and not a sword was drawn, or a shot fired.—Six powerful horses, led for the purpose and already harnessed, were on the instant linked to every gun; and away they went bounding and clattering over the frozen soil at a hand gallop, while

the fearless cavaliers formed face toward the host of Essex to cover their retreat, patiently waiting till they reached the royal lines. Then, with three regular cheers of triumph and derision, they filed off at a foot's pace, as if unwilling to return without exchanging shot of carbine or stroke of sword, even although victorious.

Another hour elapsed, and yet another, and still the armies held their stations steadily face to face, neither advancing to attack, neither disposed to quit the field in presence of the other. Noon was already past, when a fresh movement was observed among the royalists near to the centre of the army. But this time, as it seemed, no hostile measures were intended ; for a white flag was suddenly advanced beyond the outposts of the army, and then, preceded by his trumpet, and followed by a glittering train of pursuivants attired in their quartered tabards, Clarencieux king-at-arms, refulgent in the blazoned pomp of heraldry, caracoled forth upon a snow-white

palfrey, whose embroidered housings literally swept the ground.

When it had almost reached the advanced guards of the parliament, the gay procession halted, while its trumpets stirred the echoes of the slumbering hills with a long-flourished blast, calling the leaders of the host to a pacific parley.

But be their errand what it might, their summons called forth no emotion from the stern puritans. No officer rode down to meet them—no peaceful symbol corresponding to their own was raised to greet them—no trumpet answered theirs, though thrice it brayed aloud with notes of evident impatience.

Wearied at length by the contemptuous silence, which alone answered to his overtures, leaving his train where it had halted, the king-at-arms rode slowly, with a dubious air as if but ill-assured of safety, toward the nearest guard of horsemen, one pursuivant alone attending, and demanded to be led forthwith to the lord-general.

After brief ceremonial, the subaltern with half-a-dozen men escorted him along the line, requiring him emphatically, and with a glance toward the carabines of the guard rested upon their thighs in readiness for instant service, to speak no word as he would reach the general with life. Nor was his greeting much more cordial when, after hurrying him with small respect along the serried ranks, the subaltern resigned him to an officer of Essex's life-guard, who with the same stern discipline conducted him toward the quarters of the brave though over-cautious nobleman who held the chief command.

The general was mounted on his charger, with his leading-staff in hand, attired in a suit of beautiful half-armor, with a broad scarf of orange crossing his cuirass, and a feather of the like colour drooping from his morion. The Earl of Bedford and Sir William Balfour were beside him likewise on horseback, and some half-dozen of his staff, while Colonels Hazlerig

and Hampden, stood around dismounted. Essex, with whom he had no personal acquaintance, looked full upon him without word or sign of salutation; but Balfour, whom he knew, bowed slightly.

“ I bear, so please you, my good Lord of Essex,” the king-at-arms began, in nowise daunted by his cold reception, “ a gracious proclamation of His Majesty, Charles, by the grace of God—”

“ Hold, sir!” cried Essex, in a sharp and angry tone. “ Hold, sir,—to whom bear you this message? Speak out, sir—and fall back, you loitering knaves! Back with you all! Back out of ear-shot!” as he perceived the troopers of his body-guard crowding a little forward as if to mark what passed.

“ Charles, by the grace of God—” continued the bold speaker, resuming, even where he had been before cut short, the thread of his discourse.

“ To whom? to whom, I say, bear you this message?” exclaimed Essex, in tones of fierce

excitement, the blood rushing in crimson to his brow. "To whom, save me, dare you bear any word?"

"To all," he answered calmly, "to all men present here, bear I His Majesty's most merciful—"

"Silence! audacious!" thundered the general, "Silence, if thou beest not aweary of thy life! Knowest thou not, William Le Neve, knowest thou not that for this breach of every law of war and nations I might cause thee hang?—hang like a dog upon the nearest tree for all thy painted mummery!—Away with him, sir," he continued after a short pause, as if ashamed of his display of violence, addressing the officer who had escorted him; "Away with him!—see him a hundred yards beyond our outposts, and, if he do but breathe too loudly, shoot him upon the instant. I do profess," he added, turning again to the abashed and silenced messenger,—“I do profess to you, you have incurred a very fearful risk; but, that

you may not lack an answer, say to your master, that we have drawn our swords at bidding of the parliament, and in behalf of those ancestral liberties, which we will either transmit free and unfettered to our children, or lose together with our lives!—Thou hast thine answer.”

And with even more precaution than he had been admitted, was he led back, to join his followers, by a stout squadron of the general's life-guard, who, halting at some twenty yards from the confused and trembling pursuivants, deliberately blew their matches and levelled their short arquebuses! Startled at this manœuvre, it needed little, when the officer informed them, “that, an they were not a full flight shot on their route before three minutes, he should fire a volley on them,” to send them at a furious gallop scattering toward the King's army.

This was the last attempt; and ere an hour had elapsed, the guns and carriages of the King's host were drawn off by the road to Edgecot, his late quarters—and Essex, on beholding their

retreat, was no less willing to lead away toward Warwick his wearied and disheartened army, abandoning thereby to Charles the access to the capital—which he had marched, and even risked a battle, to defend—whenever he should choose to profit by the errors of his enemy.

Scarce had the orders for this movement been delivered, before a trooper galloped up to Ardenne's post, gave him a packet, and, without waiting a reply, dashed spurs into his horse, and was already out of sight ere Edgar had discerned its purport. It was a mandate from the general in council, directing him to join his force to that of Colonel Cromwell, and place himself at once at his disposal; and he had hardly read it through, when Oliver himself rode up.

“You have already,” he said, “as I see, received those tidings, which, trusting that they may not be displeasing, and that so you be not rendered an unwilling instrument in this great cause, I have come hither to communicate.

I am detached forthwith to march with mine own ironsides, and with your gallant horse, for Cambridge—thence to protect the safety of the eastern counties—and, verily, I do rejoice, for my soul sickeneth at coward councils, and, so long as we tarry here, we be not like, I trow, to meet with brave ones. Come with me, Edgar Ardenne, and I tell thee we can achieve great things for the deliverance of this groaning land—yea! and work more for its regeneration with our poor hundreds, and the Lord's hand, which of a very deed shall smite on our side—frail vessels though we be and faithless—more to advance the liberties of England, than Essex with his tens of thousands !”

CHAPTER III.

Not for my life! Not though the hosts of heaven
Bend down their knees in suppliance at my feet,
And woo me to consent, shall one poor coin
Defile my palm of what is his by right—
His heritage—bequeathed i' the olden time
From honoured sire to son, and last to him,
Most honoured, who *should* heir it now, as free
As his great soul, and *shall*, by Heaven, for me!

It was a sharp clear evening, some two months later than the undecided action of Edgehill, while both the armies were lying in their winter quarters—that of the King at Oxford, whither he had immediately retired

after his treacherous violation of the truce at Brentford, and consequent repulse from London—that of the parliament in the metropolis and its vicinity, when a small group, composed of individuals the most discordant both in character and outward show, was gathered in the oriel parlour of the old Manor-house of Woodleigh, affording to the eye a combination singular and picturesque.

Sir Henry Ardenne stood in the centre at the oaken table, on which a standish was displayed of massive silver, with implements for writing, and a long scroll of parchment, carefully engrossed and decked with several broad seals, to which, as it would seem, he was preparing to affix his signature. His figure, still erect and stately, was clad in a rich military suit of buff, splendidly laced with gold, booted, and spurred, and girt with the long rapier of the day; his snow-white locks hung down on either cheek, uncovered, for an attendant held, in readiness for instant use, his high-crowned beaver with

its drooping feather, and his sad-coloured riding-cloak. His noble features were knit firmly, with an evident expression of resolve, although a tear-drop might be seen to twinkle in his dark eye, as he looked down upon his niece grovelling in the dust before him, prostrate, and clinging to his knees, with her side hair in its dishevelled volumes, half covering her lovely form—with her hands clasped, her eyes uplifted to his face, her lips apart, but motionless, in agony of tearless supplication.

A hoary-headed servant watched, at a short distance, the development of the sad scene, with every wrinkled feature telling of his affectionate concern; while a stout, stolid-looking yeoman, summoned, it might be, to attest a signature, lounged at his elbow, staring in rude indifference on the display of passions with which his boorish nature vainly sought to sympathize.

A small man, meanly clad in a black buckram

doublet, with an inkhorn and a penknife in lieu of weapons at his girdle, of an expression impudently sly and knavish, was the last person of the group within the manor ; but without, plainly to be discovered from the casements, there was assembled a fair company of horsemen, gaily equipped in the bright fluttering garb affected by the cavaliers, with the old banner of the house of Ardenne unfurled and streaming to the wintry wind, and a groom leading to and fro the favourite charger of the head of that high name.

“No ! no !” cried Sibyl, in tones that quivered with excitement till they were barely audible, resisting the slight force which the old man put forth to raise her—“No ! no ! I will not rise. Here, here at your feet will I remain, till I prevail in my entreaty ! Oh, you were wont to be wise, generous, and just ! Temperate in your youth, as I have heard them tell, and calm : be then yourself, my noble uncle—be

then once more yourself—nor sully, by this deed of unconsidered rashness, a whole long life of wisdom and of honour.”

“It may not be,” he answered quietly, though not without an effort, as he compelled her to arise. “It may not be. The time allotted to our race hath now run out! The house of Ardenne is extinct, with the old miserable man who stands before you! the lands that have been subject to my name for centuries, shall never know it more! The Lord gave—the Lord hath taken away—blessed be the name of the Lord! But would—oh, would to heaven—that his corpse had mouldered on some foreign battle-field—that his bones had been entombed deep in the caverns of the sea—that he had died by any death, how terrible soever—that he had dragged out any life, however wretched and intolerable! Better, far better had it been, so to have mourned for him, than to have seen him thus—a blot—a single blot—on an unblemished name! a traitor to his king

—a foeman to his country—a curse to him from whom he drew his being! No! plead to me no more—for never, never shall a traitor—a fanatic and hypocritical traitor—inherit aught from me, save the high name he hath disgraced. I have—and I bless heaven that I have it—through his own act of treason, the right to sunder this entail, and sundered shall it be ere sunset! He hath no corner of my heart—no jot of mine affections—himself he hath cut out his path, and—rue it as he may—by that path must he travel now unto the end—dishonoured—outcast—disinherited—accursed—”

“Oh, no! no, no!” she shrieked in frantic tones, drowning his utterance of a word so terrible, when coming from a parent’s lips—“curse him not!—curse him not! or never shall you taste of peace again. Father, curse not your son—your first-born, and your only!—Sinner, curse not your fellow!—Christian, curse not a soul, whose hopes are thy hopes also!—Curse not, but pray!—Pray—not for your erring child,

but for your rash and sinful self! Pray, uncle, pray for penitence and pardon!"

Affected somewhat by her words, but yet more by the fearful energy of her demeanour, than by the tenour of her speech, Sir Henry paused; but not to doubt, much less to bend from his revengeful policy.

"In so far, at the least, fair niece—in so far, at the least," he said, with a smile evidently forced and painful, "you have the right of it. 'Tis neither christianlike to curse, nor manly.—But to this gear, good Master Sexby!" he continued, turning to the lawyer who had gazed with hardened coldness on the affecting scene. This deed, you tell me, is complete and firm in all the technicalities?"

"As strong as law can render it, Sir Henry," returned the mean attorney, "else know I nothing of mine own profession. Since Master Ardenne being last of the entail, and now declared a traitor by proclamation of His Majesty at Oxford, could scarce inherit, even without

this deed of settlement on Mistress Sibyl and her heirs—”

“Never!” she answered in a calm low voice, the more peculiar from its contrast to the fiery vehemence she had before displayed; “never would I receive the smallest share, the least particular of that which is another’s. That other Edgar Ardenne too!—though I should perish of starvation—never! And heirs—what tell ye *me* of heirs? Think ye that *I*—I the affianced bride of such a man—would deign to cast myself away on his inferior? No! no! your testament is nothing worth. Heirless will I die, or die the wife of Ardenne! What, then, avail your crafts and subtleties of law? I spurn their false and fickle toils before me, as the free hawk would rive asunder with his unfettered wing the trammels of the spider’s web!”

“Peace! for your fame’s sake, peace, degenerate girl!” the old man sternly answered, “would you disclose to these your miserable weakness—”

“To these? To every dweller of the universal earth would I avow the strength—the constancy—the immortality of my legitimate and hallowed love! Affianced in my youth—by thee affianced—to one whom both my reason and my heart prefer, why should I shrink to own it? Weakness? I tell you, uncle, that I am no whit less strong—nay, ten times stronger than yourself—in faith, in loyalty, in conscience, in resolve! If I may not approve his actions—and, of a truth, I do not—I may not but revere his motives! and if those actions must half sever the strong links that join us, and render me, for very conscience sake, a widowed maiden—his motives, pure and sincere and fervent as an angel’s faith, shall, at the least, forbid me to misjudge, much more to wrong him. Weakness! I tell you I adore him—adore him even more for this his constancy to what *he* deems the better cause, when every fibre of his heart is tugging him to the other—when loss of name, and fame, and fortune must be the guerdon of

his unflinching and severe devotion to a mistaken creed ! Yet deeply, singly as I love him, never will I wed Edgar Ardenne while he unsheaths a rebel blade, or prompts a rebel council. I tell you I adore him, yet will I die a maiden, unless—” and she paused for a space in her most eloquent appeal, as if to mark what influence it might have had upon the mind of her stern relative—“ unless by this your madness you drive me to do that my conscience shrinks from. Suffer your broad lands to descend to him who justly heirs them, and rest assured that sooner will I die than marry with a rebel ! Leave them to me—as, in the madness of your passion, you propose—leave them to me, and instantly will I make restitution to the rightful owner, if by no other means, at least by sacrifice of mine own conscience—mine own person !”

“Go to ! You will *not*, Sibyl !” exclaimed the old man vehemently. “I know you better than you know yourself—you would not do so, were things a thousand times more precious

than these miserable lands dependant on your action!"

"And wherefore not?" she cried. "Have I not, at the dictates of my conscience, cast from me the affections of the warmest and the highest heart that ever beat for woman? Have I not sacrificed unto my sense of loyalty—a sense perchance fantastic or mistaken—my every hope of happiness on earth? And wherefore shall I not obey the voice of the same counsellor, and to a sacrifice less grievous? Think you the love of justice is a less eloquent or weaker advocate than the mere love of kings?—But since you may not be convinced by argument, nor won by any pleading—hear me then swear, and hear me THOU"—she added, solemnly turning upward her bright eyes, flashing with strong excitement and dilated far beyond their wonted size—"that sittest on the wings of cherubim—Thou that hast no regard for kings, nor any trust in princes—receive my vow!"—

She paused an instant as if to recollect her

energies, and as she paused a deep voice broke the silence.

“Swear not, my gentle cousin,” said the slow harmonious voice—“and above all swear not for me !”

Instantly every eye was turned in the direction whence sounded those unusual accents ; and in the sight of all, upon the threshold of the open door, there stood a tall and stately figure wrapped in a horseman’s cloak of dark colour, and wearing a slouched hat and falling plume which veiled effectually, in that dim uncertain light, the features of the speaker. But their concealment mattered not, for every heart at once, and as it were instinctively, knew Edgar Ardenne, whose arrival, with the slight bustle that accompanied it, had passed unnoticed during the all-engrossing interest of the scene in which those present were engaged !

“Swear not in my behalf, dear Sibyl,” he continued, doffing his high-crowned beaver, and displaying his fine lineaments haggard and pale

from violent emotion—"nor, if you love me, thwart my father's will. In good time, I perceive, have I come hither, since something of your purpose reached my ears e'er you beheld my presence."—

"And wherefore," his father fiercely interrupted him, laying his hand upon his rapier's hilt,—wherefore have you presumed, traitor and villain, thus to defile these honourable halls with the pollution of your footstep? Have you come sword-in-hand, leading your canting and psalm-singing hypocrites—to spoil and slay and lead into captivity—or have you come, forsooth, with oily words and a god-fearing countenance to preach to the old man the error of his ways—that he too may unsheath the sword of Gideon, and go down with the chosen of the Lord to strive against the Philistines in Gilgal! Such is the style of your new comrades, and thou canst mouth it with the best of them, I warrant me! Canst thou not preach, and pray?—canst thou

not quote the scriptures of the Lord, to justify the doings of the devil?"

"For none of these things have I come, my father," he replied in sad and humble tones, sinking upon his knee; "nor yet for any thing that may offend or grieve you. Hear me, I do beseech you,"—for by the angry gestures of Sir Henry, he perceived that his speech was like to be cut short—"Hear me but for a short while, and I will cease to pain you with my presence!"

"Be it then for a short while," answered the other, nothing mollified by the calm patience of his son—"if be it must at all—as I suppose it *must*, for I can well believe that you have some five hundred fighting men of the saints to back you, else had you never ventured hither. Let it be for a short while, sirrah,—for even now I look to see the roof-tree of my father's house topple and crush the wretch that has brought infamy on all it shelters!"

“Not a soldier — not a follower — not a groom,” said Edgar sorrowfully rising — “though I look not that you will credit me — not one is with me, nor yet within ten miles of Woodleigh. Alone I have come hither, once more to say adieu, and crave — what I have nothing done to forfeit — a father’s blessing !”

“’Tis well !” Sir Henry interrupted him in a cold strain of the most cutting irony, ere he had fully ended — “Excellent well, indeed ! — So get you on with what you have to *say* — as I in turn will presently *do* somewhat. Anthony, get you hence and fetch us lights — it hath grown dark betimes — and you, good Master Hughson,” he continued, turning toward the yeoman, “will wait our leisure in the buttery. Now ! get you on, son Edgar !”

“I did hope,” sadly replied the partisan, “that your resentment, sir, had in so far abated, that you might have endured without disgust my passing visit ! To offer you the reasons for my conduct, were, in your present mood, I fear

of no avail—suffice it therefore to inform you, that though I may lose much, I can gain nothing by the part I have espoused. That neither power nor place, nor bribe of woman's love, nor proffered rank, nor yet the baser meed of gold, hath tempted me—that neither gift nor guerdon will recompense my service; nor aught else, save the inward quiet of an innocent heart, and the most high approval of HIM who alone can interpret it. But of this enough!—This deed, if I mistake not, which now but waits your signature, is destined to deprive me of my heritage. My father, as the last save me in the entail, and I proclaimed a traitor,” he continued, turning toward the lawyer, “hath, as you deem it, the power to alienate this property. Hold! interrupt me not.—It may be that he hath—provided always that the party which proclaimed me traitor shall come off victorious in the end, and masters!—If not your deed is nothing. But think not”—and he turned again toward his father—“think not, I do beseech

you, sir, that I would for one moment condescend so to inherit what you would not that I should possess! Annul this futile deed—and I, the last in tail, will join with you to sever that entail for ever! Let this man execute the papers, and, whensoever needed, my signature shall be forthcoming! So, whether King or Commons win the day, shall you be sole disposer of your broad possessions. The son whom you abhor will freely barter all for one short word of kindness—for one last blessing from a father—at whose command how gladly would he sacrifice all, save his conscience and his honour!”

“I take you at your proffer,” rejoined the baronet, without one symptom of relenting in his hard eye, without one sign of soft or kind emotion at the devoted generosity of his discarded son. “Base knaves, although they be, with whom you have descended to consort, I can rejoice you have not lost all your nobility of soul. I take you at your proffer. Affix your signature

and seal to this blank parchment—for it may well be, we shall never meet again—and here I pledge to you my knightly word of honour, that it shall be applied as you desire, and to no other end.”

A large tear stood on either cheek of Edgar, as with a steady hand, and firm though darkened countenance, he signed his name in bold free characters, and so surrendered for himself and for his heirs the title to that noble patrimony, which for so many ages had been graced by the high virtues of his ancestry. But the tear flowed not, nor was the brow overcast, for any selfish thought—by any sorrow for the wealth thus forfeited—by any fond regret for the old home of happier days thus lost for ever. At other times such feelings would have been busy about his heart—would have, perhaps, excluded every other sentiment; but now it was the coldness of the father’s tone, the stern and firm resolve of hatred which had possessed the father’s heart, that clouded the broad forehead, and dimmed

his eye. Quietly he replaced the pen upon the standish, and once more sinking on his knee, "Father," he said, in faltering and husky tones, "I never yet, save in this one respect, have disobeyed or grieved you; your blessing, oh my father!"

"My blessing to a rebel, to a hypocrite, a traitor!—Not though my life should pay for my refusal!" thundered the pitiless old cavalier. "Be grateful that I curse you not;—be grateful, not to me, but to yon pale and suffering angel, whom your false villany hath blighted, for she alone withholds it. Begone!—why tarry you? Begone, and never let me look upon you more! Begone, an outcast from my heart for ever!"

For a minute's space he stood, fixed as the eldest-born of Niobe, pierced by the arrow of the vengeful god—pale, motionless, voiceless. The wretched girl had sunk at the last fearful words, mercifully deprived, for a short space, of sentiment and reason. His father stood between them, with flashing eyes and arms ex-

tended, as if he waited but a pretext to launch upon his head the awful terrors of a paternal curse. It was but for a minute that he stood, doubtful and unresolved—his pulse beat hurriedly, his sinews quivered, his lip paled with anguish—yet in one little minute was the paroxysm ended. “Bless you, my father, bless you!” he exclaimed, in piteous and heart-rending tones. “May the Great Ruler of the universe protect and bless you! Oh! may *you* never know the anguish you have this day heaped, fiercer than the coals of fire, on the heart of a despairing child! Farewell—farewell!”

He turned, and ere a word could be pronounced, or a motion made to intercept him, vanished into the darkness of the hall. Then, and not till then, did the hot anger of the old man’s heart relent.

“Edgar,” he gasped, in faint and faltering tones,—“my boy—my boy!”

But so low was the intonation of his voice, that it reached not the ears of him who would

have welcomed those half-uttered words, even as a voice from heaven. The aged servant, who had watched the scene in silent agony, sprang forth as to recal him ; but again it was too late. The angry clatter of his horse's hoofs upon the pavement of the court alone announced the keenness of the goad that rankled in the bosom of the rider ; and ere an effort could be made to overtake his flight, the demon pride had once more gained ascendancy, and with a darker frown, and colder accents than before, Sir Henry now forbade all further care—consigned his hapless niece to her attendants—gave brief directions to the lawyer for the fulfilment of his cruel policy—mounted his horse, and rode away self-satisfied and stern through the chill darkness of the wintry camp, to join the King at Oxford ere he should raise the standard for his second sad campaign.

CHAPTER IV.

Flourish'd the trumpets fierce, and now
Fired was each eye, and flush'd each brow.
On either side loud clamours ring,—
“ God and the cause ! ” — “ God and the King ! ” —
Right English all they rush'd to blows
With nought to win, and all to lose,
I could have laugh'd—but lack'd the time—
To see, in phrenesy sublime,
How the fierce zealots fought and bled
For King or State, as humour led.

Scott's Rokeby.

THE winter had already passed away, and with it every hope of present reconciliation between the monarch and his parliament. Early

in March the royal hosts were in the field, one in the western counties, commanded by the King in person, and the most dashing of his generals, impetuous Rupert ; another in the north, under the gallant Newcastle—the noblest gentleman and most accomplished soldier who fought beneath the banners of his sovereign.

During the first months of the year the tide of fortune had flowed constantly in favour of the cavaliers. In March a desperate action, fought upon Hopton heath, near Stafford, had made small compensation to the parliament, by the death of brave Northampton, for the defeat of Gell and Brereton. Rupert had taken Cirencester, treating his captives with unmanly and relentless cruelty ; and shortly afterwards, in the same sort, had captured and half-burnt the flourishing and wealthy town of Birmingham. Nor had the occupation of Reading by the Earl of Essex brought any thing except disaster and disease upon its captors.

A dangerous conspiracy had broken out

among the puritans; and, though suppressed and punished by the deaths of the two Hothams, Challoner, and Tompkins, had yet led many to believe that seeds of discord were sown among the democratic party, which would, ere long, destroy their unanimity for ever.

A heavier and more fatal loss befel, not his own party merely, but the whole realm of England, in the untimely death of Hampden, who was mortally wounded in a trivial skirmish upon Chalgrave field, in Buckingham. He died, as he had lived, a patriot—a martyr to the cause of freedom—his last breath, ere he rendered up his spirit to his Maker, expended in a prayer for his oppressed and bleeding country.

Nor had the partisans of liberty fared much more hopefully in the north; Sir Thomas Fairfax, after a short but unsuccessful stand against the Earl of Newcastle, on Atherton Moor, was compelled to retreat before his victors, who pressed on with much energy and vigour to recover Gainsborough, which had been stormed

and garrisoned by the Lord Willoughby upon the parliament's behalf. In this important aim they scarcely could have failed, had not the leader of the ironsides, with his brave cavalry (augmented in their numbers to full two thousand men by Ardenne's junction—having already greatly signalized himself by the defeat of a superior force of royalists before the walls of Grantham, and, by the storm of Burleigh House and Stamford), gallantly interposed between the town and Newcastle's advance.

The enemy, amounting to above three times his number, under Lieutenant-general Cavendish, the brother of the Marquis, flushed with their late success — composed of picked men for the most, officered by gentlemen of equal gallantry and rank, and animated by the highest spirit of loyal bravery—had occupied, moreover, a position so commanding, that they could only be assailed by passing through a gateway, and charging up a steep declivity. Yet not for this did Cromwell hesitate an instant, but per-

sonally leading on his troopers, he resolutely rushed upon them, and, after a brisk conflict, routed them utterly, forcing them from their position into a deep morass, and killing Cavendish with most of their superior officers.

Burning for vengeance, the main body of the royalists, neglecting Gainsborough, pushed on, and with such overwhelming numbers, that Cromwell was compelled to fall back first on Lincoln, and thence immediately on Boston, uniting there his forces with the army of the Earl of Manchester, whom he had been appointed with all speed to reinforce, as second in command to that stanch nobleman. Upon this point Newcastle marched, eager for battle, and desirous to engage before the host of Manchester should be increased by new accessions, which, as he learned, were swelling day by day his ranks; detaching Sir John Henderson, an old and well-proved soldier, in advance with eighty-seven troops, horse and dragoons, to seek out Cromwell, and bring him, ere the earl

should aid him with his infantry, to action at a disadvantage.

It was a glorious morning in the latter part of June, when, at an hour so early that the heavy dews of summer were yet hanging unexhaled on wold and woodland, although the sun had lifted his broad disk above the clear horizon, the two armies came in view on Winsley field, near Horncastle. It was a gallant and a graceful spectacle as ever met the eye of man. The scene was a broad and waving tract of moorish meadow-land, checkered with many a patch of feathery coppice—birch, ash, and alder—tufts of furze full of its golden bloom, and waving fern; and here and there a bare gray rock peering above the soil, or a clear pool of water reflecting the white clouds that hung aloft, all motionless in the blue firmament—and over this romantic champaign a magnificent array of horse, four thousand, at the least, in numbers, contracting or extending their bright squadrons, now falling into column, and now

deploying into line, as best they might among the obstacles of this their battle-ground—their polished armour, and their many-coloured scarfs, now flashing out superbly as the sunshine kissed their masses with its golden light, now sobered into mellow hues as some great cloud flitted across the sky, and cast its sweeping shadow over them—their trumpets ever and anon waking the echoes of the woodlands that surrounded them on every side, with their exulting notes, and their gay standards fluttering in the breeze—their gallant chargers, arching their necks against the curb, bounding and curvetting along as if they panted for the onset—while toward the eastern limits of the plain, upon a gentle elevation, flanked on the one side by the gulley of a deep and stony brook, and on the other by a coppice, tangled with ancient thorns, and matted with wild rose-briars, which protected likewise the whole rear of his position, Cromwell had formed his line.

Nor, though inferior far in numbers, and

lacking all that chivalrous and splendid decoration which their floating plumes and gorgeous dresses lent to the cavaliers, could the puritans' dark squadrons have been looked upon without attention, ay and admiration also, by the most unromantic of observers. The admirable discipline and perfect armature of the stern zealots who composed the ranks—the plain, but soldierly and bright accoutrements—the horses superior even to the chargers of the royalists in blood and bone and beauty, and above all in that precise and jealous grooming, without which all the rest are little worth—the grim and stubborn countenances of the riders—some animated with a fiery zeal that would have smiled exultingly upon the stake of martyrdom, some lowering with a dark and sullen scowl, but all severe and resolute and dauntless! a single glance sufficed to tell that every battle-field to them must be a triumph or a grave!

Silent they stood and motionless—their long array drawn up, two deep, by squadrons at

brief intervals—solemn and voiceless—presenting a strange contrast to the shifting movements and the intricate manœuvres of their approaching enemy. Not a man moved in his saddle, not a sound broke the quiet of their discipline, save now and then the stamp and neigh of an unruly charger, or the sharp clatter of his steel caparison. And now the cavaliers, within a short mile's distance, having already cleared the broken ground, might be seen halting on the further verge of the smooth space, which swept away toward them in a gentle slope, unmarred by bush or brake or obstacle of any kind to the career of the most timid rider; when, with some three or four of his most trusty captains, Cromwell advanced before his lines.

Of stout ungainly stature when dismounted, none showed to more advantage on his war-horse, and in full caparison of battle, than did the colonel of the ironsides. It was not that his seat was graceful, or that he ruled his charger with the ease of the *manège*, but that

he swayed him with an absolute dominion, which seemed to arise rather from his mere volition, than from the exercise of strength or skill. His whole soul seemed engrossed by the approaching conflict—careless of self—exalted, and enthusiastical. His eyes flashed with a brightness almost supernatural, from the dark shadow of his morion, and his whole visage wore an aspect so irradiate with energy and mind, that Edgar wondered how he ever could have deemed him ill-favoured or ungraceful. His horse, a superb black, bore him as if he too were conscious of divine authority; and such was the commanding greatness of his whole appearance, that no human eye could have descended to remark the plainness of his war-array.

Of the small group of officers, who rode beside the bridle of their leader, the most were ordinary-looking men, burghers of Huntingdon, or small esquires of the surrounding country, selected for the stations which they occupied

by the wise politician who had levied them, on account of those morose and gloomy tenets which, with an early prescience, he discovered to be the only power that might cope with the high spirit of the gentlemen, who formed the bulk of their antagonists. Men who affected, or imagined, visions and transports—who believed themselves predestined instruments, and deemed that in the slaying of malignants they were doing an especial service to the God whose chosen servants they asserted themselves, with a conviction of the truth which rendered them almost invincible.

Among these plain and heavy-looking soldiers, the form of Ardenne, high-born and full of the intuitive and untaught grace of noble blood, gallantly armed, and handsomely attired (for he was not one of those who fancied that the approbation of heaven could be won by a rusty corslet, or an ill-blacked boot), mounted on a dark chestnut, high bred, yet powerful enough to bear a man-at-arms fully accoutred through

the longest day, showed like a glorious falcon among a tribe of vultures. Yet even he, handsome and young, and fairly clad, filled not the eye like the majestic person of his colonel.

At a quick trot, they swept along the lines, inspecting their array, with now a word of commendation, and now a short reproof, to the dark fanatics who had been chosen lance-pesades or sergeants for their savage and enthusiastic humour. Just as they finished their career, a long and cheery shout, accompanied and blended with the clang of kettledrums and the shrill flourish of their trumpets, burst from the columns of the cavaliers, now wheeling into line, and eager for the onset. No shout, nor burst of instruments replied from the parliamentarians, but their leader at the sound checking his charger from his speed till he reared bolt upright, threw forth his arm with a proud gesture of defiance.

“Brethren!” he called aloud in accents harsh, but clearly audible, and thrilling to the

heart — “ Brethren and fellow-soldiers in the Lord—the men of Belial are before you—the persecutors of the saints—the spillers of the innocent blood—godless and desperate!—slayers of babes and sucklings—ravishers of maids and matrons—revilers of the prophets and the law—accursed of the Lord Jehovah!—Wherefore, faint not, nor be of feeble heart, for surely, on this day, shall the Lord yield them up into your hands, that ye may work his vengeance on their heads, and execute his judgments. For said he not of old, ‘ Lo! I will tread them in my anger, and trample them in my fury! and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.’ So saith the Lord of Hosts.—Amen! Amen! Selah!”

And, with a deep and sullen hum, the puritans took up the words—“ So saith the Lord of Hosts.—Amen! Amen! Selah!”

“ And are not we,” continued the fierce zealot,

with increasing energy, “and are not we—blinded although we be, and ignorant and sinful—I ask ye, brethren, are not we the chosen of the Lord, and shall we not obey his bidding? Smite them then—smite the idolatrous besotted followers of the old antichrist, even as just Elijah slew the priests of Baal down at the brook of Kishon. Be strong, and fear ye not. For lo! the Lord hath said, ‘Ye shall not suffer one of them to live!’ and who are we, that we should now gainsay the bidding of the Lord, even the Lord of Hosts? Lift up your voices then, that yon malignants may perceive in whom we put our trust.”

Again, and in a sterner and more heartfelt shout, the approbation of the puritans greeted their leader’s ears; and, as he ceased, with brandished blades, and inflamed features, and with voices that drowned utterly the feebler music of the cavaliers, already confident of victory, and maddened with religious zeal, they thundered forth their favourite hymn.

“ What saith the God of battles, the mighty Lord of Hosts ?
Ye shall prevail against them, though loud their godless boasts !
Ye shall destroy them utterly, and root them from the land,
For I will give ye strength, and edge your battle-brand !

“ At the rebuke of one shall mighty thousands fly,
For I have heard my people's prayer, their sad and grievous cry !
And I will raise my glorious voice, that it be heard afar,
And show the lightning of my hand—my right hand—in the war.

“ Wo unto them that put their trust in the Egyptian's crown ;
His horsemen and his chariots ! his power and his renown !
The Egyptian he is man, not God, in whom they put their trust ;
His horses are not spirit, but of frail and fleeting dust !

“ When I stretch out my hand, together they shall fall,
The helper and the holpen, yea ! shall quickly perish all !
Of old ordain'd was Tophet ; for the King it was made hot,
As thorns, that in the furnace blaze, or briars beneath the pot.

“ But ye, ye are my people ; ye the ransom'd of my soul !
Glory shall be your heritage, Jerusalem your goal !
The sceptre shall not leave ye, and the crown shall not depart
From the faithful house of Judah, from the chosen of my heart !”

The fierce strains ceased, and a loud acclamation followed them, solemnly breathing a sublime, yet savage spirit of defiance, and was responded to immediately by the huzzas of the

advancing cavaliers, and the rich symphonies of horn and kettledrum.

A small reserve of some five hundred men was posted in the rear, and, in one mighty line, the rest swept forward at a brisk trot, the front rank with their carabines all unslung and matches lighted. Cromwell gazed steadfastly upon them for an instant, then his eye lightened, and his lip curled scornfully, as he addressed his second in command.

“Lieutenant-colonel Ardenne,” he exclaimed, “dismount two hundred of our best dragooners, and, under Fight-the-good-fight Egerton, let them file down that gulley to our left, and fire constantly on the advance of these misproud malignants !”

Without a moment's pause the order was transmitted and obeyed, and, ere five minutes had elapsed, the party was detached and scrambling down the rocky bed of the ravine unnoted by the royalists, under the guidance of as morose and bold a puritan as ever levelled musket, or misquoted holy writ.

“Sir Edmund Winthrop,” Oliver continued, “your stout lieutenant shall hold your regiment, as our reserve, here on this ground of vantage ; but shall not stir from it, unless at your command or mine. We will not tarry for their charge, but meet them horse to horse—an onset of alternate squadrons. I lead the first division, you shall support me with the second. When you shall hear my bugle sound a recal and rally, then strike in, and the Lord strike with you. ‘Truth’ is our word, and ‘Peace.’ Amen, Selah !”

Even as he spoke, the royalists gave fire from their first rank ; but at too great a distance to do execution, and halted to reload. “Steady, men!” shouted Cromwell (his sword not yet drawn) from the extreme left, as he perceived a demonstration of anxiety to charge among his troopers. “Steady, men ; let them come nigher, and when they fire again, shoot ye also upon their flash, through your whole line ; and instantly alternate squadrons from the left charge on them ere they may reload.”

Scarce had he ended, ere the line again advanced on a hard trot—a single shot rang from the gulley, broken and fringed with thorns and alder-bushes—another, and another—a rapid and continuous fire of skirmishers, picking off half a score of officers, and throwing the right wing of the royalists into some slight confusion. On, however, they still came, their banners rustling, and their gay plumes and baldrics fluttering in the wind, as, trusting to make such impression on the main host of the puritans as should cause their ambuscade to be of no effect, they hurried to the onset. On they came, resolute and dauntless. Their bugle sounded for the gallop, for the charge, and, at the latter call, again the levelled carabines rose to the riders' cheeks—a bright flash ran along their line, and a dense veil of smoke covered their orderly and brilliant front.

Before the smoke cleared away, the shattering volley of the puritans, poured in with a deliberate aim, made fearful havoc in their ranks, and, on the instant, casting aside their matchlocks, and

whirling their long rapiers from the scabbard, one half of the squadrons of the parliament hurled themselves furiously upon the advancing foe.

Eagerly, anxiously did Edgar gaze upon the charge. On went the colonel of the ironsides, six horses' lengths in front of his division, and as gallantly out dashed a leader of the King's to meet him. They met, and it was but an instant, ere the charger of the royalist ran masterless, and its unhappy owner rolled, weltering in blood, beneath the trampling hoofs of the fierce puritans.

There was no faltering—no doubt in either line—forward they rushed, all straining to the charge, their horses foaming and struggling against the bit, and their swords flashing in the sunlight.

Edgar unsheathed his rapier, for now a horse's length scarce intervened; yet neither host had paused or turned aside. And now they were encountering, when the rear rank of the cavaliers threw in, with desperate execution, their reserved volley, shaking the line of the parliamen-

arians like an earthquake, emptying scores of saddles, and hurling riders and horses headlong to the earth.

The smoky curtain once again swept over them ; it cleared away, and Ardenne saw his fellow-troopers, unbroken and in close array, so orderly had they closed in above the falling, now mingled hand to hand, and fighting with the cavaliers, whose front was bending like a bow ; the points on which the troops of Oliver had charged, beat backward a full pistol-shot, and the alternate squadrons which had met no foe, wavering and undecided what to do. Sword cuts were glancing through the air on helm and corslet, pistol-shots flashed among the *mêlée* ; and the shouts, "God and the Church !" "God and the King !" blended with groans, and yells, and curses, and the clash of blades, and the wild blast of trumpets, pealed dissonantly to the sky.

Still Cromwell's bugle sounded not, nor were his men drawn off ; and Ardenne paused in

doubt. His eye fell suddenly upon the form of Oliver fighting among the foremost—another volley from a small knot of cavaliers, and he fell, horse and man—and the strife closed more fiercely round him ; at the same instant the reserve of Henderson moved up to reinforce his battle. Then Edgar paused no longer—“ Forward !” he shouted in a voice of thunder. “ Forward—charge home !” and, dashing down the grassy slope, before a minute passed, burst like a thunderbolt upon the unengaged divisions of the enemy, and, killing two men with his own hand, drove them in terrible confusion, by the fury of his onset, back on their own reserve.

Turning his eye, now he had gained a moment's leisure, toward the spot where he had seen his colonel fall, he caught a glimpse of him on foot, fighting with desperate courage against some six or seven horsemen, who were hewing at him all together with their long broadswords, and hindering each other by their own impetuosity. Three strokes of Ardenne's good sword,

and the exertions of his superb charger, placed him at Cromwell's side, just as he fell to earth, stunned, but unwounded, by a heavy blow. One of the cavaliers received the point of Edgar's rapier in his throat before he checked his horse; the others were engaged and beaten backward by the foremost of his troopers. Hastily springing to the ground, as Oliver regained his feet—"Mount!" he exclaimed,— "mount, Colonel Cromwell, on my horse, and finish what so well we have begun!"

Without a word the zealot leaped to the saddle, cast his eyes with a quick comprehensive glance around him, and read the fortunes of the day upon the instant.

"They are half-beaten now!" he shouted in exulting tones; "one charge more, and we sweep them like the dust before the winds of heaven! Away, sir, down with the reserve, and fall upon their left flank. I will draw off my men, and, ere you be in action, will be pre-

pared to give it them again in front. Ho ! "bugler," he continued, as Ardenne, mounting his brown mare, which his equerry had led up, galloped off swiftly to the rear—"Ho ! bugler, sound me a recal and rally !"

The shrill notes of the instrument rang aloud above the din of battle, and with that strict obedience, for which they had already gained repute, the ironsides drew off from the encounter in the most orderly manner, and formed beautifully again before the shattered and disordered masses of the cavaliers had fallen into any semblance of array.

In the mean time Ardenne had reached his regiment, the men burning to emulate the glory half achieved by their companions, the horses pawing the turf, and snorting with impatience. A loud shout greeted him, as he addressed them in a few words terse and full of fire, formed them by troops in open column, and advanced between the coppice on his right and the ex-

treme left of the enemy, now near a quarter of a mile pushed forward beyond their right and centre, which had been most disordered by the fire of the skirmishers, and Cromwell's furious charge. So great, indeed, was the confusion of the Royalists, their officers toiling along the ranks, labouring with oaths, and menaces, and exhortations, to rally and reform the men, that they perceived not Ardenne's movement till he was wheeling into line to the left, previous to charging them. Then, when it was too late, they struggled to redeem their error nobly, but fruitlessly; for, ere they could show front against him, the trumpets sounded—Oliver's in front, and Edgar's in the flank—and simultaneously they were charged, broken, and dispersed.

The action was already over, but the rout, the flight, the havoc, the despair, the hideous indiscriminating massacre, urged to the utmost by religious fury and political rancour, ceased not till noon; when Cromwell's bugles, slowly and

most reluctantly obeyed, called back the men from the hard-pressed pursuit, their weapons blunted and their arms weary, but their hearts insatiate of carnage.

CHAPTER V.

* * upon the bloody field
 The eddying tides of conflict wheel'd
 Ambiguous, till that heart of flame
 Hot Rupert on our squadrons came,
 Hurling against our spears a line
 Of gallants fiery as their wine ;
 Then ours, though stubborn in their zeal,
 In zeal's despite began to reel.

* * * * *

Brave Cromwell turn'd the doubtful tide,
 And conquest bless'd the rightful side.

SCOTT'S *Rokeby*.

THOUGH but of brief duration and trifling
 magnitude, as to the number of the troops en-

gaged on either hand, yet was the victory of Cromwell upon Wensley field of vast importance, when considered in its bearings on the general aspect of the war, since by it only was the Marquis of Newcastle prevented from co-operating with the royal forces in the west; when elevated as they were in spirit by the defeat of Waller upon Roundway Down, and the disgraceful fall of Bristol, they might too probably have marched triumphantly to the metropolis, had they been reinforced, as they expected, by the northern chivalry.

In consequence of this repulse then, Newcastle sat down before the walls of Hull; while Charles, thus disappointed in his schemes, as fatally laid siege to Gloucester, which he was soon compelled to raise by the activity of Essex.

The desperate drawn battle before Newbury ensued, signal for nothing but the death of the good Falkland, the only counsellor that now remained about the King who could be deemed

a patriot, or a true lover of the English constitution. The Hampden of the Royalists, this gallant nobleman fell with his country's name the last sound on his lips, but fell not till he had become weary of a life, which was so imbittered by the disasters of his native land, that he was wont to sink, even when circled by the gayest of his friends, into desponding apathy, and to reiterate, after deep silence and continual sighs, with a shrill sad accent, the words "Peace! Peace!"

The winter which succeeded was by the cavaliers spun out in feuds, dissensions, and intrigues among themselves, the King remaining obstinately bent on prostrating all opposition to his will, and countenancing such alone of his advisers as urged the fiercest and most downright measures.

Not so the parliament at Westminster, in which the independent party were by the deaths of Hampden first and afterward of Pym, gaining

an ascendancy which was increasing daily through the abilities of Cromwell, St. John, and the younger Vane, the leading politicians and debaters of the lower house. The energy and deep-laid shrewdness of these men suffered not one false step, however trivial, on the part of Charles, to pass unnoticed or unimproved to their advantage; and ere the spring was far enough advanced for the commencement of a third campaign, they had so thoroughly aroused the spirit of the land, inflamed already by the King's impolitic and shameful treaty with the rebellious catholics of Ireland, that early in the month of March five several armies were on foot.

Essex, preparing to oppose the King in person; Waller commanding in the west; the Scotch, who had invaded England in accordance with the conditions of the solemn league and covenant, and Fairfax with his Yorkshire levies shutting up Newcastle in York; and

Manchester, with Cromwell's cavalry, hurrying from the associated counties of the east toward the same important point.

And now for the first time, since the commencement of the war, did fortune show herself in favour of the liberal party. The total and complete annihilation of Lord Hopton's force at Alresford by Waller was in itself sufficient to compel even Charles to give up all attempt at a campaign on the offensive. Nor was this all, for Newcastle's express advised him that he must surrender, unless succoured in the brief space of three weeks.

It was on this intelligence that Rupert, having achieved much reputation and some eminent successes in that large county, marched out of Lancashire with all the flower of the Royalists drawn from the midland counties, burning with gallant ardour, confident in their successful leader, appointed with a noble train of ordnance, and reinforced by Goring's excellent brigades of horse from Lincolnshire, hastening ably and no

less fortunately to the relief of York, reduced already to extremity, and on the point of yielding to the parliament.

During the dark and melancholy winter, which had thus elapsed, Ardenne in his attendance on his duties whether civil, in the House at Westminster, or active in the field, had struggled with more of steadiness than of success to banish from his heart the recollection of his own depressed and well-nigh hopeless circumstances. Of his implacable and stubborn father he had heard but little since their last interview at Woodleigh; save that a copy of the document for the securing the estates to Sibyl and breaking the entail had been transmitted to him for inspection: and that a rumour, as it proved well founded, had reached London that the old baronet, having been strenuous and incessant in stimulating warlike measures, had quitted Oxford in the dead of winter, dismantled his fine residence and thrown himself together with his niece into the capital of Yorkshire, some short

time only ere it was invested by the united troops of Fairfax, and the Earl of Devon.

Such was the state of matters, when on a lovely evening of July, some few days after the strong succours under Manchester and Cromwell had joined the northern army, Edgar returned from a reconnoissance, which he had been sent to execute with his whole regiment in that direction, in consequence of rumours that the cavaliers had been observed in force toward the neighbouring towns of Wetherby and Barnham.

During the two days which had been consumed in scouring thoroughly that district of the country, Ardenne had discovered nothing to justify in any sort the vague reports, which had prevailed ere his departure from the camp; and it was therefore much to his amazement that he perceived the forces of the parliament drawing off from the siege in no small hurry and confusion, and forming line of battle upon Marston Moor some eight miles to the westward of the city.

It was not without strenuous exertion, that Ardenne found at length the post assigned to his immediate superior, now lieutenant-general of the horse, who was intently occupied with Lesley, Fairfax, Manchester, and others of the chief commanders, in ordering their army so as to interrupt the gallant host of royalists, some twenty thousand strong, with which Prince Rupert had wellnigh surprised them in their trenches.

Night fell upon them, ere the task was well completed ; yet such was the determination and the spirit of the leaders, such the quick apprehension and obedience of the soldiery, that by the aid of torches and the long summer twilight, their position was made good ; and that too on the strongest ground that could be chosen from the extensive, low, and somewhat marshy meadows lying between the Ouse and the great northern road.

Provisions were served out with liquor in abundance, to the troops, who for the most

part passed the night upon their arms, though some were quartered in the neighbouring villages, commanding the anticipated line of Rupert's march. Patrols of horse and foot swept the surrounding roads; the officers with jealous zeal made constant circuits of the host, their progress being clearly indicated by the acclamations of the men, and the loud psalms of exultation and defiance which usually answered their inspiring addresses.

Yet was their active energy on this occasion destined to be wasted; for scarcely was their host arrayed, ere the discharge of ordnance from the town, and the tremendous cheering, which was distinctly borne to the ears of the now disappointed puritans, announced that Rupert, who by the aid of better information, and the exertion of great military skill, had executed a detour far to the right of their position, was actually entering the beleaguered city from the eastward side, whence they had drawn their troops in the vain hope to intercept him.

Great was the consternation and dismay which this discovery created in the breast not of the privates only, but of the best and boldest leaders of the parliament; and in no less degree did merriment and wild triumphant revelry possess the citizens, relieved beyond their utmost expectation. Throughout the livelong night the eastern sky was reddened, wellnigh to the zenith, by the crimson glare of bonfires blazing in every street and place within the walls; while the square towers of the minster illuminated by the fierce discoloured light were visible distinctly at some miles' distance, their huge bells swinging to and fro, a deafening peal of short-lived exultation. Upon the moor a council was called instantly; and sentries posted round the quarters of the Scottish general, with the avowed intention of maintaining an inviolable secrecy concerning the debates of the stern royalists assembled there. Such was, however, the tumultuous and noisy character of the discussion between the English officers and the

fanatical, enthusiastic, presbyterian clergy whom the Scotch brought habitually into their warlike councils, that no precautions could have hindered the entire army from perceiving that dissensions, fired by their religious differences, and fed to wilder heat by prejudice and national disgusts, had fallen with a perilous and most pernicious influence upon their leaders.

It was now nearly dawn, when breaking up their long protracted session, they at length came forth. Despondency and gloom sat heavy on the resolute and manly brow of Fairfax, as he strode forth and leaped into his saddle, without altering his garb, though in immediate prospect of a general action. He was not indeed utterly unarmed, for he had entered the court-martial, with but brief time for ceremony, after toiling from the preceding daybreak at the excavation of the trenches ; yet did he lack much of the heavy armature which was still worn by officers in high command. A buff coat richly laced with silver, its open sleeves

displaying the white satin of its lining, stout breeches of the same material fringed at the knee with costly Flanders lace, and boots of russet leather formed the chief part of his defensive dress, although he wore a short but highly-polished breastplate, half covered by his falling collar from the looms of Valenciennes, and by the sash of crimson silk and gold which was wound many times about his waist supporting his long silver-hilted broadsword. He bore his truncheon in his hand, and, ere he mounted, buckled on his head the open bacinet of steel, peculiar to the day, which an attendant held in readiness.

Upon the faces of the other generals, anger, irresolution, and disgust were variously but strongly written; and in the features of the Scottish lords especially, Ardenne imagined he could trace a settled disaffection for the service they had bound themselves to execute. No time was lost, however, and by a series of manœuvres, not less judiciously than rapidly

effected, the whole position of the army was reformed, and taken up anew; so that its front, which had originally faced toward the west, as to oppose an enemy advancing against York from that direction, was now turned easterly in readiness to meet the sally which they hoped, rather than expected, to be made on them from that same city.

Sir Thomas Fairfax, with his new-levied Yorkshire cavalry, and three Scotch regiments of horse, held the extreme right wing; and next to him the infantry of the brave Lord Fairfax, with two brigades of Scottish horse, in readiness for his support. In the main body and reserve were all the regiments of Scottish foot, appointed well and officered by their own covenanting lords, and two of Manchester's brigades; while the left wing was occupied by Cromwell with all his iron cavalry, and three good regiments of northern cuirassiers, under Lieutenant-general Leslie, and Colonel Frizell's regiment of Berwickshire dragoons, who did

good service in the action, posted yet further to the left, by a cross ditch intersecting the main dyke, which ran along the whole front of the puritans, excepting a brief space before the Earl of Manchester's pike-regiments.

The plain, upon the western side of which the army was drawn up, was, on the whole, well suited for a general action, being of considerable extent, entirely open, and untraversed by any hedge or fence, save on the left, where a long narrow lane, between high banks and bushes of old thorn, debouched upon the field, forming the only pass by which Fairfax could cross the drain, and bring his horsemen into action.

The rear of the Parliamentarians was covered by the thickly-planted orchards, each with its quickset fence, the narrow garths and gardens surrounded by stout walls of limestone, and the young plantations around the straggling village of Long Marston; which, with its solid cottages of masonry, would form an excellent and easily

defended point whereon to fall back, if repulsed from their original position ; while on both wings the strong enclosures of the pasture fields, studded with hedge-row timber, would present most serious obstacles to any movement of the enemy to overflank them.

Of all the generals, it seemed to Edgar that Cromwell was the least disturbed in mind or aspect ; yet even he, as he addressed his iron-sides, spoke not with the short, terse, and energetic style which he was wont to use when he chose to be understood, but in interminable and confused harangues, resembling more the doctrinal discourses of a fanatical and visionary preacher, than the heart-stirring oratory of a dauntless captain ; nor did he hesitate to declare openly to Ardenne, when at a little distance from the troopers—"That of a truth there was sore need of prayer and supplication—not of lip-service or knee-bending—but of soul-searching cries, of earnest and continual wrestling with

the Lord ; for verily, unless he work great things this day in Israel's behalf, verily, Edgar Ardenne, you shall behold this host melting away like snow before the April sunshine—unless the God, even the God of battles, harden the hearts and blind the understandings of yon perverse and fiery Rupert, even as of yore he hardened the heart of Pharaoh, that he might bring him to destruction with his captains and his chariots, and his horsemen—unless he do all this and more, I tell thee we shall fall into the pit ourselves have digged ! If the prince have but wisdom to abide in yon fenced city, which he has won from us, then shall you see the carnal-minded, and the feeble-witted of the host—those who, like babes and sucklings, may not endure the rich meats and strong waters of the woods—those who are ill-assured, self-seekers, and backsliders—then shall you see all these, and they outnumber half our army, falling away by tens, by hundreds, and by thousands ! But

lo!" he added, in a quick clear voice, strangely at variance with the drawling snuffle he had thus far adopted—"Whom have we here? Tidings, I trow, from my lord-general."

As he spoke, a youthful officer dashed at a hasty gallop up to his side, and checking, for a moment's space, his fiery horse, "The earl," he cried, "lieutenant-general, prays you will hold yourself in readiness for instant action! Rupert and Newcastle are even now without the gates, and marching hitherward to fight with us!"

"Said I not," shouted Oliver, as loudly that every one of his own cavalry might catch the import of his words,—“said I not that the Lord would harden the heart of our foe, and blind his understanding? The Lord he is on our side; blessed be the name of the Lord!”

And instantly he raised, with his own tongue, the first notes of a hymn, in which he was accompanied at once by full five thousand deep and manly voices.

“ Not unto us—not unto us be given
The glory and the praise—
Nor to the mortal sword.
Though shrewdly we have striven
Long nights, and bloody days,
But unto thee, O Lord !”

The fierce sounds rolled along the front, from corps to corps, till one half of the host had kindled with the same enthusiastic confidence, and swelled the same high chorus ! It was one of those bright flashes of that brightest talent in a leader, the talent of inspiring trust, of awakening energy and zeal, of lighting into sudden flame the hearts of thousands by a single word—a talent, by the way, in which no captain ever has excelled, and probably but two* have ever, in the least degree, approached the wondrous man who was that very day about to make himself a reputation with the mightiest.

As the thunders of that glorious psalm rolled onward, gaining strength at every pause, and

* Mahomet and Napoleon.

echoing for miles around, doubt and despondency passed instantly away—pulses, that but an hour before had throbbled with cold and feeble beatings, now leaped exultingly—eyes, that had rested sullenly upon the earth, flashed cheerfully and vividly to the new risen sun—and tongues, that had half uttered words of evil omen, and almost of fear, now swelled the warlike anthem to the skies.

Before the psalm had yet well ceased, and while its echoes were still alive and ringing in the ear, the pikeheads of the royal foot might be seen twinkling in the level sunbeams, above the coppices and furze brakes that fringed the east side of the plain. And now a massive column burst into open view, their bright steel sallets and their coats of plate reflecting, in broad sheets, the light which flashed in long and dazzling streaks from their tall weapons, as they wheeled from column into line—and now a strong brigade of field artillery, its caissons and its tumbrels following, came rumbling

up at a full trot ; and now, with many a blazoned standard streaming, and a white sea of plumes floating above them, squadron after squadron of that superb and high-born cavalry, to which the King owed all his previous victories, rounded a distant wood, and formed in accurate array upon the royal left. Then, as these formed, the heads of column after column debouched upon the plain, their mounted leaders darting along their flanks and fronts, their music sounding joyously, and the thick trampling of their march shaking the very ground beneath them ; as these fell in, another train of fieldpieces, and a yet more magnificent array of horse wheeled up at the full gallop, and fronted Cromwell's ironsides at a mile's distance on the open plain.

By seven of the clock both armies were in full array of battle, facing each other—when a gallant group of mounted officers advanced a little from the centre of the cavaliers, and in-

stantly, amid the blare of trumpets and the exulting shouts "God save the King!" of the brave gentlemen who mustered under it, the royal standard, with its gorgeous quarterings, was displayed to the light breeze, which bore its folds to their full length, and shook them toward the squadrons of its unrelenting foes.

At the same moment, from the midst of the dark masses of the puritans, coldly arrayed in buff and plain gray steel, with neither scarf, nor plume, nor lace of silver or of gold, to break the dull monotony of their appearance, was hoisted the blue banner of the covenant, bearing St. George's cross of red, but not yet intersected by the white diagonals of Scotland's patron saint. The elevation of this broad dark-coloured sheet was greeted by a stern and solemn acclamation, as different from the wild and animated clamour of the cavaliers, as is the deep incessant booming of the ocean surf, from the sharp, keen explosions of a thunder-storm.

Then followed a short pause—a fearful and

appalling interval of quiet, like the brief space that often intervenes between the mustering of the storm-clouds and the outbreaking of the hurricane. The faces of the bravest paled, and their pulses beat with a quickened and irregular motion, not from the slightest touch of fear, but from the intense violence of their excitement. Prayers were recited in this interval at the head of every regiment among the Parliamentarians, and many of the officers—and not a few even of the private troopers—men whom the spirit of the Lord had blessed with the high gift of expounding mysteries—held forth in their wild jargon, savouring to the ears of Edgar rather of blasphemous and profane phrensy, than of devotion or well-ordered piety.

It was at this conjuncture—just as Cromwell had concluded a long and fervent prayer, tintured, at times, with true heartfelt religion, bursting occasionally into gleams of real eloquence, and throughout fixing the attention of the zealots, who applauded him from time to

time with voice and gesture—that the same group of officers which had displayed the royal standard galloped in full career along the whole front of the cavaliers midway between the armies.

The leading officer, as Edgar gazed upon him through his perspective glass, was a tall, strongly-built, and splendidly-accoutred man, superbly mounted on a jet black barb of the tall breed of Dongola—his cuirass literally blazed with stars and decorations of a dozen military orders, his mantle of dark purple velvet fringed and laid down with lace of gold three inches broad, displayed the diamond insignia of the garter, and his high-crowned Spanish hat was overshadowed by an ostrich plume nearly two feet in height. Yet were his features coarse and ill-favoured, marked with a supercilious sneer, and an expression ill-humoured, haughty, and imperious. His hair, which flowed far down his shoulders, was harsh and quite uncurled. His figure too, though tall and powerful, was

graceless—his body corpulent and gross, betraying symptoms of debauchery and licence, as plainly as his countenance reflected a mind despotic, brutal, and self-willed.

The most profound respect attended this person's swift passage through the lines, and ever and anon some change of station, or some delicate manœuvre was executed on his bidding. But when he reached the extreme right of the Royalists, he paused some time in deep and earnest contemplation of the post occupied by Cromwell with his cavalry, which were even then engaged in chanting one of their vengeful and prophetic hymns. Then sending off a dozen officers, on the full spur, in different directions, he cantered coolly forward with but two attendants, and these private troopers, till he was scarce three musket-shots in front of the grim iron-sides. Here he again drew in his horse, leaped to the ground, and, levelling his glass upon the pommel of his demipique, swept the array of Oliver with careful scrutiny.

Edgar had from the first concluded that this leader was no other than the impetuous and daring Rupert; but had he doubted it, the bitter imprecations and fierce shouts of the excited puritans, to whom his cruelty and his successes had rendered him an object of especial hatred, must have at once convinced him. But he had little time for observation, for Rupert, in his audacious reconnoissance, had, as it seemed, miscalculated his own distance from Frizell's Scotch dragoons, or overlooked the ditch which ran obliquely from their station to within a few yards of the elevation he had chosen, as commanding much of the parliament's position—an oversight which escaped not that experienced officer. A dozen of his men, as the prince halted, had dismounted from their horses, and with their arquebuses ready, and their matches lighted, stole on from bush to bush behind the bank, unseen and unsuspected by the engrossed and anxious leader, till within short carabine

distance ; then, flash after flash, their scattering fire burst from the willow bushes and the tufts of flags that lined the water-course ; and, ere the sharp reports had reached the ears of Ardenne, one of the prince's followers leaped up in his saddle, and fell dead at his general's feet, while the perspective glass dashed from his fingers, and the white plume severed by another bullet, showed how well-aimed and narrowly-escaped had been the volley destined for Rupert's person.

The charger of the fallen trooper dashed masterless across the field, followed with nearly equal speed by the surviving soldier, who halted not, till he had reached his comrades. But he, whose life was aimed at more peculiarly, did not so much as look toward the enemy, whose fire had so nigh slain him, till he had raised his follower from the bloody sod and ascertained that aid was useless. Then quietly remounting, he shook his clenched hand in the air at the dra-

goons, who had reloaded and were now in open view preparing for a second shot, and trotted leisurely away toward his chosen horsemen.

Scarce had this passed, ere Edgar's notice was attracted by the raised voice of Cromwell on whom he had been hitherto in close attendance, but who had ridden a short space to the left, to give some orders to the colonel of one of his own regiments. His words were lost to Ardenne from the distance, but by the short stern intonation of his accents he knew that something was amiss, and cantered up to him at once. The officer, whom Cromwell had addressed, was sitting motionless before his regiment, his bridle loose upon his charger's neck, his open hands raised upward, his dull and heavy features lighted up with a phrensied glare, and his voice rolling forth sentence after sentence of unconnected texts, strung as it were together by a running commentary of his own ill-digested ravings.

“Heard you me not?—Ho! Colonel Obadiah Jepherson!” shouted the general close in his

ear, his features kindling and his voice quivering with rage. "Heard you me not command you straightway to despatch six troops to bring up fascines, that, when we list advance, we may have wherewithal to cross the ditch?—Heard you not—or do you dare to disobey me?"

"Must I not then?" replied the other in a drawling tone; "as Balak said to Balaam, 'Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put into my mouth?'" and, turning toward the troopers, he again went on; "Wherefore be ye, as those, O brethren, whom the Lord set apart to Gideon——"

But not for many words did he continue his oration, for plunging both his spurs up to the rowel-heads into his mighty charger, and plucking forth a pistol from his holster, Oliver dashed against him—leaving the rein at liberty, by the mere pressure of his limbs he wheeled the horse, as he was on the point of riding down his disobedient officer, and seizing with his left hand the collar of his buff coat, with the right he

pressed the muzzle of his weapon to his temples, with such violence that, when the pistol was withdrawn, a livid ring remained on the indented and discoloured flesh.

“Now by the Lord that liveth,” he hissed between his set teeth, but in a whisper so emphatic and distinct that all around him heard it, “if you but wink an eyelid, much less speak, or move, to disobey me, it were better for thee thou hadst never been born! Away! and do my bidding, dog, or you shall die the death!”

And, as he spoke, he shook him off so suddenly, that he had wellnigh lost his saddle, as he turned hastily away, to set about his duty with as much alacrity as though he did so of his own free will.

At this moment a loud sharp roar told that the action had commenced, and riding once more to his station, Edgar beheld a snow-white cloud surge slowly up toward the royal left—a bright flash followed—another burst of dense and solid smoke—another sharp explosion!—and then,

each after each they woke the cannon of the cavaliers, till their whole front was veiled in wreathed smoke, drifting toward the parliament's array, and filling all the intermediate space, as with a palpable and massive substance ;—while the continuous and deafening roar precluded for a while the possibility of hearing, and almost of thought.

Anon the answering ordnance of the puritans belched forth its flame and smoke, and added its din to the awful uproar. At times, when the clouds melted for a moment under the freshening breeze, Edgar and his yet more observant leader, might catch glances of the royal pikemen pouring in solid columns to the charge, the long lines of their levelled weapons glittering through the smoke—or farther to their right the masses of their horse, wheeling like flights of sea-birds to and fro—now all in gorgeous sunshine, and now all in gloom.

Meanwhile the rattling of the musketry was mingled with the deeper bellowing of cannon,

and among all, and over all, the thundering accents of that most potent of all vocal instruments, the voice of man, pealed upward to the heavens.

A long half-hour elapsed, and they might hear the battle raging at every instant fiercer toward their right, yet they remained still unengaged themselves, and without tidings or directions how to act.

“By heaven!” cried Ardenne, as he caught the distant glitter of the royal standards floating among the smoke almost within the puritan position; “By heaven, our right must be repulsed!” and, as he spoke, an aide-de-camp dashed up wounded and ghastly from the right, and as he reined his charger up the gallant brute fell lifeless under him.

“Fairfax is beaten back, and all our right wing scattered,” he exclaimed as he arose.

“Silence, man!” Cromwell sternly interrupted him. “Wouldst thou dismay all these? Say

on, but here apart, and not above your breath, as you would live to speak it out!—Say on!”

“Fairfax is beaten utterly, and all the right wing broken; you may not find two score of it together. As he charged through yon accursed lane, the musketry of Belial mowed his ranks, like grass before the scythe; and lo! the sons of Zerruiah—”

“Tush! tell me not of Belial and of Zerruiah! or, by the life of the Eternal, I will smite thee with my truncheon! Speak out in plain blunt English,” again interrupted Oliver. “Fairfax was broken, and what then!”

“His Yorkshire levies flying all disorderly,” replied the officer, confused and panting still from the effects of his late fall, “trampled beneath their feet, and utterly dispersed Lord Ferdinand’s foot; Balgony’s lancers only broke one royal regiment; and stout Sir Thomas, with but six troops of all our northern horse, hath cut his passage through the cavaliers. These are now struggling hitherward; the rest are

routed past redemption. Lucas, and Porter, and the malignant Goring, are playing havoc on the flank of our best Scottish foot, and Newcastle, with all his whitecoats, is winning way in front at the pike's point—”

“What message from the general? Quick sir,” cried Cromwell, “quick!”

“That you draw out with all despatch, and charge Prince Rupert!”

“Why said you not so sooner?” Oliver replied. “Thou, Righteous Lambert, ride to Jepherson, bid him advance with the fascines, and fill yon ditch! Hutton and Barnaby, off with you to the first and second regiments; we will advance and cross the drain at a brisk trot, and—Ha! their ordnance ceases on the left; Rupert will meet us straightway!—Forward!—Advance! Ardenne, be near me, thou! Forward!—Sound trumpets!”

And at a quick trot they advanced, but in the deepest silence, save for the clashing of their

armour, and the earth-shaking clatter of their hoofs.

“Ha!” Oliver exclaimed again, as a quick spattering volley on their left was heard distinctly, though the smoke-wreaths were too closely packed to suffer objects to be seen above a spear’s length distant; “there goes the musketry of Frizell—and now we clear the smoke!”

And even with the words they passed the ditch, which was filled level with the surface, just at the moment of reaching it; and, as they passed it, the dense clouds from the royal cannon, which, after the discharge had ceased, sailed sluggishly down wind, and hung above the puritans some minutes longer than around the cavaliers, soared slowly upward, and disclosed the whole of that eventful field.

One glance showed Cromwell that the whole right of their position was, indeed, broken—scattered to the four winds of heaven—and that their centre, though supported by the whole

reserve, could scarce maintain itself against the desperate odds with which it was engaged ; though by the fast and rattling volleys, and the repeated charges of the pikemen, he judged that all was not yet over. The second glance showed him the prince in person, with the whole gallant cavalry of the left wing, advancing at full trot to charge him, with scarce five hundred yards between them ; while a strong mass of pikemen, intent on turning the extreme left of the Scottish centre, had advanced so far beyond their horse as to expose a portion of their own right flank.

“ Ardenne ! ” he shouted, with a voice clear as a trumpet, “ away ! a flying charge upon the flank of yon pike-regiment—ride over them, wheel promptly, and fall in upon the left flank of Prince Rupert ! Ruxton, ride thou to Frizell, and tell him not to charge, but to deploy and to maintain his fire—for life ! for life ! Now for the work !—Gallop !—Ho ! charge !—Down

with the sons of Zeruiah!—Ha! ha! the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!”

An instant was enough; his messengers rode like the wind; and with a mighty shout, that rose above the thousand fearful sounds that mingled to make up the thundrous voice of battle, the ironsides plunged headlong on the advancing cavaliers. Five thousand horse at least on either side, splendid in all the vain equipments that cast a false and fleeting light of glory over the ghastly face of havoc! On they went—man to man, and horse to horse—panting for bloodshed, as for the breath of life—drunk with excitement—thoughtless of all except the present! The trumpets of the Royalists were scarcely audible among the yells and shouts of the wild fanatics. “Ha! Zerubabel!—Down with the cursed of God!—Ho! Naphtali—On, Benjamin!—Strike, and spare not! Strike in *his* name—even his *own* name **JAH!**”

The phrensy of their onset—for they charged

like madmen, rather than cool and steady veterans—together with the slight confusion which always must be felt by an assailing party, which in the very moment of attack is suddenly assailed—would have gone hard against the cavaliers ; but when to this was added the continual and well-aimed fire of Frizell's Scotch dragoons, cutting down horse and man along their flank by hundreds ; and when the fresh and gallant regiment of Ardenne (which, having fallen at an oblique tangent on the right flank of the pikemen, and driven through them like a thunderbolt with an unbroken front) had wheeled, without a second's pause, above the dead and dying as orderly as on parade, and charged full on the naked left of Rupert's cavalry—it was no wonder that they were cast into complete and irretrievable disorder.

For some time all was close and deadly conflict ; for such was the ecstatic valour of the gentlemen who battled for the crown, and such the rash and stubborn daring of their leader,

that they persisted still—rallying in squadrons, or in troops—when their whole line was broken and confused ; and still, when these were routed, rushed on in desperate knots of ten or twelve against the victors, and dealt them death on every hand with pistol, carabine-but, and broadsword.

Five times at least did Rupert rally his own regiment, and bring it up to be again repulsed ; and in the last charge, singling Ardenne out, whose prowess he had noticed in the *mêlée*, he drove his horse against him, and smote him such a blow as shivered the tried rapier, which he raised to guard it, to the hilt, and falling thence with scarce abated violence upon his morion, cleft it down to the hair, but deadened by the trusty steel, inflicted no wound on the wearer.

It was well for Edgar that at this moment a fresh charge by Fairfax, Crawford, and Balgony, who had come up from the right wing across the rear, was made with equal skill and

execution ; while Cromwell drew off and reformed his troops, bearing the prince and all his bravest backward, pushing his squadrons, utterly defeated, clear off the field, and chasing them with fearful havoc to the very walls of York.

A little interval ensued, while they called off their stragglers, eager for vengeance, and scattered by the *mêlée* ; but, ere ten minutes had elapsed, the ironsides, though thinned in number, and above half of them wounded, were under their own colours, and in their regular ranks. Ten minutes more flew by, and nothing was yet done ; they kept the ground with not a foe before them, while on their right the enemy's whole infantry, whose flank by the defeat of Rupert was open to their charge, was gradually pushing back their own foot, step by step at the pike's point, from their position.

Amazed at this delay, and fearing some mishap, Ardenne intrusted his command to his lieutenant, and, mounting a fresh horse, gal-

loped away in search of Cromwell, whom he found bleeding fast from two wounds, both above his shoulders; one in the neck, a graze, as it was said, by a chance pistol-shot from his own men; the other a smart sword-cut on the collar-bone. He was evidently faint, and failing from the loss of blood.

“A surgeon—ho!” cried Edgar; “bear him away to the rear!”

“Not for the world!” cried Oliver, in a low voice but stern. “Shall I go, while the Lord has need of me? Form to the right, brave hearts, and follow me! The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!”

And, making a last effort to lead them to the charge, he tottered in his stirrups, and would have fallen, had not two subalterns supported him and borne him to the rear.

“What now, lieutenant-colonel?” exclaimed Jepherson from the head of the next regiment, as Cromwell was conveyed away.

“Heard you not then the general’s order?”

answered Ardenne. " Each regiment form open column to the right by troops, and charge all on the flank of yon dense mass of musketeers and pikemen ! Thou, Jepherson, wheel round upon the rear of yon brigade of whitecoats. Thou, Desborough, cut thy way through yonder pikemen. Sound trumpets ! forward all ! "

And on they went, with nothing to oppose or stand before them. Regiment after regiment, taken in flank or rear, were cut down, trampled under foot, slashed out of the very shape and semblance of humanity.

But now they reached the whitecoats, Newcastle's own brigade of musketeers and pikemen mingled, four thousand strong, picked men, flushed with success, and valiant. Well was it then that Ardenne had wheeled Jepherson upon their rear ; for, as he came upon their flank, while they were fighting hard in front with the Scotch infantry, they formed a second face with admirable skill, and opened on him such a fire from their second and rear ranks, as

emptied wellnigh half his saddles; while their pikés presented an impenetrable rampart against his gallant horses.

With difficulty he rallied his own regiment, and brought it up again to the charge, and at the selfsame instant Jepherson burst upon their rear. Assailed upon three sides at once, they broke; but fought it out even then, standing in small groups back to back, refusing quarter to the last, and lying in their lines when dead as they had fought while living! Oh! noble victims, thanklessly sacrificed in the upholding of a tyrant against their country's freedom! slain innocently in an evil cause! Alas! alas! for their free English blood poured out like water on their native soil, not to defend, but to destroy its liberties!

With the destruction of the whitecoats the battle, in truth, ended; for though a green-coated brigade still offered stout resistance, it was but a last effort of despair. The parliament's whole centre, now relieved from their

assailants, moved steadily and promptly up, pursuing the advantage gained by the gallant ironsides; and, pressing on the scattered parties of the Royalists with such relentless zeal, that they could never rally till they reached the walls of York—whole squadrons pushed into the Ouse were drowned in its deep waters, or pitilessly slaughtered on its banks.

The cavalry, with Ardenne at their head, meanwhile still drove right onward; and, wonderful to tell, traversed the whole position of the enemy, from end to end, in perfect and unbroken order, sweeping the relics of that disastrous fight before them, as the surf drives the wreck, which its own violence has made, before its foamy waters. These having reached the furthest royal left, they wheeled once more to the right, and actually occupied the very ground which Lucas with his cavaliers had held at the beginning of the action.

The only enemy now left upon the field consisted of these same victors, who, having con-

quered Fairfax and his tumultuary levies, had pressed with much success upon the flank of Manchester's and Lindsey's regiments of foot; till those stout squadrons, when relieved by Edgar's overwhelming charge upon their enemies in front, found leisure to concentrate all their efforts against the cavalry which had so nigh defeated them; and were in turn repulsing them, when, on the very spot where they had first so roughly handled Fairfax and his northern horse, Ardenne fell on them unawares, and well avenged his comrades.

In this last conflict the ground was broken with steep banks and scattered bushes, and the deep channel of the drain alluded to above. There, as before, the fight was obstinate, and hand to hand, among the troopers; when just as Edgar's men drove Lucas back, killing his horse, and making himself prisoner, while all was smoke and tumult and confusion, a small but well-appointed troop of cavaliers wheeled round some alder-bushes and charged home.

These for a moment threw Edgar's force into disorder, but unsupported and too weak in numbers, they fell fast, and at the last drew off—their leader fighting desperately to cover their retreat, till a shot struck his charger, and, as he rolled upon the gory and hoof-dinted sod, a savage fanatic shortened his sword to stab the prostrate rider.

Edgar's eye caught a glimpse of the gray hairs, and noble features that were now disclosed, bloodstained and ghastly, by the falling of his battered morion. With a fierce cry, he bounded from his horse—he was—he was in time! — He struck one rapier up, received another, which he could not parry, in his own sword arm—but he had saved his father!

It was not he alone, however, who had perceived Sir Henry's peril:—a desperate rally of his followers was made to rescue him. The tide of fight had rolled away after the flying cavaliers of Lucas; and in an instant, ere he could strike a blow, or shout his war-cry,

Ardenne, second to Cromwell only as the winner of that bloody day, was made a captive, and borne off at a gallop by the flyers from that very field, on which his conduct and his valour had retrieved the fortunes of his party, when on the very verge of absolute annihilation.

CHAPTER VI.

Were he my kinsman, brother, or my son,
It should be thus with him—he must die to-morrow.

Measure for Measure.

The outmost crowd have heard a sound,
Like horse's hoof on harden'd ground.
Nearer it came and yet more near,
The very headsmen paused to hear.

Scott's Rokeby.

IT was already past the middle of the night which followed the tremendous conflict upon Marston Moor, yet many a light was glancing through the casements of the adjoining village,

in which the cavalry of the victorious army had taken up its quarters. Strange and discordant noises echoed among the low-browed cottages—the stamp and scream of vicious chargers, the clash of arms, the din of the artillery waggons groaning and creaking over the ill-made roads, the moans and outcries of the wounded wretches, waked to fresh agonies by the rough motion of the carts, which bore them from the field, watering the dust beneath their wheels with human gore—and yet, though every house and shed was occupied by the rude soldiery, there mingled not one tone of riot or debauchery with the accustomed sounds that indicate the presence of an armed multitude. All grave and stern the sentinels stalked their appointed rounds, or if they broke the silence of their watch it was but by the humming of some pious canticle; while ever and anon the louder accents of some military preacher rose upon the ear, or the deep chorus of a distant hymn. No wassailings prevailed about the watchfires, no

songs of profane triumph were bellowed from the hostelries wherein the men were billeted, no yells of savage laughter, nor female shrieks broke forth to tell of warlike licence ; in short the aspect of the hamlet was rather that of some immense conventicle of armed enthusiasts, than of the nightly quarter of a triumphant host fresh from the shock, the rapture, and the glory of the battle.

Before one dwelling of pretensions somewhat greater than its neighbours, having a little courtyard with a low stone-wall before it, and a grotesquely-sculptured porch of native sandstone, there sat two mounted privates of the ironsides, one on each side the gate, so still and motionless that, but for the occasional tossing of their chargers' heads, or whisk of their long tails, they might have passed for lifeless statues. The pale beams of the moon slept placidly upon their morions and breastplates, while the bright scarlet of their doublets was mellowed by the partial light into a dimmer and more sober hue.

Within the court two more of the same sturdy corps walked to and fro with ported carbines, crossing each other at brief intervals, the red sparks of their lighted matches showing their readiness for instant service. Within the house all were at rest save in one chamber, opening directly from the narrow hall or passage, whence might be heard, even without the walls, a heavy and irregular footstep clanging with military spurs upon the flagstones which composed the cottage floor, and now and then the suppressed murmur of a voice communing as it seemed with the deep thoughts of the speaker.

It was a large low-roofed and stone-paved room, with heavy rafters and a huge open chimney of black oak, dingy and mantled with the smoke of ages. A wide low window, divided into many lattices by massive freestone mullions, with a long settle of carved wainscoting beneath it, occupied the whole of one side, while opposite to it, and at right angles to the hearth, another seat of similar materials but

superior workmanship, with a high panelled back and elbows, was disposed so as to shield the occupants from the keen blasts that found their way in winter through many a crevice of the time-shaken walls. Over this antique piece of furniture a scarlet dragoon-cloak was flung at random, with a broad-brimmed and high-crowned hat of dark gray felt, hooked on one of the knobs which decorated its extremities, while from the other hung a buff belt with a long iron-hilted tuck.

Upon a table close before the hearth, on which a dozen fast-decaying brands silently smouldered, stood with its wick tall and un-snuffed a solitary lamp, casting a feeble and uncertain light about the room, which served however to display a brace of horseman's heavy pistols, an open map, a telescope, a worn and greasy bible, and a leader's truncheon lying beside it on the board, as well as a confused assemblage of steel armour piled in a large

armed chair and glancing with obscure reflections from the shadow of a distant corner.

It was, however, the inmate of the chamber that lent its chief attraction to the scene—a strong-built and stern-featured man, clad in a military suit of buff, such as was then worn under the corslet and thigh-pieces of the cavalry; his cumbersome jack-boots were still about his legs, garnished with spurs as when he left the saddle, though all his other armour had been doffed in consequence of recent wounds, as it would seem from many a speck and splash of dingy crimson on the leathern cassock, and from his left arm bound up by a silken sling.

It was the leader of the ironsides.—There was a strange—almost a wild expression on his grim features as he passed and repassed the light, and a glare in his deepset eye, almost like that of the insane. He muttered at times in audible and articulate sounds, but mostly in a half-

uttered inward key, striding the while with heavy but uneven steps, now fast, now slow, across the echoing floor, his hands were now crossed firmly on his breast, now tossed aloft as if they brandished the war-weapon, and now they griped each other with so stern a pressure that it almost seemed as if the blood would start from beneath his nails. It might be that the fever of his wounds had terminated for the moment to his brain, it might be that a darker fit than common of his fanatic hypochondriasm had occupied his mind, but on this night the wise and crafty conqueror of Rupert resembled rather the mysterious *energumenos*, the possessed, fiend-tortured, maniac of holy writ, than the cool, self-controlling, scientific leader he had that day approved himself.

“ King?—King?” at last he exclaimed audibly, pausing from his uneasy walk, with an expression of uncertainty and even terror distinctly marked in every feature. “ Didst thou say King?—No! no! not King!—Avaunt, Beelzebub!—Get thee behind me, Sathanas!—

It said not, 'King!' that solemn and tremendous shape, that drew the curtains of my boyish couch at the unhallowed hour of midnight—
'The greatest one in England, but not King!'
—Ho! have I foiled thee there?—Ha ha!—
well art thou called the prince of liars—get thee behind me! tempt me no more!—away foul slave! By the Lord's help I spit at and defy thee!"

He took two or three turns across the room more quickly than before, and again pausing cried, "A trick of fantasy?—who saith it was unreal—have we not ears to hear, and eyes to see; and shall we not believe what we do hear and see?—Did not a spirit pass before the face of Job, that the hair of his flesh stood up?—Stood it not still, yet he could not discern the form thereof?—Was there not silence,

* It is notorious that a story was in existence among the contemporaries of Cromwell, long before his attainment even of high *military* rank, to the effect that he had been awakened from his sleep, when a boy, by a mysterious shape, which told him he should be *the greatest man in England*, not however using the word *king*.

and he heard a voice?—And came it not to pass so likewise unto me, and much more also?—Again: Did not the evil-minded Saul call up, through her at Endor, the living spirit of the departed prophet, that it did prophecy to him?—And yet again: Did not the Roman Brutus, idolater although he was and heathen, hold converse with the shadow of his kingly victim, that was his evil genius at Philippi?—And may not I—I, that was written down before the world began—I, that have been predestinate of old to execute the wrath of the Most Highest, and press the wine-press of his vengeance—may not I too commune with disembodied ministers that walk in the night-season? Go to! go to! I heard its mighty accents as I started from my slumber, and they yet tingle in my fleshly ears—‘Arouse thee, thou that shalt be first in England!’—But not—it said *not*—King!’

Again he took a short and hurried turn through the apartments—“And if it had,” he cried in higher tones,—“and if it had said King?

—Be there not lying spirits — be there not tempters—be there not false prophets?—Had it said King, then had I roused myself indeed! Then had I striven with the evil one, that he had fled me! for to the putting down, not to the raising up of tyrants was I called—not that to me men should bow down the knee, and wallow in the dust, and cry, Hail King! but that throughout this goodly realm of England there should be innocence, and righteousness, and peace, and liberty, and truth for ever!”

He paused again in his soliloquy, and as he paused the challenge of a distant sentinel rang sharp and clear through the still night—the clatter of a horse’s hoofs—another challenge, and another—a bustle in the courtyard and the sound of several feet hurrying toward the door!

With the first faint alarm the general was himself again; he passed his hand across his eyes and drew a deep sigh as if to ease his breast—then, turning to the table hastily, he trimmed the waning lamp, and seating himself, instantly

resumed the studies whence he had probably been hurried by the ferment of his distempered spirits.

The outer door was opened, and several persons, after a moment's parley with the sentinel on duty, entered the house—a heavy hand rapped quickly on the door, followed by a blunt voice—“The captain of the watch to speak with General Cromwell.”

“Enter, the captain of the watch,” cried Oliver, and, as the well-known face of an approved and trusty comrade met his eye—“What now, good Kingsland!” he exclaimed. “How goes it with the host?”

“All thanks be to the Giver of all mercies—well!” replied the officer; “but here is one without—yea even one from the strong hold of the malignants—seeking to parley with you.”

“One from the town of York—Ha?” answered Cromwell with the speed of thought. “Admit him instantly.”

“Nay! not from York,” returned the other;

“ nor is it any *he*. Of a verity it is a damsel, yea! and a damsel decked with the comeliness—truly I say with the loveliness of the flesh !”

“ Tush! tell not me of comeliness!” cried Oliver very sharply. “Of God’s truth, Ahaziah Kingsland, thou art a fool, thus to disturb my meditations for a most frail and painted potsherd,—a Dalilah, I warrant me—a Rechab, yea, and a painted Jezabel—a harlot from the camp of the Egyptians—cast her forth straightway!—leave me, I say—begone !”

“ It is not so !” replied the other sturdily—
“ It is not so, an you will hear me out!—It is a maiden of repute—she rode up to our outpost on the western road with three stout serving-men, seeking the captain of the night, and verily when I was brought to her she claimed to speak with General Cromwell, touching the young man Edgar Ardenne— ”

“ Admit her, and that too without tarrying. And bid them fetch in fuel—for lo! the fire hath burnt low while I did watch and pray, and

the night air is chill, though it be summer—and lights and wine, I say, and creature comforts, such as may fit the tender and the delicate of women!”

The words were yet upon the lips of Cromwell when a tall female figure, marked by that indescribable yet not to be mistaken air of grace which is seen rarely but in persons conscious of the possession of high station and pre-eminent endowments, was ushered into the dim-lighted chamber. The coarse dark-coloured riding-cloak, wrapped closely round her form, could not entirely conceal the elegant proportions, which it was evidently intended to disguise; and still less could the wide-leafed hat of country straw, tied closely down upon the cheeks by a silk kerchief, mask the aristocratic mould of the fair features, or hide the rich luxuriance of the light-brown hair, which hung uncurled and damp with the night-dews far down upon her shoulders.

A slight bustle occurred, while the general

with his attendant officers, tendered her in dumb show the courtesies demanded by her apparent rank and yet more by her isolated and defenceless situation ; but with an air of quiet dignity she waved off their attentions, and expressed more by her manner than her words a wish to be left alone with the far-dreaded leader of the independents.

Meanwhile more logs had been heaped on the hearth, and now threw up a flickering and lively glow which, added to the lustre of some three or four fresh lights, diffused itself into the furthest angles of the room. The serving-men and his subordinates withdrew, Oliver sternly ordering them to hold themselves aloof, and pray to be delivered from the sin of eaves-dropping.

Then without any affectation, or display of fear or of embarrassment, the lady dropped her mantle, and stood forth revealed in all the bright and beautiful proportions of Sibyl Ardenne. Her face was pale as death, yet it was firm,

and perfectly composed—there was no flutter of her pulse, no tremour of her frame, no doubt or hesitation in the clear cold glance of her expressive eye—all was calm, self-confiding, resolute, and fearless.

“ I have come hither,” she said, without waiting to be first addressed, in a voice slow and passionless, yet exquisitely musical,—“ I have come hither, General Cromwell, in a fashion men will deem unmaidenly, and women bold unto effrontery. I have come hither under the shade of night, alone save with the company of menials, unto the foeman of my family—my King—my country! yet dare not even in your most inward soul to deem me light or frail. I have come, I say, hither, casting aside all prejudice, all fear, and all reserve—defying the opinion of the world—incurring the contempt, the hatred, and perhaps the curse, of those I I hold most dear. Yet have I come, upheld by mine own conscience, and firm in the resolve to hinder a foul crime.—All other means have

failed—tears, arguments, entreaties! All!—all, I say, save this. Get you instantly,” she went on, rising as she spoke into strong energy—“to horse!—to horse! to horse! if you would save your friend, your fellow-soldier, your preserver—alas that he was such!—if you would save Edgar Ardenne!—He is a captive of the cavaliers, sentenced to die at daybreak.”

“To die—” vehemently interrupted Cromwell—“To die!—they dare not—no, for their souls, they dare not!—Did they but harm one hair of him, I would hang fifty of their best and noblest, higher than ever Haman swung in the free airs of heaven!”

“Sentenced—” she continued quietly and without heeding the interruption—“to die to-morrow!—Yet he may still be rescued if you will it so. Prisoner to a small body of the retreating cavaliers, he will be shot at daybreak, if not released this night—nor can he be released save by your strict obedience to my bidding!—Obey me, and to-night you rescue

him, who would have died to save you ! Despise my warning, and to-morrow you may perchance—avenge him !”

With a fixed scrutinizing glance the general gazed upon her features while she spoke, as though he would peruse her soul.

“ And who—” he said at length, “ and who are you, that speak thus resolutely, act thus boldly in behalf of him who is the foeman of your tribe—even the stout and valiant Ardenne ?”

“ It matters not,” she answered steadily,—“ it matters not who I may be, or what.—It matters only that you subscribe to my conditions, and get you straight to horse.”

“ Thus far it matters only, ” answered Cromwell—“ that an I know you not, yea ! and moreover know your motives likewise, I stir not—horse nor man ! There be enow of dames and demoiselles among you who would deem falsehood very righteous truth, if so ye might entrap unto destruction one who—although

himself he saith it—hath been and will be a keen instrument—yea! a two-edged sword, to work destruction on the sons of Belial!”

“ Not so! not so!” she broke upon his speech with striking energy. “ Not so—by all my hopes of heaven!—Such may be thy creed, to do ill that good may come of it. But I—I would not stoop to falsehood, were it to buy the lives of thousands such as thou art!—my aim—my only aim—is to preserve the young from a most cruel and heart-rending doom—to save the aged from a most deadly crime. I am—know it, and use the knowledge as you list—I am the niece of your friend’s sire.”

“ Ha! Mistress Sibyl Ardenne—is it so?” muttered the general musingly. “ The brother’s daughter of that perverse and bloody-minded old malignant, whose right hand is crimson—crimson with the persecution of the saints! Verily this is a sure and trusty witness!—And so you would preserve the youth—A valiant youth he is, and I do say it—stout of

heart, strong of hand, tender of conscience—yea! a burning and a shining light to men—and so thou wouldst preserve him—and wouldst wed with him—ha! is it not so?—and win him to the faction of the man Charles Stuart!—preserve his life, so to destroy his soul! Is it not so?—Ha! have I read your heart?”

“You have *not*!” she answered, with calm dignity. “You have *not* read it; nor can you so much as conjecture or imagine the motives or the thoughts of such as I, more than you can comprehend the sacred truths which you misquote, perverting them to your own ruin. Know, General Cromwell, that not to be the empress of the universe—not to restore my sovereign to his lawful throne—my country to its ancient peace—would I espouse the man who, whether from misapprehended duty or from wilful crime, could band himself with persons like to thee—lending himself a willing tool to be played off by rebels to their monarch—traitors to their country—and—alas! that I should live to say

it — vile hypocrites before their God ! It is for this—for this that I would have him live, that *he* may not lack season for repentance ; and that his miserable father may be spared the sin of slaying his own son !”

“ His father !” shouted Cromwell, excited now beyond all self-restraint. “ His father ! In God’s name, speak out, maiden ! His father ! Merciful Lord ! What meanest thou ?”

“ He is a captive to Sir Henry Ardenne,” she replied ; “ made captive in the very action of defending him, and doomed by him to perish, as a rebel and a traitor, with the first break of dawn !”

“ Where lie these cavaliers ? what be their numbers ? Speak !”

“ Promise me, then,” she said, with infinite composure ; “ promise me as you are a gentleman, a soldier, and a Christian, that, save to rescue Edgar Ardenne, you will not turn the tidings I shall give you to your own gain, or to King Charles’s detriment ! Promise before the

Lord, and by your hopes of an hereafter, that you will shed no drop of blood which is not absolutely needful to his safety; and more, that he once safe, you will strike no blow further, but return straightway to this spot, molesting no man, nor taking any note of their position or proceedings against whom I shall lead you, for twelve hours' space!"

"Tush! tush! it may not be. Say quickly where they lie, and what their numbers, so shall we save your lover; but dally not, I pray you, lest we may be too late to save!"

"Promise!" she answered, steadily.

"Dally not, maiden! I say dally not!" Cromwell repeated very sternly; "else shall the blood of him thou lovest, and not that only, but the guilt of the insane old homicide rest on your head, who might have saved them, but wouldst not!"

"Promise, or not a word from me! Promise, or I go hence, and Heaven befriend whom thou desertest to destruction!"

“It may not be, I say—it may not be!” he cried, gnashing his teeth, and stamping violently on the floor, in a fierce paroxysm of unbridled rage. “Speak quickly, girl, and truly; or instantly I cast thee into bonds! Without there, ho! a guard and fetters!”

“Promise, or you may tear me limb from limb—ay, draw me with wild horses, yet shalt thou nothing learn! Promise, and I tell all!”

The guard rushed in—grim, gloomy-looking fanatics, to whom their leader’s merest nod was law—yet she was silent as the grave; and the dark zealot paused in deep perplexity. His brow was stormy as a winter’s midnight; his eye cold, hard, and pitiless; his teeth compressed so firmly, that his very lips were white as ashes; and his hands clenched, yet quivering with emotion. While he yet doubted, a slow solemn sound came floating down the night-wind to his excited ears. It was the village clock striking the second hour past midnight.

“Three hours more,” she said, in a low

mournful voice, "and nothing will remain of him you *call* your friend, except a little blood-stained clay, which you may, or may not, avenge!"

The muscles of the general's mouth worked violently, his clenched hand gradually opened, the expression of his eye grew softer.

"Noble heart!" he muttered. "Well hath the prophet spoken 'a virtuous woman is beyond the price of rubies!'"

Then, raising his voice, he said distinctly and aloud—"Before the Lord, my Judge and my Redeemer, and by my hopes of grace, I promise thee "It shall be done as thou wouldst have it. How many, and where lie they?"

"Three hundred horse—in the small town of Wetherby-on-Wharfe."

"Sound trumpets—boot and saddle! Mine own first iron-sides to horse; let them all carry petronels. Despatch! despatch! Saddle me Thunder for the field—I will myself to horse! Find me three trusty guides that know each

yard of country for ten miles around ! For life ! for life ! no tarrying !”

Forth rushed the subalterns—the trumpets flourished, piercingly shrill and stirring—then came the clash of arms, the trampling of quick feet, the glare of torches, the din of confused voices, the pawing and the snort of chargers, and all the thrilling sounds and sights of an alarum at the dead of night.

“ One more word, maiden,” he exclaimed, while fastening the rivets of his corslet with an impatient hand. “ Where hold they him in ward ?”

“ In the court-house,” she answered, “ hard by the market-place, and nigh the river-bank ; and now forget you have beheld me—forget it, and farewell !”

“ Nay, nay,” he said, “ not so. You go not hence, save with our escort. Too much risk have you run to-night already.”

“ No,” she replied. “ I must be home before you. I lodge not in the town, and I may well

be missed. I must be home before you, else will all fail."

"Nay, thou art right in all things," Cromwell answered; "and as thou wilt it shall be. Kingsland, conduct the maiden in all honour to her own attendants. Lady," he added, taking her by the hand with a benevolent expression lighting his gloomy features, "lady, thou art a goodly and a glorious creature; and this night hast thou done a deed worthy the noblest of earth's daughters. A soldier's blessing, although he be not of thy faith, nor of thy faction, cannot disgrace or harm thee. The God of Israel bless thee then, and guide thy feet aright, and give thee peace and happiness and understanding. Farewell, and doubt not that I will deal with thee righteously; for if I fail thee, to transgress my promise, may He whom I profess to serve—with frailty, it is true, and fainting, yet with sincere heart-zeal—do unto me so likewise at mine utmost need, and much more also!"

He let fall her hand as suddenly as he had

taken it, and, as if half ashamed of the emotion he had shown, abruptly turned away, and scanned the map which lay upon the table with intense scrutiny ; while Sibyl, wondering at the singular emotion and unexpected conduct of the hated independent, silently left the house to hurry homeward, with an easier heart than she had carried to the quarters of the puritans.

Before a half-hour had elapsed, five hundred chosen horsemen were under arms and in the saddle—the very flower of Cromwell’s finest cavalry—and he himself, despite his wounds, his arm yet hanging in a sling, mounted, and at their head.

After a short and hurried conversation with the guides, he gave the word to march, and led them at a rapid trot along the moonlight roads, none knowing, save himself, the object or direction of their route. When they had ridden some six miles, he halted suddenly.

“ Is there not hereabout,” he said, looking toward the guide, who rode beside his rein, “ a

path whereby to reach the Wharfe, and ford it here, some mile or so below the town?"

"A half-mile further," answered the countryman, "a lane turns off to the left, down to the Flint-mill ford, two miles below the bridge.

"Ho! Captain Goodenough," cried Oliver, "take thou this fellow to the rear, and, as we pass the lane, turn down it with the last troop—tarry not on thy way, but cross the river, and keep the right bank up, until thou be within two gunshots of the bridge; there halt till that thou hear my trumpets, and then charge! Over the bridge—into the town—and strike straight for the market-place! If that ye be discovered, ere ye hear me, delay not, but dash straightway in. If that your guide deceive you, shoot him upon the instant. Be cautious, and be quick—away!"

On they went, quickening still their pace, and, as they passed the lane, the troop appointed to the duty wheeled off, steadily, but

without slackening its pace, and hurried on its route.

Another mile was passed, and once again the general halted. "Kingsland and Pearson," he cried, "move to the front; I would hold counsel with ye; and bring the other guides." Then as his officers arrived—"There be," he said, "two other roads, beside this which we follow, that enter Wetherby this side the river—the great north road from Boroughbridge, and one from Knaresborough, yet further to the west. Goodenough holds the bridge, and I will keep this route; you two must ride across the country, till that ye reach these roads. Feel your way down them, each one as nearly as he may unto their outposts, and when ye hear my trumpets charge, as I said before, and cut your way straight for the market-place. Kill no more than ye must, and make no prisoners. Keep your men well together, and be steady. Send back your guides to me, each with an orderly

when ye have reached the roads. Ye have but a scant hour to do it, but that is time enow, an ye employ it diligently. By then the moon will set, and we shall have it dark and misty. Be wary, and success is certain. God speed ye, gentlemen—away !”

Off they rode across the open fields which stretched, at that time without fences or enclosures, except a few small drains, for many miles over that fertile district.

An hour passed slowly over, and the moon sunk, as Cromwell had predicted, into a heavy bed of clouds, yet he moved not. His men were drawn up, all dismounted, but each trooper by his horse, in a small piece of marshy woodland, open to the road, where they could not have been discovered by a chance passenger.

The morning grew not lighter yet, for a small drizzling rain began to fall, with a dense fog, rendering objects scarcely visible at ten feet distant. Another half-hour passed, and yet no tidings.

“Mount, ho ! and blow your matches,” exclaimed Cromwell, breaking the silence which had so long remained uninterrupted by any human sound or whisper. “We must fall on, else shall we too late—trusting to fortune and the favour of the Lord that our friends be at their posts. Wheel to the left. Ho ! forward, trot !”

He put his horse at once into his swiftest pace ; but, just as he moved his men, the clang of hoofs came rattling up the stony road—it was the guide from Pearson with an orderly.

“All’s well !” he cried ; “stout Capt. Pearson hath gained the further road, Kingsland must needs be at his post, and lo ! here comes his messenger !”

“Forward ! Forward !” shouted Cromwell, “for lo ! there breaks the morning. Forward ! and when the outposts challenge us, sound trumpets and shout cheerily !”

On they went, clattering at a furious pace along the broken roads, and now they almost

reached the town, the lights of which they might see feebly twinkling through the mist-wreaths. An awful sound broke on their ears, heard fearfully distinct above the din of hoofs and clash of spur and scabbard—it was the first note of the death-bell!

“Gallop! Ho! Gallop!” Cromwell shrieked out in piercing tones that thrilled to every heart, plunging his spurs up to the rowel-heads into his charger’s side—but his command reached other ears than those of his stout followers.

“Stand, or I shoot!” challenged a drowsy sentinel, whom they had wellnigh passed unnoticed despite the clatter of their march; and at the selfsame point of time his musket was discharged; but its report was drowned by the heart-thrilling flourish of the trumpets, and the repeated war-cry of the charging zealots.

On every side the trumpets of the general were answered by the simultaneous shouts of the three bands he had detached, by the quick

clatter of their horses' hoofs, and the sharp ringing volleys of their carbines. On every side the outposts were cut down, and the town entered sword in hand. The death-bell ceased to toll—the ringers had deserted it in terror!—The bugles pealed, and the drums beat to arms, but it was all too late. The few who were on foot, were instantly cut down;—others came rushing from their quarters half-attired, with lighted torches and unbelted brands, only to gaze in mute and unresisting terror on the complete success of the assailants!—only to see four gallant troops of horse wheeling in opposite directions and in resistless numbers into the market-place!—to hear the clang of axe and hammer upon the prison-gates, mixed with the deafening huzzas of the triumphant puritans!—to mark, by the red glare of many a flambeau suddenly kindled by the troopers, their captive borne in triumph from the cell—which he had never dreamed of quitting, but for the place of

execution—mounted upon a ready charger, and girt round by a ring of swords, that set the very hope of rescue at defiance!

One short note of the bugle, and every torch expired as suddenly as it had been illumed!—Another—and the strangers fell into column with the speed of thought, and filing off at a hard trot were out of sight so rapidly, that but for the dismantled gates, the empty dungeon, the decaying brands that smouldered on the ground, and the few scattered bodies outstretched upon the miry pavements never to rise again, all that had passed might have been almost deemed a wild and baseless dream.

CHAPTER VII.

Perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright—to have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mockery.

Troilus and Cressida.

THE terrible campaign of '44 had ended, not indeed with that total overthrow of Charles, and absolute dispersion of his party, which might well have been looked for after the complete rout of the finest army he had ever been enabled to collect upon Long Marston Moor, and which would probably have followed, had

all the generals of the commonwealth been equals in spirit, energy, and firm devotion to their cause, of the true victors on that bloody day—Fairfax and Cromwell. But, in truth, during the years which had elapsed since the uplifting of the royal standard, the aspect of affairs in England had been changed greatly for the worse, and men's opinions had undergone, if possible, a greater alteration.

Each party, as is the natural consequence of opposition, whether in argument or armed strife, had but become more desperately wedded to its own principles or prejudices. The King, though he had gained no single step toward a general result of conquest or pacification, was more resolved than ever to come to no terms, save such as he could never reasonably even hope to gain with his rebellious subjects.

The people, meanwhile, were becoming weary of the war, and all the miseries that follow in its train, and seeing that there was no hope that Charles would ever listen either to prudence or

to reason, until reduced to infinite extremities, were daily—hourly—increasing in their animosity to him, and in their readiness to urge on and promote, by every method in their power, the interest of his enemies.

The nobles, on the other hand, those even who had been the first and the most zealous to proclaim themselves adherents to the parliament and constitution—the first to buckle on the arms of legalized and just rebellion—perceiving now, that through the self-destructive obstinacy of the King, the civil strife could have no end, save in the downfall of the monarchy, and consequent suppression of all aristocratic privilege, relaxed in their endeavours—fought, if they fought at all, with feeble and uncertain spirit, as doubtful whether conquest or defeat to them would prove the greater evil—and would, had they possessed the absolute control, have suffered the war to go out, as it were, for very lack of aliment.

Among the royalists immediately upon the

issue of that bloody field, the gallant Newcastle, justly incensed at Rupert's furious and unmanly rashness, by which indeed the whole north had been set at stake and lost in one pitched battle, had thrown aside his arms, and crossed the seas to gratify, if it might be, in happier realms, his taste for those accomplishments and arts of peace which were far more congenial to his improved and courtly intellect, than the rude din of camps and foughten fields.

The prince, without so much as an attempt to rally his dispersed and shattered forces, fled with all speed toward Chester, while York, relieved in vain, surrendered in a few days to the conquerors of Marston.

Better success, however, than could have been expected, fell to the cavaliers in other portions of the realm. Charles, who, a few days previous to the defeat of his rash nephew, had worsted Waller at Cropredy bridge, now following up his slight advantage by a vigorous and able movement into Cornwall, pressed upon

Essex with such skill and perseverance, that the general of the parliament was forced to make a precipitate escape by sea. Hopeless of bringing off his army, he went on board with a few officers, having first sent away his horse, under command of Balfour, to cut their way, as best they might, to London; which (owing to the shameful revelry of Goring, who suffered them, although forewarned even of the hour when the sortie would be made), he most successfully accomplished; and leaving all his infantry, artillery, and baggage under Skippon, to take the best terms of surrender they might gain from the King's policy or mercy.

A second desperate drawn battle followed before Newbury, wherein, as they had done in every action, Cromwell's undaunted squadrons carried all before them in that part of the field where they engaged, although at other points the headlong valour of the cavaliers retrieved the day, and gained the doubtful credit of a balanced fight, owing, as it was said, to Man-

chester's uncertain, if not dishonest, policy in absolutely prohibiting the leader of the iron-sides from making one more charge on the retreating cavaliers; when, as that officer asserted, a complete victory must have undoubtedly been won by such a movement.

After this fruitless struggle, relieving the beleaguered posts of Donnington and Basinghouse, the King once more took up his quarters for the winter in the loyal town of Oxford, with better hopes than he had entertained since the complete subversion of his party in the north; on news of which his Queen had instantly escaped to France, and he himself had deemed it wise to send the Prince of Wales to Bristol with a separate council and an independent army, judging it hazardous to hold so great a stake as their united safety embarked upon a single venture.

Toward the dead of winter, the armies being both laid up, the puritanic leaders returned to Westminster to take once more their part in the

proceedings of the Houses, since they had no more opportunity of active service in the field.

Matters in parliament looked wildly—parties ran higher now than they had done at any time even before the royalists seceded from the councils of the nation—the Presbyterians and the Independents striving, with rancorous and bitter energy, to gain the upper hand. Commissioners were, indeed, sent from both sides to treat for peace, as during the preceding winter, at Uxbridge; but rather to preserve appearances, than from the least belief, on either side, that they could prove successful in their mission.

Such was the state of things when, on a keen December's afternoon, Ardenne had strolled forth from his lodging under the pressure of uneasy thoughts, to try if exercise and change of scene might banish the dull sense of rooted sorrow, almost amounting to despair, which had possessed his bosom. At first he wandered aimlessly about the streets, until at length he found himself in the long alleys of St. James's

Mall, the stage in former days of so much gaiety and pomp, but now all gloomy and deserted by every living thing, except a few disconsolate and dingy sparrows huddled together on the leafless branches of the elms, or twittering feebly in the wintry sunshine.

The dull and lonely scenery—the grass-plots mantled partially with crisp hoar-frost—the wide canals sheeted with rotten and half-melted ice—the rustic benches white with the slippery rime—the big drops plashing down from off the southern branches of the giant trees—and, above all, the utter solitude—the absence of any human being—harmonized so well with the dark and almost misanthropic mood which had crept on the young soldier, that he continued for above an hour to walk to and fro, almost unconscious of the flight of time.

He was at length, however, awakened from his reverie by the approach of three men walking at a rapid pace toward him, apparently engaged in conversation of the strongest interest.

A single glance sufficed to let him recognise the persons of Ireton, Vane, and Cromwell. So deeply were these gentlemen engrossed in their discourse, that it was not till they were on the very point of meeting, that Cromwell knew his favourite officer. They did not even then, however, pause; but, with a courteous salutation, passed him, conversing rapidly in a low tone. After a few steps Oliver quitted his companions, and, turning short round, followed Edgar at so swift a pace, that he overtook him almost instantly.

“You are well met,” he said, entering without preamble on his subject. “Had I not thus—by special favour, it should seem, of Providence—encountered you, I should have sought you in your lodging ere to-morrow morning. There is a great change working—yea! a great change in Israel! And, truly, it is needed; for verily the tares have multiplied among the harvest of the Lord—they have increased fourfold—they have grown up all green, and rank, and

flourishing, that they shall overtop the goodly wheat, and choke it down, and triumph over it. But lo! the time is now at hand. The Lord hath borne it in upon our hearts, that we shall purge the field—that we shall purify the thrashing-floor, setting apart the good grain from the sinful weeds—that so we may not die, but live!”

“Of what change speak you, general?” returned Ardenne, somewhat coldly; “for, to say truth, I may not comprehend you, while you speak thus in parables.”

“May not, or *will* not—whether?” Oliver inquired, with a solemn sneer curling his lip, and he fixed his piercing eye upon the face of Ardenne so sternly, and so searchingly withal, that few men could have brooked his gaze without confusion. Then, seeing that the countenance of Edgar, though firm and fixed, was frank and open as the day, he deigned to speak directly to the point.

“Why, see you not, he said, “that an these generals, these *lords*, continue—self-seekers as they be, not holding their eyes steady, and their hearts aright toward the public weal, but turning the right hand and the left, struggling ever for their own advancement, backsliding, wavering and fainting at the push of need—see you not that this war shall vex the realm long years, and that the man, Charles Stuart, must in the end prevail? For, lo you! even now those covenanting crafty Scots, whom may the Lord confound! are hankering, as the Israelites of old, after the flesh-pots of the heathen. I tell you, of a verity, if they might cast the net of their deceptions over this groaning land—even the foul abomination of an established Presbyterian church, sterner than prelacy, yea! more intolerant than papistry itself—they would desert us straightway, and unsheathe the sword—edgeless although it be, and wielded by most weak and coward hands—to raise the King unto his

former place, and stablish him in all the might as he is steady in the will, to work upon our heads his ancient tyranny !”

“Something of this I have perceived,” Ardenne replied, “and loath am I to own it even to mine inmost thoughts. But, on my conscience, I believe that Manchester and Essex wish not to see the parliament prevail too fully. Nay more, I grievously suspect the Scottish leaders, and have done so from the beginning. It may be that I wrong them, but I *do* hold that their only object from the first hath been to force the bigoted and iron discipline of their presbytery upon this kingdom, intolerant, inquisitorial, meddling, vexatious, and fanatical. Nor do I think that they would strike one blow for liberty, save in this rooted hope.”

“You do not, Edgar Ardenne, you do not wrong them !” exclaimed Cromwell, joyously. “I do rejoice that you have read them rightly. And would you not do somewhat—somewhat to save our necks from this most bitter yoke of

spiritual bondage—to cast this burthen from our consciences—would you not venture somewhat ?”

“Much, much !” cried Ardenne ; “ I would both do and venture deeply, if I could see the method, and the time !”

“ Verily, I will show thee,” answered the other. “ To-morrow do we hold a solemn fast, and a soul-searching self-inquiry to the Lord, in all our congregations—and all our preachers shall exhort us—truly the Lord hath put one leaven and the same into the hearts of all, and with it shall we all be leavened—showing us how unjust and scandalous a thing it is, that we, the members of the Houses, should engross all offices, both of the army and the state ; giving a cause to backbiters and to malignants that they should scoff and cry, ‘ Ha ! ha !—should be lovers of gain rather than lovers of the Lord ! self-seekers, striving for the soft and elevated places ! belly-gods, hungering and thirsting for the fat things and the sweet things of the land !’

Then shall we move before the Commons, Sir Harry Vane and I, a self-denying ordinance, whereby no member shall hold, any more, any commission in the armies of the land. So shall these stiff-necked nobles be forced to yield the sway they have so misemployed, and Fairfax, honest and trusty Fairfax, shall take the place of doubting Essex."

For a moment Ardenne pondered deeply, and it was now his turn to strive to read the countenance of his companion; but all was dark, mysterious, and inscrutable.

"Your scheme," he said at length, "is naught; for by this ordinance you must *yourself* resign your truncheon; and, I care not although I say it, I hold *you* the main pillar of our armies in the field. Your scheme is therefore naught—nor could it pass the Lords."

"The Lords!" said Oliver with a grim sneer. "Trouble yourself not for the Lords! Truly

the time hath come when they must do, even as the Commons bid them. And for the rest, truly there is a way."

"An *honest* way?" asked Edgar, sharply, "for to say truth, General Cromwell, I like not these by-paths of counsel—still less like I this calling upon holy names, this feigning inspiration, and forging miracles, this quoting and interpreting the word of God, to justify things politic and worldly!"

"Go to! go to!" cried Oliver, but with a dark and subtle smile. "Thou talkest as a babe—yea! as a very suckling that knoweth not the hearts of men. Know this—all things are honest, that be wrought for honest ends. Moreover, many pious souls there be, yea! conscientious, tender, and God-fearing souls, that will not lend themselves to any work, how honest in itself soever, without they seek the Lord and learn his pleasure. I say there is a way, ay, and a righteous way, whereby we

may retain our leading of the new-modelled host, and marshal it to glory.”

“How so? I see it not,” said Edgar, musingly, and wholly unconvinced by Cromwell’s specious sophistry. “It must be most gross practice.”

“Surely we may resign our sittings in the House,” answered Oliver, very slowly, watching the effect of every word upon the face of Ardenne, “if it be better for the people of the Lord that we continue with the army.”

“And wherefore not they also?”

“Wherefore not?” interrupted Cromwell. “Wherefore, but because they being peers of England, their seats hereditary, their privileges indefeasible.”—

“Well, sir,” Edgar broke in upon him before his speech was half concluded—“I see your plan—and I believe that you *mean* honestly. Nevertheless I like it not, and I will none of it. I love not devious counsels.”

And will you then fall off?” inquired the

other evidently much annoyed. “ Will *you*, that have performed such mighty deeds for the good cause, fighting the faithful fight for Israel, will you fall off to those whom you know wavering and fickle, if that they be not absolutely traitorous and false ?”

“ I will do nothing, Master Cromwell, on that you may rely,—I will do nothing,” Edgar replied in quiet but stern tones, “ that both my head and heart approve not. I may not in my conscience vote for this your measure ; for though I quarrel not with the effects, but deem them most desirable, I do abhor the means. I may not vote against you ; for I yet more dislike the course of your opponents. Neutral I will not be. Therefore to-morrow I resign my seat. There be not any measures in debate in which I care to mingle. In matters of religion my voice is still for universal liberty—all systems of exclusion, whether they be presbyterian or papistical, I hold alike despotic, bigoted, and jesuitical, and I will vote for none of them. I

will devote my parts where most they may avail, to the ordering of my soldiery."

"Be it so!" answered Cromwell, somewhat relieved. "Be it so—since it may not be as I should deem for the better. But not the less shall we prevail in this thing, only hold thou my counsels secret."

"I am not wont," said Ardenne, not a little ruffled, "to fetch and carry—and, as I said before, I do believe that you mean honestly. To-morrow, then, I shall resign my seat, and straight go down to the army."

"Farewell then, till the springtide—and then, *then*, Edgar Ardenne, under command of the right gallant Fairfax, full early shalt thou see and own the wisdom of my measures. The next campaign—mark! mark, I say, my words—for they are of the Lord!—the next campaign shall be the last for Charles."

CHAPTER VIII.

By Him who cannot lie,

Each bright intelligence that studs the pole,
Planet, or fixed, or wild eccentric star,
With some weak mortal hath connexion strange
Of good and ill. Yea! from his natal hour
O'erlooks his fortunes, culminating proud,
Foreshows his glory, but with watery hue,
Sanguine and dim, prophetic points his woe.

The Astrologer.

SOME months elapsed, as they had both surmised, ere Ardenne again fell into contact with his superior officer, and in the interval not one but all of those great changes which the latter

had predicted had indeed come to pass. After much fierce contention the self-denying ordinance although opposed to the utmost by Hollis, Glin, and Stapleton, and all the leaders of the Presbyterian faction, passed both the Houses ; Fairfax was named chief general of the parliament, and by a series of intricate manœuvres. affairs were so arranged that Cromwell, still retaining his commission of Lieutenant-general, was not required even to resign his seat in the Commons.

It was an evil omen for the royal party that Laud, after remaining in confinement during four whole years in the tower, was now brought to his trial, condemned, and put to death by ordinance of parliament, having in vain produced a regular and ample pardon under the King's hand and seal. None, therefore, were surprised that, like all former efforts at a reconciliation, the treaty entered on at Uxbridge utterly failed in its results, the King on one side and the commissioners on the other exhibiting so much of haughtiness and unaccommodating spirit that,

unless by a miracle, no peace could have been possibly concluded.

So much time had elapsed in the debates at Westminster, and so late was it in the session ere the ordinance became a law, that the new model of the army was not accomplished till the spring was far advanced, and ere the Independents were prepared to take the field, Charles had already gained some trivial but encouraging successes. The town of Leicester had been taken by assault, and miserably sacked by the wild cavaliers, who as their means decreased fell more and more into those desperate excesses which rendered in the end their very name a byword for debauchery and licence. Several other garrisons had also been stormed sword in hand; while the new-modelled army had done nothing but suffered a repulse from Borstall House, and made a most unprofitable demonstration against the university of Oxford. Having received false tidings, that Fairfax had sat down in form before that city which might be deemed

the capital of loyal principles, the King marched hastily with some eight thousand men hoping to raise the siege, and force the general to a battle ere he could be joined by Cromwell with his cavalry; but hearing, after he had advanced as far as Daventry, that Fairfax was so near him as Northampton, he the same day retreated upon Harborough, intending to fall back on Leicester, where he might draw more infantry from Newark to his banner and tarry the arrival of his northern reinforcements.

On the thirteenth of June the army of the parliament took up its quarters for the night about a mile to the south of the small town of Naseby, the ironsides, with Ardenne's regiment of horse, being a little in advance on the right wing of the position, and occupying a commanding station on a range of gentle eminences. It was a calm and lovely evening—so still and breathless that the smallest rural sounds—the lowing of the cattle from the rich pastures in the vale below—the bay of mastiffs from the scattered

granges—the hooting of the owls from many an ivy-mantled pollard—even the breeze-like murmur of the distant rivers were clearly audible in singular but pleasing contrast to the ruder sounds of the nocturnal camp. The moon in unveiled gorgeousness was hanging in a sky so perfectly transparent as is but rarely witnessed under the humid atmosphere of England, and millions of bright stars were flashing like diamond sparks in the unclouded firmament.

Edgar had only joined that afternoon, and taking orders from the general in person had not as yet met Cromwell; but now, when he had seen his men duly provided with their rations, his horses picketed and well supplied with forage, and all precautions taken needful for a night to be passed upon their arms, he took his way along the lines toward Oliver's head-quarters.

Some two or three tents rudely pitched about the centre of the ridge, with six or eight field-pieces in battery before them, and the red cross

on the blue field of the covenant drooping around its staff, from which the gentle air had not the power to move it, easily showed him whither to direct his footsteps; but somewhat to his wonder, on reaching Cromwell's tent the sentinel on duty there informed him that the lieutenant-general had gone forth alone beyond the outposts of the army to wrestle with the Lord in prayer, even as holy Samuel went forth "to cry unto the Lord his God for Israel that he might save them out of the hands of the Philistines."

Anxious to see Cromwell before the morning, Edgar, inquiring of the sentinels, and of the scattered groups of soldiers who were engaged cooking their evening meal about the watch-fires, easily followed on his track; and at last, having proceeded some few hundred yards beyond the farthest outpost, discerned the figure of a man kneeling upon the open plain in the full moonlight, with both his arms outstretched toward Heaven. The clear light glanced upon the polished iron of his morion and breastplate,

and even more than this, the harsh tones of the speaker, as he sent up in vehement profusion his wild supplications, or remonstrances—for such they were in spirit—to the throne of grace, announced to him distinctly that he had found the object of his search.

Before Ardenne reached him, Oliver's prayer was ended ; and, rising from his knees, he stood—his feet a little way apart, and planted with colossal strength upon the mossy sod—gazing with an air of calm enthusiasm upon the glistening heavens.

“And thou, bright ruler of my destinies”—thus Ardenne, to his deep astonishment, heard him exclaim—“thou that didst smile upon my natal hour—thou that, through every change and chance of this my mortal course, hast given evident and never-failing tokens both of my weal and wo—thou that, when through long years I wallowed unregenerate and foul in the abyss of low and soul-debasing sin, wert dim and clouded ever with thick darkness—thou

that, in afterdays, when, by the gracious mercy of that long-suffering and beneficent Lord, who willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live—my soul was touched of grace, and mine understanding enlightened to the sinfulness of my ways—wert seen to shoot forth scintillations, pure as the seven living lamps that burn before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God—thou that, before the blood-red field of Marston, whereon the Lord vouchsafed unto the humblest of his servants to fight the great fight, and to win the crown—even the crown of victory, conjoined with sanguine Mars, didst shine pre-eminent—Beam on ! beam on, with that serene and placid gorgeousness, which fills my soul with the high confidence of coming triumph ! Ha ! who goes there ?” he shouted, in a sharp harsh key, strangely at variance with the wild enthusiastic accents of his previous meditations. “Stand ho ! and give the word !”

“The sword of Levi !” answered Edgar,

promptly. "Lieutenant-general, I greet you on the eve of battle!"

"Ha! Colonel Ardenne, by the voice," cried Oliver. "Right glad am I now to encounter you. I heard of your arrival, and truly I rejoiced that we should once more ride together into the strife of men. Surely the gentle beauty of the night hath tempted me to wander forth, and commune here alone with mine own spirit. I do profess it is a most fair scene—saw you the stars at any time shine forth more gloriously?"

"It is, indeed, a night of most unusual beauty for this our English climate," Ardenne replied, somewhat surprised at the uncommon turn the conversation had thus taken. "I have seen many such, however, in Italy and Spain. But I knew not that you were so deep an admirer of nature—methought that men had rather been the subjects of your observation."

"It is not that! it is not that!" said Cromwell; "although all His creations must needs be worth man's study. But have you no belief

in the connexion of those brilliant and mysterious lights with the career of men—the course of great events?”

“In truth, not I,” answered Ardenne; “nor do I see how such belief can be consistent with the Christian’s faith in a supreme and all-commanding Providence!”

“But I do,” Cromwell interrupted him. “I see not wherefore the Eternal may not divulge a portion of our fates by means of these—the most sublime of his creations—nor wherefore the appointed angel, who ministers to every one of mortals unto righteousness, may not be likewise the presiding spirit over some one of yonder glorious worlds. I do believe it fully—yea! I have proved it. Lo! see you not yon large clear star, there to the east of Lucifer, and higher toward the pole, brighter than all the planets? It shone upon my birth, and from my boyhood upward have I known and marked the face of that far sparkler, and ever has it varied with the varying of my fortunes, dim and most melan-

choly in my benighted days of evil, and glorious, as you see it now, when aught of greatness or of glory was in prospect. See how it shoots forth jets of most pure light—no other star doth likewise. Verily, verily, the Lord shall work great things for us to-morrow !”

“I have heard tell of this before,” Ardenne replied, “of this your superstition—for so I cannot but consider it,—and likewise that you fancy how you a saw a vision years ago.”

“Fancy ! *fancy* I saw a vision,” cried Oliver, impatiently. “I tell you, Edgar Ardenne, as plainly as mine eyes behold you now, I saw that dusky form—as clearly as mine ears drink in your doubting accents, so clearly did I feel the tones of its immortal voice. How should I fancy such things? I was then but a boy—a wayward, headstrong and most ill-conditioned schoolboy. It was a sabbath night and I lay wide awake, plotting I know not what of orchard-breaking, or of hen-roost robbing for the morrow—when suddenly a strange and thrilling fear

crept over me—I knew that I was not alone, though I saw nothing. I felt as though a pair of mighty wings were spread above me, chilling my very soul—I would have cried aloud, but my voice choked within me—I would have risen up and fled, but could not move a finger. And yet, although I say it, I was then bolder than my years betokened, and feared not man nor devil. It was a night of murky darkness, but suddenly a faint and pallid light filled the whole chamber, not emanating from one brighter point, but uniform as daylight, though very dull and ghastly. My curtains were drawn suddenly asunder, and a tall misty shape stood in the opening. I tell you I did see it perfectly and plainly, for I did not faint, though my flesh quivered aguelike—and the cold sweat stood in beads upon my brow—and my hair bristled, as instinct with life. There stood it while I could have reckoned twenty, and then a deep slow voice, of strange and solemn harmony, rolled forth without an effort—“ Arise ! arise,”

it said, 'thou that shalt be the first in England!' It then vanished, and all again was darkness, but the voice was tingling in mine ears when the next sun was high in heaven."

"And do you credit this?" asked Ardenne, fixing his eyes with something of suspicion on the face of the enthusiast. "Do you trust in this prophecy? Does this *dream* actuate your waking movements?"

"And wherefore not?" said Cromwell. "The elder Brutus, he who made Rome free, was called the FIRST IN ROME, and father of his country. A man may be the first, and yet not king or tyrant. Cannot you credit this?"

"I fear me," Edgar answered, very gravely, "that this vision *was* a spirit—the evil spirit of ambition! Beware, I say, beware how you give heed to it! Truly there is not much about me of the antique Roman; but did I think—as half I doubt even now—that this same vision were but the working of an unholy thirst for power, that may one day prompt thee to lay

violent hands upon thy country's freedom—I have yet so much of the Cassius in me, that I would thrust this sword, which I have buckled on to fight thy battles, into thy very heart, ere thou shouldst live to find thy vision true.”

“Wo! wo is me, what have I said!” cried Oliver, apparently much moved. “Alack! alack! truly the flesh is weak, but strong and sincere is the soul. Well hast thou said, my friend, and rightly wouldst thou do, should I be rendered subject to the temptings of the evil one. Wo! wo is me, that I should be mistrusted; surely, if this heart be not honest, then there is neither faith nor honesty in man. But thou, Lord, knowest—thou beholdest—yea! thou readest the most inward thoughts of this thy servant—continue me then, O thou merciful and mighty One, continue me thine instrument; and shield me from the power of the evil one; and be thy word a lantern to my feet; and keep me, even as I now am—thine, O Lord, thy servant and thine only!”

With these words he burst into a violent passion of tears, mingled with sobs so choking and hysterical, that Edgar was alarmed half for the intellect, half for the health of the strange being in whom he felt so deep an interest. Within five minutes, however, the ecstasy had passed away; and, as if he had forgotten all that had occurred between them, Cromwell now addressed him in the decided, although quiet accents of command.

“Soh! Colonel Ardenne, you will join your men forthwith—go over once again your roll-call—see all be in right state for early action—one hour hence report to me your numbers at my tent.

And with a slight but courteous inclination, he turned his back, and walked away toward a watchfire, round which some dozen of the iron-sides were grouped. Food was before them—ammunition bread, steaks of beef rudely cooked upon the embers, and a black jack, or leathern tankard of strong ale, while several pipes of

trinidado were sending forth their powerful fumes above the savoury odour of the viands.”

“Ho! Hezekiah Sin-despise,” said Cromwell, addressing a grim-looking trooper—for he knew every one of his men personally and by name—“how fare ye here? Have the knave commissaries dealt with ye righteously? Surely ye must not fast, else shall the flesh be weak upon the morrow.”

“Yea, general,” returned the Independent, “tis very righteous truth. Wilt not thou taste thyself, so shalt thou judge how fares the sturdy but rough-coated private, on whom doth fall the brunt and burthen of the service?”

“Take, eat!” exclaimed another of the soldiers, tendering to him a wooden platter heaped with beef and bread. “Eat, drink with us to-night, as we shall fight with thee upon the morrow.”

“Will I not!” answered Cromwell, seating himself beside the speaker, and helping himself heartily to the plain but wholesome food.

When he had finished eating, he filled a cup

of ale, and, nodding to the troopers, quaffed it until he nearly saw the bottom; then, with a hoarse laugh,

“’Twere evil manners did I not share with *thee*, Born-again Rumford,” he exclaimed, “since thou didst share so courteously with *me* ;” and instantly, suiting the action to the word, he chucked the rinsings of the cup full into the broad face and grizzly mustaches of the man, who had supplied him with the meat.

“Thou hast it there—thou hast it fairly, Born-again,” shouted the soldiers, delighted by the practical jest of their leader.

“I know not truly,” Oliver continued, with a grim smile, “whether indeed this Rumford hath been born again, whether in flesh or spirit; but this I do know of a surety, that he is now baptized again—hey, Rumford? Hand me a pipe of trinidado,” he continued, turning toward another of the military saints who sat near, grinning heart and soul at the rough witticism. ‘Think ye now, men, that Ireton—he is your

commissary of the horse, I trow, and sees to these your rations—think ye that Ireton and Desborough and Rossiter fare anywise more daintily than ye?”

“Ay, marry!” answered Rumford, somewhat sulkily, “the private and the officer be not alike in aught. Saw we not master Zedekiah, Desborough’s secretary, bear, not five minutes since, a right fine haunch of grease and store of flagons of Bourdeaux into his master’s tent? Lo! there go Rossiter, and Jepherson, and Fight-the-good-fight Egerton, to banquet even now upon the good things of the earth!”

“Ha! is it so?” cried Cromwell, his eye lighting up. “Verily, then the kid shall be preserved from out the spoiler’s jaws, and given as a feast unto the shepherds!—yea, even unto those who watch! See here, Baptized-again; I go hence straightway to my quarters—enter thou in to Desborough’s pavilion, and summon them all instantly to meet me at my tent in council. When ye shall hear three taps upon

the kettledrum, then rush in, all of ye, and fall to bravely—spare not to spoil the haunch, nor yet to drain the flagons—I, even I myself, will stand between ye and the fierce wrath of your officers.”

“Cromwell ! live Cromwell !” shouted the delighted soldiers. “Now may the Lord preserve to us valiant and trusty Cromwell !”

The object of their rude praises turned aside, but, ere he went, another rugged jest showed yet further the wild humour which at times possessed him ; for, as he passed behind the back of the tall trooper whom he had addressed as Sin-despise, he took the pipe out of his mouth, when he had kindled its contents, by two or three quick puffs, to a red heat, and struck the bowl so sharply on the rim of the man’s corslet, that all the blazing ashes fell down his neck, between the shirt and skin.

“Now may the devil—” shouted the trooper, springing to his feet.

“Ho ! swearest thou ? Fy ! fy ! for shame !”

cried Oliver. "Orderly officer, set Hezekiah Sin-despise down in thy book, five shillings for an oath. Truly thou shalt no more be known as 'Sin-despise,' but rather as 'Overcome-by-sin.' "

Again the soldiers roared their merry approbation, till Oliver, surveying with a mirthful aspect the contortions of the scorched veteran, and moved to some compassion by his rueful countenance, drew forth his purse, and, taking out the fine, handed it to the non-commissioned officer.

"Our discipline must be preserved," he said ; "and the foul vice of swearing I do abhor—yea, utterly. But, in that some share of the fault was mine, who tempted the loud railing of this rash Rabshakeh—verily, I will pay the sum in which he standeth mulcted. Tush ! twist not thyself, man, to and fro, nor grin, as though it hurt thee—methought my ironsides were proof 'gainst fire as well as steel !" and, without further

words, he hastened to his tent, where he found Ardenne waiting with the list of his returns.

“When all the council shall have entered in,” he whispered to the sentry at the door, “strike three taps on the kettledrum, and suffer none to come in or to go out after.”

Scarce had he spoken, ere the officers made their appearance, Desborough wearing a marked air of sullen discomposure, and all save Ireton, whose spirit was of a higher and a nobler mould, showing some symptoms of vexation.

“Give you good evening, gentlemen! Please you draw nigh the table,” Oliver exclaimed, “and make me your reports—past doubt we shall engage to-morrow.”

And, for wellnigh an hour’s space, he kept them there engaged in various details of military service, some truly of importance, some trivial and almost unmeaning. When at length all was finished—

“Soh! we have done at last,” he said —
“Have you supped, gentlemen? So far as goes
a crust of bread and cheese, and a good cup of
ale—campaigner’s fare—I can supply you, if
you will tarry here, and eat with me.”

“Thanks, worthy general,” said Rossiter ;
“but in good sooth we were just at the sitting
down in Desborough’s tent, when that your
summons reached us. He hath, I know not
how, wrung forth a noble haunch of venison and
store of Bourdeaux wine from some misproud
malignant here at Naseby!”

“Soh! soh! right creature comforts—trust
Desborough for that!” Cromwell replied.--
“Why spoke ye not of this beforehand, my
business might have tarried—but let me not
detain you—Farewell, until the morrow.”

“Not so! fair sir,” Desborough answered—
“please you to walk with us and share our
supper.”

“Nay, I have supped already!” he replied,

“with some good fellows of Jepherson’s stout regiment. Well, since you be so pressing, I will e’en walk down, and crush one cup of wine with ye,” and without further words they all proceeded, conversing gaily as they went, toward the tent of Desborough.

They reached it; and how strange a scene was there!—the canvass flapping on all sides open to the air—the lamps streaming and flaring in the night wind—the seats around the table occupied by a dozen or so of wild-looking cuirassiers, quaffing the rich wines, hacking the now dismantled viands with knife and dagger—laughing, whooping, and shouting in their joyous revelry—while a score at the least of others waited, till these had finished, to fall in and take their turns.

“Now shall you see,” said Ireton, who understood the scene at half a glance, “our stout host Desborough foam like a baited bull. This is, I warrant me, one of the general’s jests

—somewhat rude; yet do the soldiers prize him all the more for them.”

“Damnation!” muttered Desborough in violent though smothered fury—“but this doth pass a joke!”

“Yea! ’tis a *passing* good one!” answered Oliver, with an attempt at wit which drew a laugh from the carousers—“But surely thou didst swear; a fine! a fine unto our treasury—look to it Mr. Commissary!—So now these excellent good fellows have watched with their lights burning, and their loins girded up, and they have their reward. Art thou an hungered, Desborough?—nay then our worthy Ireton will find you rations; less delicate, perchance, than you fat haunch, that was; but savouring more justly of the camp, and more proportionate to the hard messes of your fellow-soldiers in the Lord. Fy! fy! but this was gluttony—and the means too, if I mistake not, won by extortion! But enough of this! Off with ye to

your quarters, ye well-fed knaves, and snore off this carousal; and ye, fair gentlemen, though supperless, good rest to ye.—Right bravely shall we breakfast on the morrow, an Rupert keep his purpose.—The Lord save ye!”

CHAPTER IX.

The night is past, and shines the sun
As if that morn were a jocund one.
Lightly and brightly breaks away
The morning from her mantle gray,
And the noon will look on a sultry day.
Hark to the trump and the drum,
And the mournful sound of the barbarous horn,
And the flap of the banners that flit as they're borne,
And the neigh of the steed, and the multitude's hum,
And the clash, and the shout, " They come ! they come !"

The Siege of Corinth.

AT an early hour of the following morning, while the east was yet gray with the lingering shadows of the night, the army of the inde-

pendents drew out into line, and formed itself on ground of the most advantageous nature. This was a long range of low hillocks dominating the whole plain or valley that separates the towns of Harborough and Naseby, the latter lying in the flat a little to the north-west of the parliament's position. Their centre for the most part was made up of musketeers and pikemen with a good park of field artillery, and Fairfax's life-guard in the reserve, the whole commanded personally by that true gentleman and gallant soldier—the right wing was composed of Cromwell's ironsides, with Rossiter's and Ardenne's lighter regiments; while the left, consisting likewise all of horse, was under Ireton's direction.

All their arrangements were completed, ere the first flush of daylight broke through the leafy screens of woodland, which fringed the eastern verge of that wide campaign; but soon the thin clouds, that were scattered over the summer sky, assumed a rosy tinge—a flood of

golden light succeeded, and then the great sun himself rose up in living splendour from the low horizon.

The vapours gradually melted from the lowlands, and disclosed a beautiful expanse of rural scenery; deep pastures studded with noble trees, green hedges rich in the flowery garniture of spring, masses of forest throwing their dark-blue shadows in long checkered lines across the laughing meadows—all sparkling with the morning dew-drops—all clothed as with a radiant mantle in gay and gorgeous sunshine. The cattle lowed in the abundant valleys, the lark sprang upward from the pearly sod, the rooks sailed forth upon their matin voyage, their harsh voices pleasingly mellowed by the distance, the hares limped through the young wheat scattering the dew from the thick herbage in lengthened mazes—but not one sound or sight was there betokening aught save happiness and peaceful quietude.

The royal host, meanwhile, was also in array

some six miles distant on a height just south of Harborough, and posted yet more strongly than their enemies, could the mad impetuosity of those whom heaven had marked out for destruction have tarried to avail itself of their advantage. But as the day drew on, Rupert, who led the cavalry of the King's right—leaving the centre under Lord Astley and the left commanded by the noble Langdale still in position on the hills, with the life and horse-guards in reserve—dashed forth, two thousand strong, to reconnoitre.

About the same time Ardenne's regiment had been detached for a like purpose, but that wary partisan, feeling his way with caution through the wood-roads and defiles of the valley, easily detected the advance of the royalists, himself unperceived. Placing these troops in ambush with instructions to check the prince's march by one deliberate volley, and then to fall back on the spur, he drew the rest off, and in a short half-hour had the satisfaction of collecting

his whole force under the guns of their position ; Rupert having been fairly staggered by the fire of his skirmishers.

Still, with his wonted obstinacy, that rash leader persisted in believing that the puritans were in retreat ; and despatched message after message to order first, and then to hurry the advance of the main army, which left its vantage-ground and fatally descended into the open plain ; so that, before three hours had elapsed, the generals of the parliament might see the whole of the King's host rushing like birds into the fowler's net. With admirable foresight, Fairfax resolved to suffer them to clear the broken country ere he should attack them ; seeing that, if defeated, the enemy must be cut off among the lanes and passes, which would be choked with fugitives the instant that the battle should be turned into a route.

The ground immediately below the hill was open, as was the whole width of the slope, excepting two or three stout timber fences, and

a group or two of trees, which were at once pulled down, or felled, by Ireton's pioneers, clearing as fair a field for an encounter as ever was defaced and trampled into gory ruin by the death-shock of thousands. A little after ten, on that bright summer morning, Rupert's bold cavaliers had cleared the woodlands; the heads of Astley's columns were seen slowly taking up their ground, and wheeling into line to form the centre, while Langdale with his northern horse was toiling at a full mile's distance in the rear to bring up their field ordnance. Still no material opposition was offered to the royalists, except that now and then a solitary cannon belched forth its snow-white cloud, and hurled its shot with terrible precision into the crowded files, as they debouched upon the plain.

But now the trumpets of Sir Marmaduke were heard on the left, and he appeared with all his Yorkshire chivalry; though still the cannon of the cavaliers were at the least a mile behind, encumbered by the fat loam of that hostile district.

Still the impetuous Rupert paused not—the instant that the cavalry of Langdale came into view upon the left, his bugles sounded for the charge; and with a cheery shout, leading his fiery squadrons, himself the foremost man, he hurled himself against the horse of Ireton, with the velocity and brightness of a thunderbolt.

Forward they rushed—a torrent of plumes, scarfs, and rich embroidery—their brandished rapiers glittering aloft like lightning, and their high-blooded chargers tearing the turf to atoms in their furious speed. Such was the fury of their onset, that neglecting to discharge their carabines they plunged at once into the closest conflict. There was a clang as of ten thousand smiths plying their iron trade!—a shout that was heard, as men say, at Harborough!—And brave although they were, stubborn and resolute, the cavalry of Ireton wavered. In vain their high-souled leader strained every nerve, and bled at every pore;—now here, now there; rallying, shouting, charging, in vain he crossed

swords with the fiery prince and checked him for one moment—they bent, they broke, they fled!

Then flashed the pistol-shots, and in unbroken force over them swept the cavaliers!—The ground was cumbered with the slain—but still, over the dead and dying, over the voiceless trumpet and the tattered banner, over the mute dismounted ordnance, amid the groans and blasphemies, the shivering clash of steel, the neigh of maddened chargers, and the wild shouts of his victorious troopers, on charged the daring leader!—on!—fetlock deep in gore!

“Now, an he wheel upon our flank, the battle is half lost already!” hissed the deep tones of Cromwell in the very ear of Ardenne—“But lo! the Lord hath blinded him—the God of hosts hath robbed him of his understanding! See where he drives along heedless of aught save massacre and havoc!—Ho! by the light of heaven, this day shall crown the whole!”

And in good truth, neglecting all, wild as the whirlwind that destroys, and still sweeps on,

bearing destruction it knows not and it seeks not whither, Rupert pursued the fliers—mile after mile they fled—mile after mile he followed—beyond the heavy ordnance, beyond the baggage of the parliament; cheering until his throat was parched and his voice clove to his jaws—slaying until his sword was blunted, and his arm weary and exhausted.

Scarce five troops of the whole left wing had held their ground, and these under the valiant Ireton, as fired by the success of their companions Astley's stout infantry came steadily and firmly onward, charged gallantly upon a stand of pikes—they were hurled backward, as from a castle-wall, and still that deep array of pikes rolled onward.—They rallied, and again they charged, driving their horses in upon the serried spears, and firing their pistols in the faces of the sturdy footmen; but the cavaliers received them as the bull receives the mastiff and hurls him from his unscathed front.—Their leader was dismounted, and made prisoner, their

bravest were stabbed down and mangled by the goring pikes—they scattered and fled in diverse directions.

But now the musketry awoke, mixed with the louder bellowing of artillery, but save the rolling smoke-wreaths packed above the hosts in the calm hush of the hot noontide, and the red glare that ever and anon surged upward, and now the waving of a standard, and now the flash of wheeling weapons half seen among the volleying clouds, nought could be descried.—Yet still the royal foot pressed on unbroken and invincible; and Fairfax—though his lines fought stubbornly and well, and formed again when shaken by the musket-buts and halberts of the royalists, who hardly fired a shot, still fighting hand to hand, and poured their volleys in, deliberate yet fast—felt that he still was losing ground, and that the vantage of the hill alone preserved him.

On the right of the parliament's army the conflict had been long delayed; for Langdale

had scarce formed, even when Rupert's charge had pushed the horse of Ireton clear off the field; and Cromwell dared not flank the foot of Astley, lest he should be in turn out-flanked by Langdale. But now with kettledrums and trumpets, and shot of carabine and pistol, Sir Marmaduke advanced upon the gallop; and Cromwell, tarrying not to receive his charge, swung forth his heavy squadrons with a thundering hymn to meet him.

An officer rode forward from the Yorkshire men, as both lines halted to reload, and Oliver dashed out in person to encounter him. Their pistols were discharged in vain, for Cromwell's bullet glanced from the corslet of the cavalier, and the other fired at random.—Then blade to blade they met, a dozen passes flashed with the speed of light between them—their horses wheeled and bounded obedient to the bit—Oliver missed a parry, and his morion, with the chin-strap severed, fell clanging to the ground; but without hesitation on he went, and hailed so

thick a storm of blows upon his foeman, that he beat down his guard, and hurled him headlong.

The whole passed in a few instants—ere a few more had elapsed, the adverse lines were mingled—yet as they closed Born-again Rumford sprang to earth, caught up the general's morion and tossed it to his saddle bow. Hastily, as he galloped on, shouting his battle anthem, and still at every shout striking a cavalier down from his saddle, he threw the morion on, but with its peak behind, and so unwittingly fought on through all that deadly strife.

Equal in numbers, and well-matched in spirit, the tug of war was dubious and protracted between the northern horse and the unconquered ironsides ; but in the end Cromwell's enthusiastic energy prevailed, and Langdale, fighting to the last, was driven from the field. Then—then was the superior moral of Oliver's men proved past doubt—obedient to the first word, they drew off, careless of plunder or

pursuit, although their blood was stirred almost to frenzy by the protracted struggle, and by the heat of their religious zeal.

“On, Ardenne, on!” Oliver shouted, as he halted his own five regiments. “Pursue, pursue! suffer them not to rally—support him, Rossiter—away! Break them to pieces—scatter them! The Lord of Hosts hath given them a prey into our hands! All glory to the name of our God!”

As he spoke, he wheeled at once upon the flank and rear of Astley’s infantry, which still maintained the conflict in the centre, slowly but steadily forcing their way against the stubborn valour of the puritans. One hope remained for Charles—one only. In the reserve himself, with his life-guard commanded by Lord Lindesay, and his own picked horse-guards—his *troupe dorée* of nobles under the Earl of Litchfield, and Rupert’s best foot-regiment—in all some thirteen hundred men, fresh and unwearied, who had not on that day unsheathed

a sword, or pulled a trigger, Charles had a fair occasion to draw out and fall upon the flank of Cromwell, as he swept round to charge the foot; and so, to do him but free justice, he proposed. Bidding his trumpets sound, and drawing his own rapier—sheathed, as he was, in glittering steel from crest to spur, conspicuous by his broad blue scarf and diamond George—he plunged his rowels into that snow-white charger, rendered immortal by the deathless pencil of Vandyck—his pale and melancholy features transiently lighted up by strong excitement—“Follow me!” he exclaimed, “follow me all who love Charles Stuart!”

Full of ecstatic valour they sprang forth—another instant would have hurled them on the unexpected and unguarded flank of Oliver, who was already hewing his way, crimson with blood from plume to saddle-bow, through the now reeling infantry. The charge *must* have been perilous to Cromwell in the extreme—*might* have destroyed him utterly. And had it so

fallen out, the victory would have been the King's; for Rupert's scattered troops were even now beginning to return, and Fairfax could scarce hold his own.

But the charge was *not* made. Whether from folly, cowardice, or treason, it now can never be discovered, the Earl of Carnewarth, a mere cipher in that band of England's noblest peers, seized on the bridle of the King. "Saul o' my body!" he exclaimed, in his broad Scotch accent, "will you then go upon your death this instant?" and, ere the hapless monarch could comprehend his meaning, or arrest the movement, he dragged his charger toward the rear.

Then, on the instant, a strange panic fell on all around; so that they fled upon the spur, although no enemy was near them; and though at length the King's exertions—who spurred through the ranks beseeching them to stand, and even striking at the fugitives in impotent

but noble indignation—brought them to rally, and ride back toward the field, the moment had gone by. It was too late. For Fairfax, when he saw how Cromwell had succeeded on his right, and felt the consequences of his charge upon the royal foot in the disorder of that sturdy mass, moved down at once his own life-guard from the reserve, and brought it into action.

The prince had, indeed, now returned from his insane pursuit, but his men, deeming that their part was played for that day, could not be brought to form again or charge by any effort of their leaders. And now but one battalion held its ground, a solid square of foot presenting an impenetrable front of pikes on every side to the assailing horse, while from its inner ranks it poured a constant shower of balls, that mowed down all before it.

Cromwell, meantime, was overthrowing every thing, traversing Astley's line from the left end-wise toward the centre, when Fairfax, wheeling

his life-guards round upon the rear of that undaunted square, charged it himself in front. Two horses were shot under him, but a third time remounting, he brought up his men, though shattered by the constant volleys, to renewed exertion.

In the last deadly rush, his helmet was torn violently off by a pike's point. The colonel of his life-guard proffered his own; but no! bare-headed as he was, he dashed upon the spears—he hewed his way into that serried band—with his own hand he cleft the ensign of the regiment, who crossed his path, through morion and skull down to the very teeth—he waved the captured banner round his head, and threw it to a private for safe keeping, who afterwards would fain have claimed the honour. That line of pikes once broken, in swept the independents with the rush of a springtide, and, where it fought, that firm battalion, refusing quarter and resisting to the last, was trod-

den to the earth, annihilated, but unconquered.

The victory was complete—the route disastrous. Even to the walls of Leicester, Cromwell's fierce zealots did execution on the flying cavaliers. From three miles south of Harborough to nine beyond it, the country was one wide-spread scene of flight, massacre, and havoc. Five thousand of the royalists were slain or taken from an army which had mustered but eight thousand in the morning. Two hundred waggons laden with arms and baggage—all the artillery and colours, the royal standard, and the King's own carriage, fell to the victor's share; and, above all, that fatal cabinet of letters, which—though, with a delicate and generous point of honour not often to be met with in such times, Fairfax declined to open them—when published by the orders of the parliament, proved past all doubt or question, the utter insincerity of Charles and his resolve—as firm at

the last hour, as when he first set up his standard—of reigning, if at all, a monarch irresponsible and absolute.

That victory decided the campaign, and that campaign the cause of England's freedom.

CHAPTER X.

To that father's heart

Return, forgiving all thy wrongs, return!
Speak to me, Raimond, thou wert ever kind,
And brave, and gentle! Say that all the past
Shall be forgiven! That word from none but thee
My lips e'er asked! Speak to me once, my boy,
My pride, my hope!

HEMAN'S *Vespers of Palermo.*

THE action, having raged incessantly during three hours, sunk into sudden silence after the charge of Fairfax, which, like a hurricane, swept all before it; and, ere another hour from that time had elapsed, the field was utterly

deserted, except by those who, having fallen in the full tide of violence and fury, now slept as soundly and as well upon the gory turf as if they had departed from their peaceful beds amid the weeping ministry of friends; or those less fortunate, who lay hopelessly writhing in their mortal agonies, 'scorched with the death thirst,' and torturing the tainted air with their unheeded lamentations.

The hot sun poured his steadiest and brightest rays over that scene of carnage, glancing as if in mockery upon the gorgeous dresses, the rich armour, and the noble steeds—lately so full of fiery life and beauty—which shed but now a halo of false glory over the horrors and the misery of warfare.

The roundheads had withdrawn to their encampment on the hills, and were recruiting themselves after the heat and labours of the day, in that deathlike and absolute repose which is the sweetest balm to soul and body, both equally exhausted by the tension of unnatural excite-

ment, No plunderers—those human vultures that haunt the battle-field to render horror yet more horrible—crept stealthily among the dying and the dead ; for such was the severe and ruthless discipline of Cromwell, that the few sordid spirits, who necessarily mingled with the high enthusiasts of freedom and religion, dared not even by night, much less in the broad daylight, to exercise their odious calling. But the ravens had already flocked in hundreds to the plain, lured by the scent of carnage from the wide woodlands of Northamptonshire and Huntingdon, and now sat perched upon the neighbouring trees waiting the evening darkness to commence their loathsome meal, while several large kites and buzzards sailed slowly round and round in lofty circles, as fearing to alight while any breath or motion remained to their intended victims.

Such was the aspect of the ground across which Edgar led his men, returning from the first pursuit of Langdale's cavalry, which he had urged—his military ardour tempered by

Christian mercy—no further than was needful to prevent their rallying that day; and it had given him more pleasure than he had felt for many a month, to see with what a generous and British sentiment his men, though hot in blood, the most part wounded more or less severely, and all exasperated by the fall of many a gallant comrade, refused—even when urged by the fierce exhortations of their more fanatical commanders—to strike an unresisting foeman. While they fought front to front, their hearts were hardened, and their hands unmerciful; but when the rush and fury of the conflict had passed over, they felt that those poor fugitives were countrymen and brothers.

How trumpet-tongued does this fact cry aloud in the behalf of those much-slandered independents, whom it has pleased the writers of grave sober history—all either prelatists or presbyterians—to represent as stern, morose, bloodthirsty, and remorseless.

In the protracted fight, and in the hotly-

urged pursuit, eight hundred only of the royalists were slain, and of these more than three fourths occupied the ground whereon they fought, cut down *flagrante prælio*, with weapons in their hands; while Rupert's onset, and the massacre which followed it, needlessly savage and unsparing, alone cost Ireton's brigade more lives than the whole royal loss!

The prisoners, not the slain—the prisoners and the results, were the true tests and trophies of the victory at Naseby.

But these were not the thoughts which crowded on the mind of Edgar, as he rode sorrowfully back across the red arena of his party's triumph. He looked upon the dead, as they lay stiff and cold, outstretched in serried ranks even where they fought and fell, like swathes before the mower's scythe; their feet toward their foemen, their grim and gory faces turned up reproachfully toward the placid heaven, their backs upon their native earth, and every wound in front; and as he looked,

in very bitterness of heart, he beat his bosom with his hands till his steel corslet clattered. Not one of these but died, in his own creed, self-justified—not one but deemed himself a patriot and a martyr—the churchman as the puritan—the fiery loyalist, as the severe republican—each battling for his country's rights—each honestly believing his opponent the rebel, or the tyrant.

Alas, for human reason! Alas, for human error! Alas, for vanity and ignorance—for blindness and presumption! Alas, for right and wrong—for virtue and for vice! Where—where on earth shall we discover the distinction—how test them here below—save by the arbitry of the false harlot fortune, save by the sophist touchstone of success?

At every step the hoofs of Edgar's charger plashed with a sickening sound in the dark curdled gore that flowed commingling from the wounds of that fine aristocracy—that old high stock of English gentlemen, polished in courts

athletic and well-skilled in every manly feat of rural exercise, second to none as scholars in the forum, or as soldiers in the field, lowly in bearing to the low, open and frank among their peers, haughty and proud to their superiors; and of that independent yeomanry, fearless and generous and free, remote alike from insolence and cringing, dauntless and staunch in war, blunt and sincere in peace, the children, tillers, owners of the soil; both races equally "England's peculiar and appropriate sons, known to no other land."

And wherefore lay they here, never to gladden hall or cottage more—their energies, their virtues, their devoted love, lost to their native land for ever? Was it—was it, indeed, for England's good? was it, in truth, for the pure cause of liberty that they had fallen there, self-immolated victims? or was it but for man's insatiate ambition? Was it, indeed, a trial between the principles of tyranny and freedom, or a vain struggle between this and that oppressor, a con-

flict between principles of legalized authority and arbitrary sway, or a mere strife between the interests of Cromwell and Charles Stuart?

Such were the gloomy thoughts that sat so heavy at the heart of the young conqueror; such the unanswered doubts that almost led him to distrust himself, almost to curse the hour when he joined the standard of the parliament. But it was not long ere more immediate cares, sorrows more near and kindred, diverted, if they could not overpower, the half-prophetic aching of his patriotic soul.

The course which Langdale's fugitives had taken, far to the right hand of the field, prevented him on his return from meeting the main tide of the King's army, which was scattered irretrievably, and covered the plain toward Harborough. He therefore rode directly toward the post of Cromwell. It was near three of the afternoon, when he arrived and found the leader of the ironsides mounted again, and at the head of his brigade, refreshed by their brief halt—

about to set forth instantly in the pursuit. Before he started on his march, however, he handed several letters to an orderly dragoon, who stood, booted and spurred, with a broad leathern belt and a despatch bag buckled round his waist, waiting his orders.

“This,” he said—“this to the Honourable William Lenthal, the Speaker of the Commons House of Parliament—with your own hand, remember your own hand!—This to the Worshipful Lord Say!—this to good Master Milton!—and now get you gone! let not the grass grow under your horse’s hoofs—be swift and trusty!—Ha! Colonel Ardenne —” he continued, his brow overclouded as he saw him—“a word with you apart!—” Then as he drew him to one side—“Truly the Lord,” he said, “hath blessed the general cause with mighty triumph—I may say, with a great and crowning mercy—and therefore it behoves us not, with weak and fainting hearts, to sorrow over deeply for our own private griefs. — Surely

whom the Lord loveth most he chasteneth!—
Is not this righteous truth?”

“Undoubtedly,” Edgar replied, not unsurprised by the peculiar manner of his leader—“Undoubtedly it is; but wherefore say you this to me?”

“Yea! and he tempereth the wind to the shorn lamb. So may he temper it to thee—humbly and fervently I trust—honest and valiant friend, in thy time of affliction—much have I prayed and wrestled with the Lord, since I did hear—”

“What—what? I pray you speak, lieutenant-general, if you know aught concerning me or mine. There needeth not this tampering with the subject, I can endure to hear aught of affliction, human tongue can tell me.”

“Be you so strong?” said Cromwell—“man then your heart; for of a truth your father is a prisoner—in the camp, sore-wounded, ay! unto death I fear me.”

“Where lies he?” Edgar inquired with a

voice so preternaturally calm, that Oliver himself gazed at him wondering. "Hath he had any help?"

"I caused him to be borne," Oliver answered, "down to the village yonder, even unto the house of the Episcopalian priest. Two of his own domestics be about him; and General Fairfax hath sent his own chirurgeon—best hasten, though, if thou wouldst see him living. I march forthwith—but tarry thou behind, until the fourth day hence—so long may I dispense with thee. Then join me at the half-way house 'twixt Harborough and Leicester, at the first hour after noon! farewell, and may the Lord look down on thee!"

The trumpets sounded, and the ironsides filed off at a sharp trot—and Edgar mounted hastily on a fresh horse, and calling several of his body servants to attend him, rode furiously away along the broken lanes toward Naseby.

The vicarage was a low rustic tenement, distinguished from the neighbouring cottages by

nothing but its superior neatness, and its close vicinity to the square ivy-mantled tower, and the yew-shadowed yard, with its low mossy graves of the small village-church. A noble lime-tree, myriads of bees humming and revelling amid its scented blossoms—overhung the grassplot in the front, and a thick growth of honeysuckle crept over the whole building, curtaining porch and roof with its close-matted verdure, and peeping with its honeyed trumpets through the latticed casements.

Each hut and cottage through the hamlet had been converted into a temporary hospital for the reception of the wounded from the near battle-field, but by the group of horses guarded by a stout knot of troopers, and the two sturdy sentinels who kept the door, the son knew instantly the sojourn of his father.

Curbing his horse so violently up that he had well-nigh fallen on his haunches, he sprang down, and rushed under the low doorway. Just as his foot was on the threshold, a person,

whom he judged to be the surgeon, was passing onward.

“How fares he?” Edgar gasped—the words half-choking in his throat—“How fares your patient?—Have you any hope?”

The man of healing shook his head—“None—not the slightest,” he replied—“the ball hath severed all the main intestines. The hæmorrhage has ceased externally—and he is easier now—mortification must ensue; he cannot live six hours! I have done all I may, in quieting his agonies—man can no more.”

Bending his head to veil the bitter anguish that racked his manly features, Ardenne passed onward—directed by a gesture of the silent sentinel he entered the small parlour, and there upon a temporary couch—the window-curtains drawn aside, the lattices thrown open to admit the slightest draught of air that might be stirring, the old steward of his household wiping the death-sweat from the massive brow and long gray locks of his loved master, while the

big tear-drops fell like rain down his own withered cheeks, and the white-headed vicar kneeling in silent prayer beside the death-bed of the cavalier—there lay his father, with his high features pale and sharpened by the near approach of the destroyer, and the froth gathering round his bloodless lips, and the dark drops of icy perspiration bursting from every pore of his broad temples.

No groan, nor murmur passed the mouth of the calm sufferer, but one sad, querulous, and oft-repeated cry—“Comes he not yet?—not yet?”—But when the foot of Edgar, lightly although he set it on the floor, clinked with its jingling spurs upon his ear, he started half-erect, and drew his hand across his eyes, as if to clear away the gathering mists.

“’Tis he!” he cried in tones, distinct and clear from the excitement of the moment, a faint flush lighting up his ashy cheeks, but instantly departing—“’Tis he at length—thank God—my son! my son!—”

And into that son's arms he sunk, and lay there as contentedly as though no cloud of anger or mistrust had ever come between them, smiling up with a faint but most kind smile into his face, and clasping his convulsed and trembling hand with all the little strength his mortal wound had left him.

For many moments Edgar could find no voice—his whole frame shook with agony—he sobbed as though his very heart would burst, gazing upon the countenance of that loved parent with dry and burning eyes, and a throat choked by the convulsive spasms of a tearless sorrow. “My boy—my own boy—Edgar—” the old man faltered forth at length—“take not on thus—oh! take not on thus bitterly. 'Tis but the course of nature—the old must die before the young; and I—why I have fallen full of years, and full of honour, although myself I say it—and I am glad to die thus—*thus* with your arms about me, Edgar. But I have much to say to you, and I can feel my time

grows very short to say it. Our reverend friend, to whom I owe so much, and good Master Winterfield, will pardon us a little while—and Anthony—old faithful Anthony will leave us. We have not met for many days, and we would fain be private ere we part—” and his voice failed a little, and a tear stood in his clear gray eye—“part, as we must, for ever. We will recall you—” he continued—“presently; for I would fain pray with this holy man, ere I go hence to stand before my Maker.”

There was a pause—a long sad pause, as all obeyed his words, broken by nothing but the hard breathing of the wounded man, and the strong sobbing of the mourner.

“Edgar,” the old man said at length, “are we alone? have they all left us?” and then, his question being answered—“This is a sorrowful, yet a most happy meeting; for I feel—I feel here—” and he laid his hand upon his breast—“that that kind heart of yours has

pardoned all the wrongs—the cruel and unmanly wrongs which I have heaped on you. Is it not so, my boy, my kind and noble boy ?”

“Oh, speak not thus!” he answered, when he could force a word—“oh, speak not thus, my father; you have been ever good—too generous! too good! ’Tis I—’tis I alone, may Heaven forgive me, that have been to blame. Say only that you pardon me, and bless me, oh father!”

“No! no!” exclaimed Sir Henry, with more of energy than he had spoken yet—“I will *not*—I do *not*—for I *have* nought to pardon. Never, never, from your most early years have I had cause of aught save joy and pride in you. And you were—yes, you were the joy, the pride, the only anchor, the last stay of my lone widowed heart, till England became mad, and this accursed and unnatural war rushed over us, tearing asunder every gentle link, and blighting every warm affection. But I have nought, even here, to pardon; for I have been, even here, alone to blame! But I too was mad!”

“Oh, no,” cried the repentant son. “It was my duty to obey you—to bear with you—to do, in every thing, your bidding—”

“Not so,” Sir Henry once more interrupted him. “’Tis no man’s duty to obey in things against his conscience; and I was but a fool—an obstinate and merciless old fool—that would not even hear you. Nay more! nay more,” he cried, wringing his hands with mental torture, “rash miserable sinner that I am, I would have slain you, but for that angel girl—slain *you*, that would have never been within my power but for your self-devoting efforts to preserve me. And I *have* slain your quietude—your peace of mind for ever! blasted your hopes of fireside happiness—banished you from the dwelling of your fathers—robbed you—ay, robbed you of your heritage—divorced you from your bride—cut short your hopes of leaving your high name to sons as glorious as yourself. All this—all this, and much more, have I done—much more!”

As he spoke, he sunk back quite exhausted

by his own vehemence ; but in a moment, heeding not the tremulous intreaties of his son, that he would not wear out his faculties with this most needless passion,

“ I will, I will,” he answered—“ I will go through with my confession. Reach me that cup, and hear me.”

He drained the draught of some mild opiate, mingled with wine and water, and proceeded.

“ Much more of deadly sin than this ! I am the murderer of Sibyl !”

For an instant Edgar fancied that his intellect had failed him, and gazed hopelessly upon his face ; but there was no glare of insanity, no idiot vacancy in those high pallid features.

“ Yes,” he continued, “ I have murdered her ! Have I not seen her growing paler day by day, and thinner, and more delicate, and frail ? Have I not seen her pining hourly away—withering beneath the blight of her affections, like flowers beneath the earliest frost winds ? And yet, at every hour, more patient and more

angel-like, and more unearthly in her pure holy loveliness? and I have done this also—this foul and gradual murder? And she will waste away before her time, and sink by inches into the cold dark grave, blessing her slayer as she dies! And thou too, thou, my son, wilt live a sorrowing and solitary thing; for thy strong noble soul will not succumb to any violence or spite of fortune. Alone upon the earth, like the last oak of a druidic grove, when all its brother trees have fallen by the woodman's axe—magnificent, and flourishing, and stately, yet sad in all its dignity—friendless, companionless, alone, and with the worm—the never-dying worm—busily gnawing at its heart—yet happier than thee in this—that 'twas not by a father's hand its green companions fell; not by a father's hand the foul-destroying worm was thrust into its bosom! No, no! it cannot be; you can *not* pardon me!”

“All this,” said Edgar, calmly, yet much moved, though smothering his emotion—“all

this is but the work of Heaven. The Lord hath willed it so, and we are but the instruments, the wretched instruments, within the hollow of his hand. If you have erred, as I say not you have, you erred in honour, and believing yourself justified. But if it be a comfort to you, hear me now, on my knees beside your dying bed, declare that never—never for one short moment, have I felt any wrath or bitterness—never known any feeling toward you, dearest and most honoured father, save the most deep heart-springing reverence and love. Sorrowed I have, and deeply, that you misjudged my soul, and disapproved the course my conscience bound me to pursue; but never have I thought of you as wronging me—never presumed, nor even wished, to blame you. But yet, if there be aught for which you need forgiveness from a child—oh, term most misapplied—with all my heart—with all my soul—in sight of men and angels, I bless you and forgive you, O my father !”

“And bless you,” cried the old man, “my

noble-hearted boy—Heaven bless you, and it will—it *must* bless such as you—and prosper you with all its choicest stores, and make you tenfold compensation for your past and present sorrows.”

And he drew down the lips of Edgar to his own, and clasped his arms about his neck; and their tears mingled long and silently, and their prayers went up together to the throne of mercy; and with those tears, and that embrace, the bitterness passed by, the iron was drawn out from the old warrior's soul.

The clergyman returned, the simple but affecting service of the church was feelingly performed, the last most holy rite partaken both by the son and sire—the servants were called in, the faithful followers of their lord through weal and woe—and a faint smile, a sad farewell, a kindly pressure of the honoured hand dismissed each weeping, not as for a master, but rather as for a friend and father, from the low chamber—and once again the father

and the son were left in solitude. There they remained for hours—the old man, while his hard breathing shook the frail couch beneath him, calm, patient, and serene—the stately son bowed down, and bent as if by age, clasping the languid hand that grew at every instant sensibly colder and more pulseless, and sorrowing as one who would not be consoled, although he choked his anguish, lest it should but increase his father's sufferings.

The bright warm sun had long since sunk into the west, and his last flash had faded from the sky; yet so mild was the evening air, that every lattice was still thrown wide open, and the rich odour of the woodbine and sweetbriar rose more profusely on the senses, when steeped in the pure dews of summer. And now the dark blue skies grew gradually lighter, as the moon, near her full, rose slowly and serenely over the distant trees. There was a whispering of the breeze in the top branches of the lime, and from the odorous shrubs in a far corner of the

garden a solitary nightingale, awakened by the glorious lustre of the planet, started at once into its wild and melancholy flood of song.

The dying man, who had sunk into a long and tranquil slumber, moved now uneasily, he made an effort to turn over, and the pain caused by the motion roused him. "Sibyl!" he muttered, hardly yet awake,—“Sibyl, your song is wondrous sweet to-night; but why so sad? it should be gay as summer after this blessed union.—Ah!” he continued,—“Ah!” as consciousness returned, “I dreamed—I have slept pleasantly, and dreamed a most delicious dream. Is it late, Edgar?”

“The clock hath just chimed ten,” Edgar replied. “I would have called for lights, but feared to awaken you—shall I now do so?”

“No,” he said faintly. “No, it matters not now. How calm it is, and sweet—the blessed moonlight streams in through the casement, like Heaven’s own mild forgiveness into a sinner’s bosom. Edgar, when I am gone, say to

my poor, poor Sibyl, that on my happy death-bed my sole regret was that I could not join her hand with yours for ever. She will be yours now—*now*, that this miserable war is ended—for it *is* ended, Edgar, and I regret its termination less, that I have lately seen much in Charles Stuart—in the King—that I had disbelieved, or shut my eyes upon, before—a good man, but—it will out—a bad king.” He hath, I must confess it, dealt insincerely with his nearest councillors. He hath kept up a secret intercourse with the wild Irish rebels, through that ill-minded Antrim; and, I much fear me, he was privy to, and instigated their first bloody rising under the bigoted and barbarous O’Neill. Weak, obstinate, and prejudiced he is, beyond all doubt, proud and uxorious. I know that he stands pledged in private to his queen, never to give peace to his people unless by her consent. And all this done against the counsels and without the knowledge of those men who have a right to counsel him—

ay! and to know his measures—since for him they have risked their all!—done in deep malice to his enemies—in deeper guile to whom he calls his friends!—Out! out, I say, upon such kingcraft!—But enough of this.—She will be yours, and you will both be happy yet—as I am now—most happy! How soothing is that sad bird's note! I could almost believe it is prophetic.—How beautiful—how peaceful!”

He was again for some time silent, as though absorbed in listening, or in thought; and Edgar, who well knew his end was very near at hand, was motionless, and almost breathless, his heart was far too full for words. At length the old man spoke once more; but now his voice was very faint and low, and all its accents were so altered, that his nearest friend could not have recognised a tone—and his words came at intervals, quivering and slow and interrupted.

“How exquisite,” he said,—“how exquisite this tranquil bliss!—Never—no never felt I such complete peace—such perfect happiness—

Edgar—Edgar—my time—is drawing—near.—
My feet grow numb and cold.—Kiss me—boy—
kiss me. The bird hath ceased his song!”—(Even
while he spoke, its notes were filling every corner
of the chamber with its most thrilling melody.)
“The moon hath set!”—(Yet she was stream-
ing full on his uncurtained couch.) “All—all is
dark—and silent.—Time—it is time—to die!—
My boy—my own boy!—Bless you—Sibyl!—
Sibyl!—”

It was over—the spirit had departed to its
God.

END OF VOL. II.









