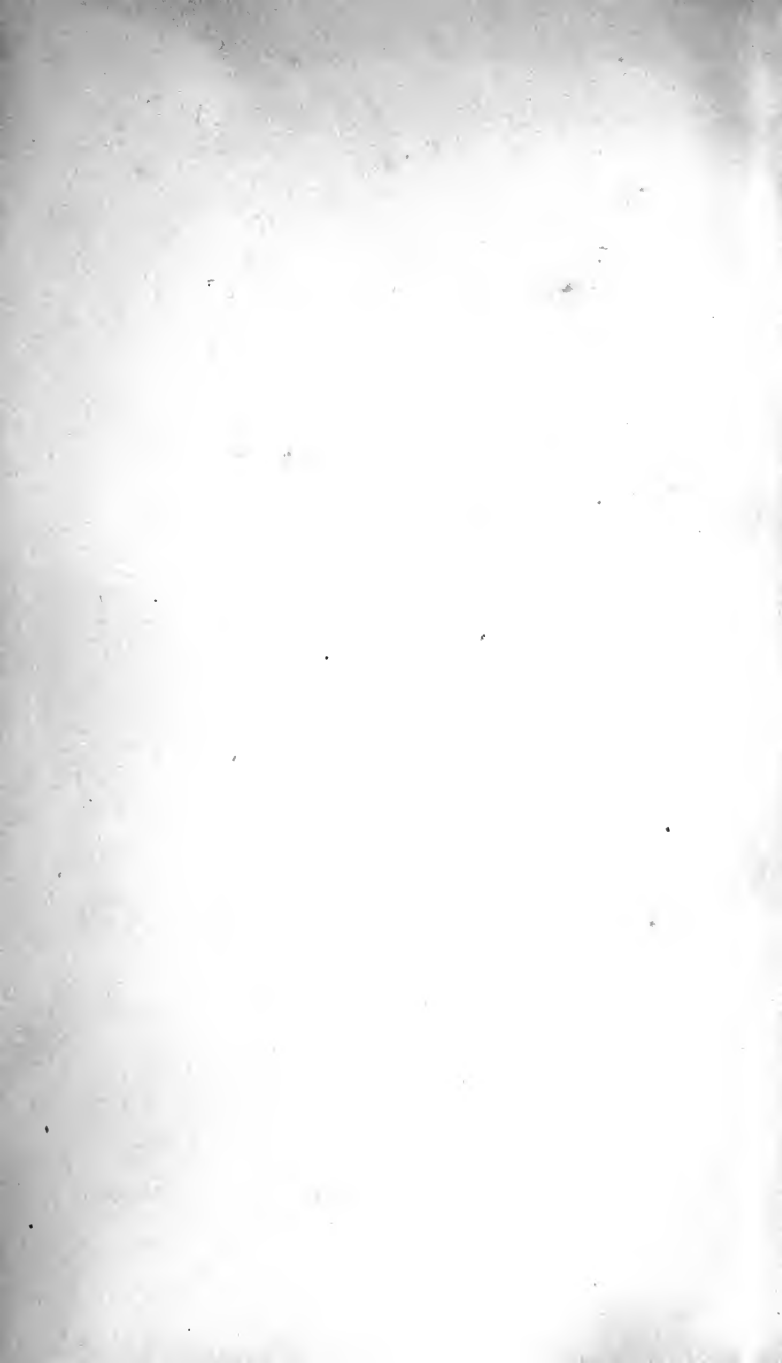
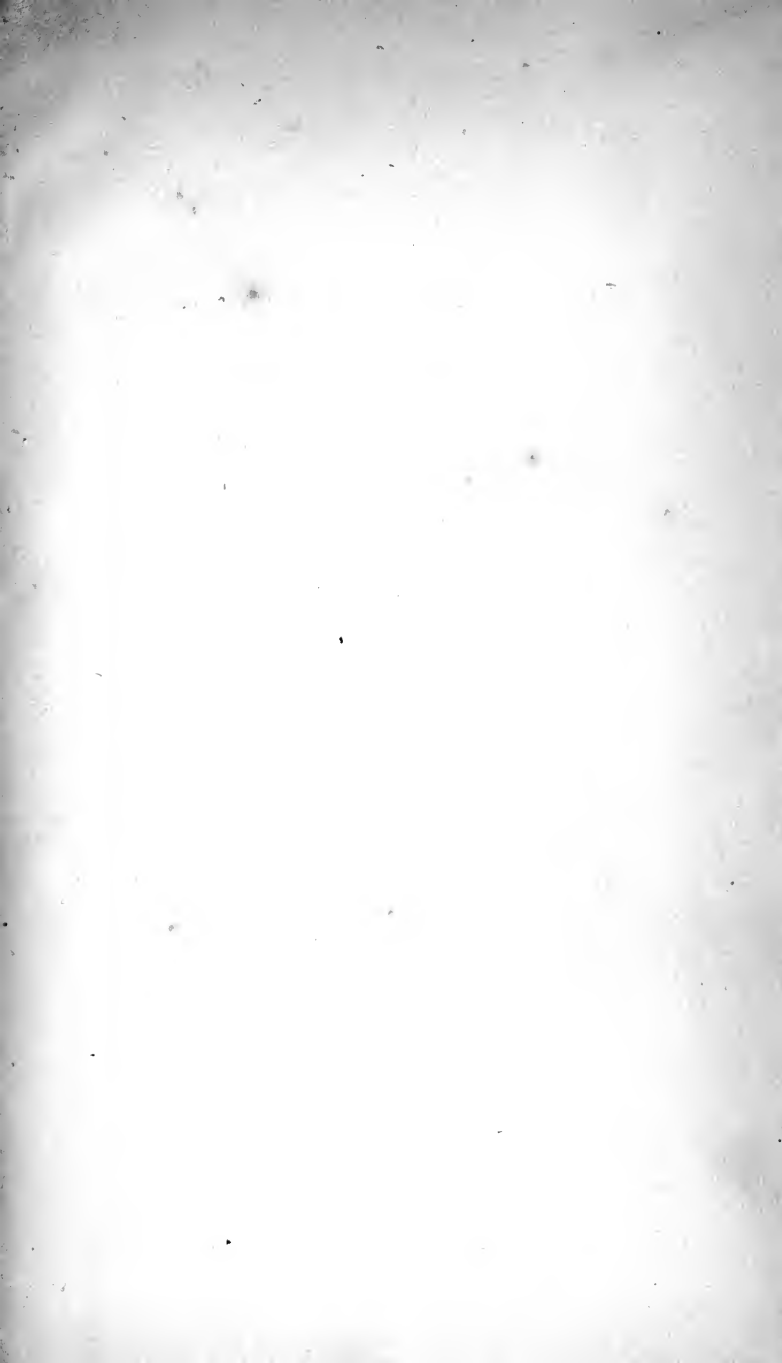


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November 11th - 1873

OLIVER CROMWELL:

AN

Historical Romance.

William Henry Herbert

EDITED

BY HORACE SMITH, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

“BRAMBLETYE HOUSE.”

Yet is the 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. III.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1840.

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MAIN

CROMWELL.

BOOK III.

There can be slain
No sacrifice to God more acceptable
Than an unjust and wicked king.

MILTON. (*From Seneca.*)



CROMWELL.

CHAPTER I.

The abuse of greatness is, when it disjoins
Remorse from power: and to speak truth of Cæsar,
I have not known when his affection swayed
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof,
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber upward turns his face,
But when he once attains the topmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend.

Julius Cæsar.

Two full years had gone round since the
defeat of Naseby had paralyzed the efforts and
destroyed the hopes of Charles Stuart's party

during the whole remainder of that fatal year—even when winter had set in with its most keen severity—the arms of Cromwell swept like a hurricane over the western and the midland counties. No leader could compete with him on terms of vantage or equality—no forces stand against him in the field—no town or garrison resist his prowess. Chief after chief was beaten in detail; stronghold upon stronghold surrendered, or was stormed sword in hand; till, to conclude the whole, Winchester and the long-disputed post of Basing-house were taken; and Astley, on the 21st of March—the sole commander of the King's, now at the head of any power—suffered so total a defeat, at Stow-on-the-Wold, being himself made prisoner with sixteen hundred of his men, that he said frankly to his captors, “My masters, you have done your work, and may go play, unless you please now to fall out amongst yourselves.”

His fortunes in the field being thus utterly disastrous, after some fruitless efforts at negotiation

with the parliament, and with the independent leaders—negotiations marked by all his usual chicanery and insincerity—on the fifth day of May, Charles threw himself into the quarters of the Earl of Leven, then besieging Newark.

How the Scots dealt with their unhappy monarch—who, whatsoever were his faults, undoubtedly confided in their honour—the world knows, for it has become a brand of national reproach. Treated — from the first moment, when they found he would not guarantee their covenant, and promise to establish presbyterian rule throughout the land—not as a prisoner merely, but with indignity and insult, how Judas-like they sold him to the parliament, and gave him up to Skippon like a mere thing of merchandise, on payment of two hundred thousand pounds, is history. But not so—that it was several times in the unfortunate King's power to escape to France or Holland, but that the menacing and angry letters of his false queen, who had her own peculiar reasons for

dreading a reunion with her injured husband at this moment, prevented him till it was all too late, and in effect consigned him to the block.

That the uxorious and weak King was mainly prompted to the war by the ill counsels of his adulterous spouse is evident. Her pride—her education—her hereditary prejudices—her selfwill—nay, her very birth itself, made it but natural that she should aim at arbitrary power, and urge her husband, himself obstinate as weak, to that insane and suicidal policy which ultimately proved his ruin. But that, herself in safety, she should with cool determined infidelity insist on his remaining among his deadly enemies, when hope was itself at an end, would seem incredible, were it not fixed beyond a doubt by the existence of her threatening letters, and his heart-broken answers.

Immediately on his surrender to the parliament, he was removed to Holmby Castle, where he remained in close though honourable custody, served and attended as a King, and suf-

ferred to indulge in all his favourite recreations, though strictly watched, and vigilantly hindered from any secret correspondence with his friends, and even interdicted from communion with ministers of the episcopalian church.

At this very time there was in progress a desperate struggle between the presbyterians and the army. The former, having already utterly suppressed episcopacy through the realm, proceeded with the sternest and most bigoted intolerance of persecution against all sects, papist or protestant, clearly demonstrating their resolution to subject the whole kingdom to a system of church-governance connected with the state, under the presbyterian form, as fully organized as that which they had just put down, and ten times more obnoxious to domestic freedom—ten times more rigid, fierce, inquisitorial and tyrannical.

Against these measures the independents, who although a minority in both houses, were formidable from the talents of the leaders, the

enthusiasm of the mass, the real justice of their cause, and above all from the fact that they possessed the power of the sword, the army being almost unanimously in their favour, offered all constitutional opposition — but to no purpose. Petition after petition was presented, only to be contemned and disregarded. Just at this moment it was rumoured, and — as was shortly proved — most truly, that the parliament was now preparing to disband the army without payment of its long arrears, and then to re-enlist it, under presbyterian officers, for the conquest of rebellious Ireland — a plot most cunningly devised, could it have been effected, for wresting their ascendancy from Ireton and Cromwell, and rendering themselves unquestioned masters of the state.

This instantly gave rise to mutinies the most alarming — the army organized itself into political divisions; the privates, under their adjutators, elected two from every regiment — the officers forming a superior council — and

treated with the parliament, as a species of fourth estate holding itself under arms, and ready for offensive action. At the first of this crisis, Cromwell opposed the mutineers with such apparent energy and zeal, that for a time he lost his popularity with his own soldiery; and shortly afterward having been accused, or at the least suspected in the House of underhanded tampering with the mutineers, he cleared himself to the full satisfaction of all present by a most vehement and overpowering burst of indignation, mingled with tears and prayers and explanations, such as removed from every mind all doubts of his integrity.

Shortly, however, fresh suspicions were excited among the presbyterian leaders, who, dark and wily in their own secret machinations, naturally feared the like manœuvres from their political opponents. By some means it transpired, that a new presbyterian army was to be raised forthwith, the veteran host compelled to disband at the sword's point, and Cromwell,

Ireton, and Harrisson—the champions of the independents—committed to the Tower.

Thus forced in self-defence to concur in those very movements, which they had first opposed as mutiny—unless they should prefer to submit tamely to their own destruction, and to the overthrow of all those principles of civil and religious freedom for which they had so long and painfully contended—the military chieftains acted with all that rapid and decisive energy, which had continually signalized their conduct in the field. The instant they had ascertained the truth of these reports, one Joyce, a man of well-proved resolution, though by rank only cornet in Whalley's regiment of horse, was sent to Holmby to secure the person of the King, who was conducted with all the speed consistent with respect, to the head-quarters of the army; and such was the considerate and honourable bearing of the soldiery toward their captive monarch, that, on Fairfax disavowing Joyce's enterprise and offering to send him back to

Holmby, he at once replied that "nought but force should urge him to it."

In good truth, the difference of his situation was so great, as well to justify his preference; and, could he even then have laid aside dissimulation and acted with straightforward singleness of purpose, it is most certain he might again have filled the throne of his forefathers. Both parties were, indeed, at this time willing, nay desirous, to reinstate the sovereign; for such an union, as that measure would have caused, with the still powerful, though beaten, faction of the cavaliers, would have placed either permanently in the ascendant. The presbyterians proffered to replace him on the throne, provided he would yield assent to the substitution of a presbytery for the established church of England, endowed with all its ancient privileges; to the absolute suppression of all other sects; and further to such cessions of prerogative as would have left him but the shadow of a sceptre. The independents stipulated merely for univer-

sal toleration—excepting only papistry, which they insisted he should extirpate entirely, root and branch—and for the full securing to all men of every constitutional and civil privilege.

In either case Charles's life and throne would have been both secured to him; yet could he not refrain from playing off the one against the other faction, till both had learned that they could place no confidence in his sincerity or truth.

While he continued with the army all was for a long time comparatively sunshine; at Cromwell's intercession, his children—the young Dukes of York and Gloucester and the Princess Elizabeth—were suffered constantly to visit him, and to remain in his society. Two chaplains of his own persuasion—an indulgence sternly refused him by the parliament—were granted willingly by the commanders of the soldiery, who, while they asserted their own liberty to worship as they chose—to preach and pray themselves, and listen to the exhortations, not of licensed

gospellers, but of their own military saints—consistent at the least in this—were willing to concede to others, unlike the bitterer presbyterians, the same rights which they claimed for themselves.

Fortified now by possessing not the person only, but the confidence and favour of the King, the army moved toward London. From Newmarket they marched to Royston, Reading, and Windsor; and at the latter place Charles occupied his royal castle. Thence, after some delay, advancing, they encamped on Hounslow, their leaders holding constant although guarded intercourse with their now trembling and half-discomfited opponents.

Early in August the King was reinstalled in Hampton Court, and all things seemed to be once more his own. His yeomen of the wardrobe and the guard attended him; he was permitted to hold levees of all parties—all his own favourite advisers were permitted to resort to him, including many under the ban of

parliament. There was, as it were, a general amnesty and reconciliation. Members of both the Houses visited him—Cromwell and Ireton held close and constant intercourse with him; and so sincere were these in their intention to befriend him, that they actually commenced a correspondence with the Queen's emissaries, and suffered Berkeley, Legge, and Ashburnham, once more to take their places in his council.

The adjutators of the regiments, elected by the privates, and members from the council of the officers attended him with terms so advantageous, that Sir John Berkeley openly declared that "a crown so near lost was never yet so easily recovered, as this would be, were things adjusted on these terms."

Yet even then, hoping for something more, he haughtily and scornfully rejected these; and plunging headlong into a fresh scheme with Lauderdale, assented to the covenant, on the condition that he should be brought at once to Westminster; which he had the folly to believe

would place him where he was before the outbreak of hostilities.

The citizens of London and the militia of that city greedily entered on the scheme, and signed the covenant by thousands!—Both Houses instantly voted this an act of treason against England — that very night their doors were forced by a tumultuous and infuriate mob of presbyterians mingled with concealed royalists — their persons were assailed with violence and insult, their very lives endangered! Compelled by imminent and sudden peril they passed a hasty vote sanctioning his return, but the next instant voted an adjournment as unable to deliberate with liberty of conscience; and straightway a large party of both Houses, with the speakers — Manchester and Lenthall — at their head, withdrew from the disordered capital, and finally repaired to seek protection in the camp at Hounslow.

In the mean time, the violent presumption of the King, unduly elevated by his supposed

success, and instigated further by the intriguing Ashburnham, induced him actually to treat with contumely the adjutators of the army, openly refusing to concede the smallest jot of his prerogative, and even intimating his intention again to force episcopacy on the Scots.

Inflamed to madness by this strange tergiversation the soldiers flew to arms; and a strong party forced their way into the chamber of Lord Lauderdale, then in the palace, and compelled him to return, having held no communication with the King, direct to London. A few days after this, with the most perfect shamelessness, the King in public solemnly disavowed his dealings with the covenanters, and once more professed certain confidence in the commanders of the army, and feigned a vehement desire to come to settled terms with them.

In London the remnant of the Houses commenced a weak and futile effort at resistance; they called out the militia of the city, appointing Waller and Massey to command their now

tumultuary levies, repaired the fortifications, and in short had every thing in readiness for action except energy and courage.

After a rendezvous at Hounslow Heath, the parliamentary seceders were welcomed by the excited soldiery with the loudest acclamations and the sincerest tokens of affection. A convention held at Sion House, whereat Fairfax and his superior officers assumed their seats in common with the members of both Houses, decided the whole question; and on the 6th of August the army entered London, without experiencing a shadow of resistance, their colours flying and their drums beating through the streets!—That same day the seceders were reinstated in their seats by the strong hand of military power; the General Fairfax was appointed constable of the Tower, and a thanksgiving voted with no dissentient voice either of peers or commons! Thus was the triumph of the independents finally determined, and themselves raised to power not soon again to fall.

It was the same day after the entrance of the army, that Sir Edgar Ardenne, elevated to the baronetcy by his father's death—who, though becoming gradually more and more doubtful of the purity of Cromwell's motives, had played his part as gallantly as heretofore throughout the long campaign of 46 and 47, and even shared in the deliberations and proceedings of the army as opposed to the yet darker machinations of the parliament—walked forth to seek for some solution of his apprehensions at the deep wisdom of his friend John Milton. His mind had, in truth, long been in a dubious and unsettled state. The tyranny of Charles, against which he had taken arms in the beginning, was something palpable and obvious, as was his leaning toward Romish doctrines, and his inclination to fritter down as much as possible the broad distinction between the Catholic and Episcopalian churches.

It was, however, rather against the King's aggression upon civil freedom, than against the

abuses of the church that he had warred, although he saw the latter in so clear a light that he felt no repugnance to make common cause with those who viewed them as the greater evils. Now, when the first oppressor was reduced, the first assailants of religious freedom beaten and trampled underfoot, it seemed too probable that a new hydra-headed tyranny would spring up from the downfallen despotism, and greater outrages on liberty of conscience follow, than those which had called England into arms.

Such was, indeed, the certain course of things if in the present struggle the parliament should regain the ascendancy—which body, it was evident, under the strong plea of necessity had already most alarmingly extended their boasted privilege, leaving all the assumptions of prerogative immeasurably in the rear, and which, now that the conflict was decided, showed little disposition to lay down their dear-bought power. Himself a follower of the church of England, Sir Edgar had seen little to find fault with in

the old establishment, save an over rigour and a want of toleration, which he would have extended to all sects, except the catholics, who were in those days truly formidable from their determinate spirit of conversion, their bigotry, and above all their undissembled inclination toward arbitrary government. He, therefore, looked upon the stern and overstrained morality of the presbytery with feelings of so deep dislike, that he would almost have surrendered all the gains of the late war to hinder its establishment as a predominating state-religion, although he would have gladly suffered it in common with all other protestant denominations.

With these views, he had naturally joined the independents in their contest with the parliament; but now that they had gained the day, he was yet ill at ease. A fierce fanatical military government would be, it was self-evident, the very worst of all governments, and utterly subversive of the English liberties and constitution. The wavering and dishonest policy of

Charles rendered his restoration all but impossible—while, in the deep-laid and unfathomable mysteries of Cromwell's course, Ardenne began to foresee daily, more and more cause for apprehension and for caution.

Still, such were the rare talents of the man'such his inexplicable influence over the minds of all whom he encountered, that while Sir Edgar doubted, he was compelled to grant that he had no cause for doubt, which he could make clear to himself, much less to others. At times he fancied his religious ecstasies mere hypocritic jargon, adopted so to mystify all eyes, and veil his deep ambition;—at others—and that too most soberly and often—he believed him a wild self-deceiving hypochondriac, an erring though sincere enthusiast.

Hitherto all that Oliver had done, had doubtless been of service to the cause of veritable freedom; and it was certain that his present opposition to the presbyterians *might* prove quite as unselfish—quite as beneficial to the

commonwealth, as his preceding opposition to the King. Still it was too apparent to escape the foresight of a politician so clear-headed and far-reaching as Sir Edgar, that if the military faction should gain firm foothold in the state, Cromwell would not lack either talent, opportunity, or power, to mount even to the topmost summit of ambition if he should feel the inclination to attempt it. And who, when all things most magnificently tempting shall lie prone, subject to his mere will, yea!—courting him to grasp them—when to dare almost seems a virtue—to refrain a despicable weakness—who can, in such a situation, answer for another—who even for himself?

Revolving such thoughts in his mind, and eager to unbosom himself to some true friend, Sir Edgar took his way, as has been said, the second evening after the occupation of the city by the troops, toward the dwelling of John Milton. The controversialist had changed his domicile during this troubled period, and now

occupied a smaller house in Holborn, opening backward upon Lincoln's-inn.

It was a lovely evening as ever smiled upon the earth, which Ardenne had selected for his visit to the patriotic poet. The setting sun, that alchemist of nature, shone out so brilliantly from an unclouded sky, that even the great wilderness of walls and chimneys, for once seen through a purer medium than their accustomed canopy of fog and smoke, looked cheerfully. The same grave-eyed and sober-looking servitor, who had admitted him at his last visit six long years before, opened the door; and in reply to his inquiry informed him that Master Milton was within, but in his garden; and ushering him into a small parlour, decked with the selfsame dark-green hangings, offered to call his master. But declining his civility, Sir Edgar walked by himself into the narrow stripe of garden, planted with a few lilacs and laburnums all besmirched and dingy from the effects of the London atmosphere.

At first he saw not any thing of him he

sought; but in a moment after, he distinguished the full solemn voice, whose cadences, once heard could never be forgotten, proceeding from a little arbour facing the western sun, and covered by a mass of annual creepers, such as may easily be reared even upon the meanest plot of soil. The sounds, however, were not as of one engaged in conversation, but resembled rather the accents of a person thinking aloud, or possibly composing what might be afterwards committed to the safer guardianship of paper. The words which reached his ear, as he advanced, were these, at no long period subsequently published in the poem styled "Il Penseroso:"

* * * the high-imbowed roof,
With antique columns massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light :
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear
As may with sweetness through mine ear
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

That which was most peculiar in the manner of the speaker, if, as Ardenne suspected, he were pronouncing thoughts, which for the first time now were couched in language, was that they flowed in one melodious and uninterrupted stream, unbroken by the slightest pause or hesitation, but running, as it were, into spontaneous melody, as unpremeditated as the music of a bird, the murmuring of a rivulet, or any other natural sound that soothes the ear of man with untaught harmony.

He had not, however, much time to drink in the sweet and solemn verses ; for the quick ear of the poet—quicker perhaps as his sense of vision year after year became less vigorous—detected an approaching footstep on the gravel walk ; and ceasing instantly from his employment he stepped forth to meet his visiter.

The countenance of Milton was but little altered, embalmed as it were by his passionless and peaceful avocations, excepting that perhaps the furrows on his expansive forehead—furrows

of thought, not age—were somewhat deeper, and the whole expression of his lineaments more subdued and even melancholy than when they last met his friend's eye. The change, if change there were, was slight indeed as compared with the havoc which anxiety, grief, hardship, and exposure, more than time, had wrought on the fine features of Sir Edgar Ardenne. His glance was indeed bright as ever—his carriage as erect and dignified—his limbs as muscular, nay even as elastic. But the high manly beauty—the triumphant energy—the soul out-flashing from the face at every new emotion—the flush of youth—the glorious radiancy of a fresh mind—were utterly extinct for ever. The features were indeed the same in their proud classic mould, save that the nose was sharpened, and that the mouth, more firmly set, rarely or never now relaxed into that playful smile that used to light up the whole countenance like sudden sunshine. Deep lines were visible not on the forehead only, but hard and sharply cut from

either nostril downward. His hair, still soft and waving, was streaked in many places with premature and wintry gray, and, more than all, a dull dead shadow had settled down upon him with a gloom like that which an autumnal cloud will cast upon a landscape, that scarce a minute past was laughing in its sunniest loveliness.

At first sight Milton scarcely recognised his friend and pupil, and when at length he framed a half apology, attributing the blame to his own "great infirmity becoming," as he said, "as each morn rose on its preceding night, but more and more decided."

"I thank you," answered Ardenne, grasping the soft hand of the scholar-poet, with warm affection,—“I thank you for your kindly artifice; but I well know that hard seasons, and yet harder fortunes, have so far changed me, that, were my mother living, she scarce could recognise her son in the gray weather-beaten soldier that alone remains of him. But,

after all, what matters it?—what matters it, that our frail bodies should wear out and wither, when even thus they outlive empires!—But let us in—if I may so far trespass on your leisure—my mind is ill at ease, and I would fain cast off some of its secret burdens into ears which I know friendly, wise, and trustworthy.”

Milton assented with a kindly but grave gesture ; sympathizing more deeply than could have been expected from his unworldly habits and philosophic style of thought, in the appalling change which he was well aware could have been only wrought by singular affliction on the aspect of a man, whom he knew by experience to be calmer and more disciplined of mind, than the most chastened of his austere contemporaries.

They walked in silence to the house, for too full were the hearts of both to vent themselves in any converse of small moment. But when seated in the quiet parlour, Ardenne at once broke silence.

“I have,” he said, “methinks, more than a common claim on you for that advice and information, which I believe no man can so well afford me; seeing that it was owing mainly to your exhortations, that I determined on embarking actively upon that stream of circumstances, which has all blindly swept me onward to this pass. Obedient—or, I should rather say, convinced by those your exhortations, I have been, as you know, a faithful and unflinching—if unimportant—actor in the events which have dethroned the King, abolished the established church, and, to conclude, laid the whole realm—laws, liberties, and lives of Englishmen—at the precarious mercy of an armed and zealot multitude. In thus pursuing the dictates of *your* advice, not less than of *my* conscience, I devoted myself wholly to what I then believed my country’s good. I have lost—sacrificed—every thing! I am alone among the ruins of my house—a sole and thunder-stricken column left standing when its temple

hath for ever fallen. My father died at Naseby, my only consolation that he forgot our differences, and blessed me ere he passed away. My betrothed bride—you saw her once in our young days of hope and promise, and know her priceless worth—is perishing by inches of a pined and broken heart. But this—ay! all this I could bear, were it not that dark fears have grown into my soul, till I doubt every thing—almost my own integrity and honour. A busy voice is whispering at my heart, that I have forfeited all that makes life a blessing—nay more, that I have aided in destroying all those most dear to me, and in the chase of a vain phantom! And more, yet more than this—that in the very chase, I have but been the sport and mockery of a falsehood! I feel, I see, that England has been deluged with the blood of her free sons—her valleys fattened with the corpses of her best and bravest—her wise and pious prelates driven from out their spheres of usefulness—her monarch, justly, I grant, but

fatally, held captive in the very palaces of his forefathers—her constitution plunged into the wildest jeopardy! All this I feel—I see. The havoc and the misery, the desolation and the peril! But when I would look forward, all is blank and hopeless. The worst view, anarchy in the state, and persecution in the church! For government—an army of sectarians and schismatics, fanatical and ignorant and savage! for council—a small knot of officers, wild visionary madmen, like Harrison and Lilburne—enthusiasts like Ireton—or hypocrites and mercenary knaves, like hundreds I *could* name, but need not! and for church—an austere, intolerant, morose, heart-chilling discipline—paralyzing every noble aspiration—condemning every innocent and lawful pleasure—hardening, and at the same time lowering, every heart—confounding every real standard, narrowing all distinctions between vice and virtue—converting men into mere hypocrites—or worse, into mere misanthropes, and brutes! This is the

darker side the picture. Turn it!—and the best view—truly the more I look upon it, the more sure do I feel that it will come to pass—the best view is the resurrection of a stronger dynasty—stronger, because supported by a standing army, founded upon a conquest, erected on the ruins of all that *did* oppose its predecessor, and *cannot* oppose *it*—a dynasty, with for its founder and its head, mightier and more dangerous a thousand fold than Charles—because more wise, more valiant, and more virtuous—start not, my friend, at what I am about to say—with, for its *tyrant*, CROMWELL!”

“I have heard you without interruption,” answered Milton in his rich persuasive tones, “but with attention, with sorrow, and with wonder! Sorrow—that you have lain beneath the burthen of affliction, such as no fainting pilgrim of us all could bear and live, did we not know that such is but the test, which the Supreme Artificer applies to try the temper and the metal of our souls—the purgative-like fire

under the ores of the mine, by which he fits our corrupt bodies to put on incorruption!—Attention—for that, although I trust to show them baseless as the morning vapours which disappear before the all-pervading daylight, your prognostics are fraught deeply with the world's wisdom; and your views of the presbytery entirely sound and solid!—Wonder—that you should doubt, or anywise distrust, the purest and sincerest patriot—the most upright judge—the stoutest man of war—the trustiest and most painstaking Christian, that the Lord hath raised up, since the old days of Israel's glory, to vindicate the liberties, and wipe away the sorrows of an oppressed and groaning people.”

“I rejoice much,” Edgar replied, “to hear that such is your opinion. I cannot say indeed that I so much distrust *him*, as I do the tide of circumstances, which seem to flow on irresistibly toward his elevation. Charles never can again

sit on the throne—no party can place confidence in him—myself, I would not see him there; for whensoever he should fancy he had gained the power, so surely, as we two are here conversing now, would he renew these struggles. He is in heart—by habit—by his very blood, a despot. But let me profit by your wisdom—to what end do you look, whether for sorrow or rejoicing?”

“The lieutenant-general,” answered Milton, “has gone hence but now—scarcely an hour before you came. Indeed he passed a great part of the morning with me, in grave disputation; for we did not, nor do we yet, agree. He would replace Charles Stuart in the high places of his fathers, dreading the tyranny of the parliament more than he dreads the despotism of the King—the persecutions of the presbyterians, beyond the persecutions of the prelatists.”

“Indeed!” Sir Edgar answered in great astonishment. “Indeed! then have I much

misjudged him. Restore Charles Stuart! I should have thought he would have stricken off his right hand sooner!"

"He would do so, however," Milton replied, "beyond all doubt he would. He deems he has devised a scheme to fetter him within the bounds of lawful power. Besides, he trusts his gratitude—mistaken trust, I fear me, on most unstable grounds. He parted hence almost in anger, for that I thwarted him, and held his project naught."

"And the terms?" asked Sir Edgar—
What would be the terms on which he would restore him?"

"Certain improvements in the freedom of elections," returned the other, "and in the rights of parliament. The military power both by land and sea, and the creation of all great officers of state, to be for ten years vested solely in that body.—No person, who has warred against the parliament, to sit, for five years, whether as peer or commoner, or to hold any office.—No

peers created since the removal of the privy seal in '42, to sit without permission of both Houses. All grants made by the King, since that same date to be held void—all by the Lords and Commons valid. The liturgy not to be enjoined—nor yet the covenant enforced, but all coercive power to be taken from the bishops, and the clergy. The King, Queen, and the royal issue, except in these points, to resume all their old powers and prerogatives without restriction. And lastly, an indemnity to all, but five delinquents, to be granted, in behalf of those who have served for the King, whether in camp or council.”

“And does the King consent?” Ardenne inquired once more.

“Surely he does,” the poet answered. “He were mad to refuse conditions which, fallen as he is, he could have scarce even hoped for.”

“It would work well,” said Edgar, musing very deeply. “It would work excellently well,

if the King might be trusted. But—I fear still. At all events the zeal of Cromwell to promote this settlement, argues that I have been unjust in my suspicions. Yes! I have greatly wronged him. But you said, that you differed from his views, and that he went hence ireful and chafing. I pray you tell me—what, then, are your opinions?”

“ Mine?” replied Milton. “ My opinions are but the musings of a solitary bookman, unskilled in court or council—neither a statesman, nor a politician; yet such as they be, you shall have them. I would see England free! free and unshackled, as was Rome in her fresh days of glory, ere she had bowed the knee to any Kaiser.—As Greece, when she spurned forth the countless myriads of the oriental king from her unviolated shores, and reared herself a bright example, pure and immortal, of liberty unquenched, unquenchable!—I would see England subject to law, to reason, and to God!—bending the neck to none—‘rousing herself,

like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks!’—I would ‘see her, as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam,’ yea! spreading forth to the four winds of heaven her long-abused and fettered pinions, superbly floating in her pride of place, unscathed amid lightnings of the empyrean! And wherefore, I would ask you, not? Consider what we are, and have been—‘a nation, not slow nor dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit, acute to invent, subtile and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to!—a nation, not luxurious nor effeminate, but of a hardihood surpassing that, I say not of the frivolous light Frenchman, not of the polished and *affété* Italian, not of the indolent Castilian, but of the frugal Transylvanian, the winter-tempered Russ, the mountain Switzer!—a nation, boasting itself the freeborn offspring of the free!—a nation, that rolled back the flood of

Roman war from its interior fastnesses, when Rome was at the mightiest!—a nation, that shall yet—once freed from the soul-galling yoke of monarchy, the spirit-killing sway of prelatists and peers and papists—send forth her arms, her laws, her language, and above all, the lights of her religion, to the remotest corners of the habitable earth, securely throned on her sea-circled pinnacle of glory, o’ershadowing the lands with her dominion, sweeping the ocean-waves with her renown!”

“Dreams! dreams!” replied Ardenne, shaking his head mournfully. “Beautiful! beautiful dreams, but baseless!—Methought that you had studied history more narrowly. There never has been, from the world’s birth till now—there never shall be, henceforth to the day when the great trump shall sound—a true republic! Rome, when her kings were banished was an aristocracy—a wise, poor, frugal, brave, paternal *aristocracy*;—foot after foot her nobles yielded to the flood of what her demagogues styled

freedom—the moment when she became republican or democratic, which you will, that moment held her up a prize to the successful soldier. Her history thenceforth—corruption, anarchy, bloodshed, proscription, Cæsar! And what was Athens?—If for a little while she stood cemented by external wars which forced her to be single and united—what was her government, but a succession of bright usurpations—of aggressions on the people's rights, abuses of the people's power; till at the last democracy prevailed, and then—the thirty tyrants! Sparta, from first to last, was the most close and austere oligarchy earth has ever witnessed—ay, oligarchy within oligarchy—an irresponsible and high-born senate, holding their sway for life over an oligarchy of six thousand Dorian warriors; who in turn domineered with a most iron sceptre over their myriads of subordinate Laconians, myriads of scourged and tortured Helots!—These! these are your bright examples—these the republics of the universe!—

For you will hardly quote me Venice—Genoa—Florence—wherein not all a Petrarch's or an Ariosto's glory can veil the degradation of the slavish mob—the tyrannic insolence of the brute nobles. Dreams!—I say once again—beautiful—but still dreams! Alas! for human nature! how can we look to see republics stand, unless we hope for wisdom and for virtue in the councils and the actions of the mass—how hope for these, when human reason and divine authority tell us alike, and tell us truly, that the majority of men are ignorant and prone to evil! But now, truce to discussion—you have relieved my mind at all events from one great dread—of having been in truth—while I supposed myself in some degree a champion of my country's weal—the mere tool of one man's ambition. This was the point, on which I chiefly sought your counsel, and I am satisfied. And now, let us to lighter and more pleasing matters.—I heard your voice, as I approached the harbour, composing as I fancied some new poem.”

“A trifle! a mere trifle!” answered the other, as if half-reluctant to descant on such a subject; but Ardenne’s end was gained—the thread of their original discourse was broken, and, turning thence to poetry and the chief literary topics of the day, a conversation followed, which, though of interest enough to those who held it, was scarce of such importance as to warrant its transmission to posterity.

CHAPTER II.

Nay, be thou sure I'll well requite thy kindness,
For that it made my imprisonment a pleasure :
Ay, such a pleasure as incaged birds
Conceive, when, after many moody thoughts,
At last, by notes of household harmony,
They quite forget their loss of liberty.
But, Warwick, after God, thou set'st me free,
And chiefly therefore I thank God and thee.

King Henry VI.—Part III.

IT was a lovely summer morning, with a soft west wind just ruffling the bosom of the silver Thames, and wantoning among the graceful foliage of tall trees, and slender, though not less

beautiful exotics, which still adorn in such profusion the gardens of that palace built by the haughty Wolsey, but destined soon to pass into the hands of his bluff master, and to descend to his posterity as one of the most fair abodes of England's royalty.

In a magnificent apartment overlooking those unrivalled gardens, its ceiling gorgeously painted in Italian frescoes with some of the most picturesque creations of the Grecian fable, its walls draped with brocaded damask bordered with arabesques of gold two feet in width, and decorated with the masterpieces of Vandyck and Lely, in all but power a King, sat Charles, gazing out with a sad but quiet eye upon the flowery parterres adorned with many an urn and statue—the trimly-shaven lawns—the odorous thickets and the green alleys, through which might be seen the broad monarch of his kingdom's rivers flashing brightly in the sunshine. His children were about him, the Duke of York, the eldest, leaning upon his father's knee, and

looking up into his face as conscious of the melancholy air, which had become almost habitual to those unmarked but comely features, yet ignorant of the dark causes which had there imprinted it. The younger, Duke of Gloucester, and Elizabeth his little sister—just at that happy age when tears are as April showers succeeded instantly by smiles, when sorrows pass away and leave no sting behind—were busily employed imprisoning beneath a Venice goblet a painted butterfly, which, lured by a display of lovely summer flowers blooming in a large crystal vase upon the table, had flitted in through the tall casements but to be made a prize by the admiring children. A louder laugh than usual joyously bursting from the lips of the young girl diverted the King's mind for a moment from his sad reflections.

“My little girl,” he said, half-sorrowfully smiling, “you would not persecute the pretty butterfly?—See how it beats its painted wings against the walls of its transparent prison, and

rubs off all the downy colours that you thought so beautiful. Know, my Elizabeth, that poor imprisoned fly would now be fluttering far, far away over the sunny gardens, in the sweet morning air, sipping the dew from every flower, happy and free; and you, by shutting it up here, have made it very wretched; and it will pine and die. See, it grows weak already. Would not my darling grieve for the poor butterfly, if she should find it lying dead upon its prison-floor to-morrow?"

The child stared wonderingly, with her great blue eyes wide open, upon her father, as he spoke with a degree of serious and simple pathos, caused perhaps by a sense of sympathy with the slight insect, caged like himself, though in a splendid prison; but as he ceased a big tear swelled upon the lashes of either light orb, and slid slowly down over her rosy cheeks. "I did not want," she said, "to make the butterfly unhappy. Will it die, papa, now, if I let it fly away?"

“ No, my sweet child,” he answered, “ it will revive directly; all that it wants is the fresh air, and liberty to go where it pleases.”

“ Then farewell, pretty butterfly,” she cried, half weeping and half smiling, as she released the captive. “ I should not love to be a prisoner myself. Go and be very happy. See! see! he is gone already!”

“ Heaven, in its mercy, grant you never may, my child,” Charles answered solemnly; “ but if it should please God that evil men should shut you up, you must be very patient, and not hate those who hurt you, but forgive them, and say your prayers for them to your great King and Father in his holy heaven, that he may pardon them, and turn their hearts.”

“ Do you do so, papa?” she said. “ Do you do so? For I heard you say one day that you were a prisoner—though this pretty room can hardly be a prison—for I thought a prison was a dark place underground, all barred with iron

grates, and very terrible. Do you forgive your enemies ?”

“ Surely I do, my little girl,” he answered, “ else would not God forgive me. But now, go play—for see here, some one comes to speak with me,” and as he said the words, the door was opened, and a gentleman-usher with his black rod entered the chamber, and informed the King, that the Lieutenant-general Cromwell was in the audience-chamber waiting his pleasure.

“ Admit him, forthwith, Feilding, we will receive him here,” replied the King; “ and hark you, pray Mistress Drummond to come hither, and take hence the children. We would be alone.”

The usher instantly retired, when taking up his high-crowned hat, which lay upon the table, without any feather, but ornamented by a diamond buckle in the band, the King placed it on his head, and seating himself before a writ-

ing cabinet of ebony inlaid with ivory and silver.

Scarce had he settled himself, with perhaps some slight view to effect—when the independent entered. He was uncovered, bearing his beaver in his hand, and bowed low to the fallen sovereign, though he bent not the knee, nor offered any movement to kiss hands.

It was a singular and interesting meeting between two men, pitted by fortune for long years against each other, and now thrown peaceably into familiar contact. The contrast—the marked difference between the two—both great—but the one born to greatness, the other having by the energies of his own mind, the actions of his own right hand, achieved it.

Their features spoke volumes as to the distinction! The King's were indeed comely and full of a calm natural majesty, but bearing no decisive marks of any ruling principle or passion—no radiancy of intellect—no manifest impress of character!—mild, though at the

same time somewhat stern, their chief expression was an air of cold and melancholy resolution, not perhaps inconsistent with the traits of mind, for which he was remarkable. When gazed upon, indeed, by one who knew him as the King, he looked it every inch; but had he been met in a crowd, attired as a private individual, he would have been observed for nothing but the easy bearing, natural to every high-born gentleman.

The countenance of Cromwell, on the contrary, owed all its influence over the minds of those who saw him (and powerful indeed and universal was that influence) to the undoubted stamp of genius—to the indomitable resolution—the deeply-seated and unfathomable thought—the quiet but intense enthusiasm, graven in living characters upon his homely features—to the intelligence, in short, and soul that flashed out palpably from every line and lineament of his marked face. Seen in the armour of the soldier—the statesman's robe of peace—the plain

garb of the every-day staid citizen—or the vile tatters of the mendicant, he could not for a second's space have remained unnoted, as a superior creature—as a man of vast unquestionable powers.

But if, in this respect, the carver out of his own mighty fortunes, surpassed the owner of legitimate hereditary sway—in bearing and demeanour there was no comparison. Every position, every movement of the king was redolent of ease and dignity combined; and his repose—that hardest test of grace—carelessly natural and unstudied, was as perfect in its harmony and keeping, as if it had been the result of the most artful skill. The motions of the independent, on the other hand, were sudden, rapid, rough; his postures rigid and iron, when erect, when seated, angular at any time and awkward, but so more obviously when brought into relief by the contrast to the elegance of Charles.

Both were dressed simply, for their station in society, the King especially, who would have been

outshone at first sight by the poorest noble of his court. He wore a plain suit of black taffeta, crossed by the broad blue ribbon of the Garter, silk stockings of the same colour, with satin roses in his shoes, and a short mantle of black velvet. His sword was a plain mourning rapier with a hilt of jet; but the deep falling collar round his neck was of the finest Brussels point, and the star on the left side of his cloak glittered with diamonds of the purest water.

Cromwell, who, as he rose in dignity and station, had discarded the slovenly and coarse style of his garments, was attired handsomely in a half-uniform of maroon-coloured cloth, faced with black velvet; a broad silk scarf of the same hue was wound in many folds about his waist supporting his steel-hilted rapier. Military boots highly polished and equipped with silver spurs met his trunk hose, fashioned to match his doublet, just below his knee, and a silk hatband with a silver clasp relieved his dark gray beaver.

“I give you good day, sir,” said Charles, in answer to the low reverence of Cromwell. “We are well pleased to see you, the rather that we owe you thanks, for that, as we have learned, by your warm intercession with the parliament, our children have been yielded to our prayers.”

“Verily,” answered Cromwell,—“verily, if it please your highness, I hold this matter no just cause for thanks, seeing that—as myself a father, whom the Lord hath vouchsafed to bless with a fair progeny, and as a Christian man, who, having learned that we should do to others as we would have it done to us, strives still to put in practice that which he has learned—I have but done my duty. Permit me to hope rather that it may be my fortune, in the time to come, in such degree to minister unto your majesty’s advancement and wellbeing, as may deserve not *your* thanks only, but those of this distracted realm.”

“Nevertheless, we thank you, sir,” returned Charles with a smile seemingly sincere and natural, “both for the good which you have

done to us already, and that which you profess your will to do hereafter. We will speak more at length, when we shall be alone—and, in good time, here comes fair mistress Drummond. Good Drummond,”—he addressed the lady, who now entered—“we will, if you be now at leisure, trespass so far upon your time as pray you to bestow your care upon these little ones. James,” he said, turning to the Duke of York, “if Sir John Berkeley be at liberty to wait on you, you have my licence to ride forth; but see you be not absent over-long. Farewell my little prattlers.” And he stooped down to kiss the rosy lips of the young princess, laying his hand softly on the sunny curls of Gloucester. “Drummond will take ye to the gardens; and in an hour or two ye may return to me. Farewell!—Who waits without?” he added in a louder voice as the lady left the chamber with the children.

“Feilding, your majesty,” replied the usher, a cadet of the noble house of Denbigh.

“Feilding, we would be private.—What pages have ye there?”

“Mildmay and Henry Gage—so please you.”

“Send Mildmay to the head of the great stairs, let Gage wait at the entrance of the painted gallery, and you bestow yourself in the fourth window hence. Suffer not any one to pass the stairs, nor interrupt us upon any plea of pleasure or of business.—Business!” he added, now addressing Cromwell, who had remained standing hat in hand—“We will to business, sir; for that, I trow, has gained for me the pleasure of this visit. I pray you sit—nearer the table if it please you.” And drawing forth some papers from the cabinet before him, he pursued them rapidly as if in search of some peculiar passage.

“Has your grace found the leisure,” Cromwell asked, “to overrun the schedule of conditions, which my son-in-law, Colonel Ireton, had the honour to submit to your attention?”

“I have, and carefully,” answered the King; —“and on the whole, since as it seems I may not now do better, I am contented to abide

by them. One thing, and one alone, if possible, I would have stricken out or modified. 'Tis the last article, I mean—this one relating to the five delinquents. I cannot—no I cannot, on any terms, surrender friends, whose only crime has been their love to me—their firm adherence to my fortunes—their sacrifice of all that men hold dearest, to prop the falling fabric of their master's greatness. No, I cannot surrender them to death—to meet such a death as this! I were no man to do so!”

“I should regret,” said Cromwell, gravely, “most sincerely, that your majesty's objection to this article were absolute! for I will not pretend one moment to conceal from you my full conviction, that on this point the parliament and army are both alike determined; and that refusal to surrender these men—not to death, but to impartial trial—will break off, at once and for ever, all negotiation. The army are exasperated to the last degree against some of your majesty's advisers—and, I profess to you, the

times crave very wary walking! From parliament—as I believe your highness has discovered heretofore—nought can be hoped. They will not treat at all, save on the utter abolition of the church of England—that form to which your grace is, as I well believe—(and wherefore should you not? since to all men there cannot be one faith or one opinion, more than one tone of voice or set of features)—religiously and conscientiously attached—and the establishment, throughout the land, of their presbytery.”

“Never! I never will consent to it,” exclaimed the King. “I will die sooner!”

“Save on these terms, however, they will never treat,” Cromwell replied. “I have—I do profess it to your grace—I have laboured with my whole soul and spirit, wrestling in your behalf, and for your friends’ advantage—and, truly I scruple not to say it, I hold there is not one among the presbyterian faction that will consent to a firm peace, while there be any bishops in the land.”

“I do believe,” said Charles,—“I do, indeed, believe that you have stood my friend of late; and I do thank you for it, and well I hope the time shall come when I can compensate your good deeds to the full.”

“Your majesty may so say well,” Cromwell replied impressively. “I have stood forth somewhat too boldly; so that I have, I grieve to say it, but verily the truth must be spoken always,—so that I have fallen into some suspicion even among my veteran soldiery—so that they scoff, and point at me with jeering fingers, and cry, ‘Lo! he, that puts his trust in princes!’ Also the adjutators of the regiments have called into their counsel my son Ireton, and wrathfully entreated him, enjoining it most sternly on him, that we shall hold no more communion with your highness, unless some terms be settled, and that too right speedily.”

“Indeed?” answered the King. “I had hoped that the army was disposed more loyally.”

“Of a truth,” Cromwell replied, “it was so!

Greatly distrusting the rogue presbyterians, and striving often and sincerely with the Lord in spirit, that it would please him to replace your majesty in the dominion, and upon the throne of your forefathers. But when you last gave audience to the adjutators—(surely it is a grievous thing to say—but I profess to you, as the Lord liveth, it is true)—all their trust in your highness passed away—and all the favour you had met with in their eyes, even as morning clouds when that the south wind chaseth them. Yea! and their hearts were hardened, and their countenances changed against you, and against all they deem your friends. Moreover secretly have I—ay, even I myself—been now advised by letters from tried friends, and otherwise, that threats are rife against me in the camp, how they would lay wait privily, and dig a pit, and set a snare before me, and take and smite me with the sword, and slay me under the cloud of night. But, as I live, they know me not who do suppose that my fear of that which man can

do to me shall turn me from performing that which I have tasked my spirit to accomplish. Truly, these terms which now lie here before your majesty, with much of danger and yet more of difficulty, have I prevailed upon the host to offer you. If that it seem good to you to accept them I pledge myself right gladly that the parliament shall, ere long, consent likewise—for lo, the army is the mightier! But if (which I trust will not be the case) you shall determine to reject them—then do I wash my hands of it. If by mine own self-sacrifice I could secure your majesty's and England's quiet, then might I, Decius-like, devote myself; but truly I esteem it mere insanity to rush upon mine own destruction, when nought is to be gained proportionate."

"If it be so, sir," answered Charles, after a brief pause of deliberation, "and these be the best terms your friendly aid may gain for me, I will be frank with you, and candidly accept them. Rather had I take harder terms from the

blunt honesty of your stout soldiers, than chaffer for conditions, as for vile merchandise, with the cold cozening presbyterians;—and for your own part, trust me when I say, that next to the Almighty, with reverence be it spoken, I hold *you* the instrument that hath uplifted me from the abyss of sorrow, and wrought for me a deliverance and restoration! And I assure you there shall be a time, when you will own me grateful.”

“This then is settled,” Cromwell replied. “I may announce unto the host your majesty’s unqualified assent to these their propositions?”

“You are at liberty to do so,” returned Charles; “for myself, from this hour I hold me bound to them.”

“Right joyful am I!” exclaimed Oliver. “All thanks be to the Lord of Hosts—England shall then have peace! Verily, ere ten days be passed, your majesty shall sit in state at Westminster.”

“And my first deed, when there,” said Charles, “in guerdon of your much-esteemed and faithful services, shall be to raise my well-

beloved and trusty Cromwell to the peerage under the title, now extinct, of Earl of Essex, and to grace him with the garter of St. George, which never yet was buckled round the knee of braver leader.—The parliament, I trow, will not object to honours thus bestowed on their best general—nor to my commending him to the command of England's armies !”

“Your majesty is gracious,” answered the independent, in a tone half indignation and half irony; “but not to be made Prince of Wales, and heir to England's crown, would I thus labour that you should once more occupy the throne, did I not well believe that England's peace demands it! It is for England's laws, and England's liberties—not for my personal aggrandizement—not that I should be known as Lord, or Earl, nor yet by any other title, which is but earthly pomp, and vanity before the Lord—not that I should be the owner of broad lands, or the dispenser of preferments, wielding the truncheon of the hosts of Britain—that I have done so much

and suffered; and did I not believe your majesty resolved, henceforth to hold the liberties and weal of all your subjects nearest to your heart, and the fear of the Lord, always before your eyes—verily, withered be my arm, and my tongue palsied, if I would strike one blow, or syllable one sound to save you from perdition! But now this matter is so happily arranged, may it please your grace excuse me. My duties call me hence to Windsor, where I should be by noon!”

“Duty, sir, needs no licence,” Charles replied, smiling most graciously, and rising from his seat and even taking three steps toward the door, as the blunt soldier moved to leave the presence; “and till we meet at Westminster, rest in the full assurance of possessing your liege sovereign’s gratitude and favour.—Ha!” he continued, as the door closed and he found himself alone—“Deep as he is, I have out-generalled him.—Now he suspects not any thing—Ha! ha! the garter and the Earl of Essex—a precious clown in faith to grace an earldom!—But now

or Lauderdale and Hollis!—the dull fools—we will outwit them all, and yet reign, as our father did before, a king in something more than name !”

But the enthusiast strode forth, the tessellated floor of the proud gallery ringing beneath his massive stride, exulting and triumphant ; and as he passed the vestibule, where there were none to mark his actions, he clasped both his hands above his head, and cried out in a voice husky and stifled with emotion, “ My country—oh, my country!—have I then—have I won for thee, peace, happiness, and freedom ?”

CHAPTER III.

Let us see—

Leave, gentle wax ; and manners blame us not :
To know our enemies' mind we'd rip their hearts ;
Their papers is more lawful.

King Lear.

THE third day after Cromwell's interview with Charles, Ardenne, who had purchased a small house in the Strand, with pleasant gardens sloping to the river, making it his continual abode when not engaged in military duties, was walking on the terrace close to the water's edge in one of those abstracted and half-melancholy moods, which had become almost habitual to him, except when circumstances calling for

sudden action roused him at once to all his former energy. The day had been one of storm, more like a winter's tempest than a summer's shower; the rain, driven along the river's course by a cold eastern gale, had fallen constantly since daybreak; and though towards evening it had ceased, and the wind sunk, a thick chilling mist crept up the stream, at the first clinging only to the opposite shores and curtaining the distant objects, but increasing gradually in its volume, till the whole space from bank to bank was filled with a gray mass of fog, so palpable and dense that barge and wherry passed and repassed unseen, although the near dash of their oars and the loud voices of the rowers showed that they could scarcely be at ten yards distance. A transient gleam of sunshine had drawn forth Sir Edgar from his solitary studies, and once plunged in his gloomy reveries he continued to walk to and fro, scarce conscious of the increasing badness of the weather. But suddenly, as he paused near the little wharf, to which his barge

was moored, a stern voice, whose accents of command he recognised at once, rose from the misty river, above the plashing of the oars which had been for some time approaching.

“Ho! put in here, thou stupid knave—here at this private stair; ’tis here we would be landed.”

It was, he could not be mistaken, the voice of Cromwell; and immediately the sharp beak of a wherry ran upon the steps, pulled by two watermen, with two more men, soldiers it seemed, reclining in the stern. Oliver (for one was indeed he) leaped out forthwith and addressed Edgar hastily, as if afraid that he should speak first, and in a tone so loud that it was evident he wished the boatmen to hear what he said.

“Is not this, I beseech you the dwelling of the brave Colonel Ardenne? We have come hither from the army—two of the adjutators—to bear tidings to him.”

“It is, sir,” Edgar replied, quickly comprehending Cromwell’s wish, “and I am Colonel

Ardenne. I pray you walk up to the house, you and your comrade."

"Surely, most surely," Oliver replied with well-feigned bluntness. "We have come by the river up from Brentford; and I profess that I am chilled, and yearning for the creature comforts. How say you, Fast-and-Pray, think'st thou a quartern of strong-waters would go down amiss? You, watermen," he added, "make fast your boat there to the stairs, and follow us to the house, we cannot tarry here in this foul mist to pay your fares."

They were joined, while he was speaking, by the other soldier, whom, despite his dress, Ardenne at first sight discovered to be Ireton; and although not a little wondering at their visit, and the disguise they had adopted, judging the garden no place for inquiry, he led them in all haste toward the house.

Both wore coarse scarlet cassocks, with buff breeches and immense jack-boots, and the uniform of privates in the ironsides off duty, long

tucks with iron scabbards hanging from their buff belts and clattering on the pavement as they strode along, and broad-brimmed hats of felt, the flaps unlooped, and covering their brows as if to guard against the weather. They both were furnished with tobacco-pipes—short dingy iron tubes—and smoked almost incessantly, as well to cloud their features, as to afford a plausible excuse for silence. But, as a further safeguard against inquiring eyes, Cromwell had cast about him a stained and weather-beaten dragoon cloak of frieze, with its cape muffling him well-nigh to the mouth.

Ireton carried in his hand a package of some size wrapped in an oilskin cover; and on a casual meeting even an intimate acquaintance would have detected nothing in their air or manner, by which to judge them different from what they seemed.

The moment they had entered—"Let your domestics instantly take arms," said Cromwell, "and lay these watermen by the heels; they might blab else, although I think they know us

not. Let your trusty steward alone attend us; and bid them see your doors be locked, and that no one of our attendants, on any pretext, this night cross the threshold."

Leading his guests himself into a small library, retired from the street and looking out upon the garden, Edgar went out to give his orders. Before returning he had seen the boatmen, after a slight struggle, secured in a remote chamber, with an abundance of strong liquor which he judged rightly would at once console them and effectually close their mouths; and two stout watchmen posted at the door—had given his directions to old Anthony, who since Sir Henry's death followed his fortunes, and held the keys of every door and shutter in his own possession.

"Rude greeting this," said Oliver as he returned; "but of a truth there is deep need of it. In brief I will acquaint you with the matter; for time presses. Three days since, Charles accepted fully the conditions of the army, as I wrote you on Monday. The adjutators are

brought over ; the parliament must come to our terms. So far all's well. But with the dawn to-day a letter came to me at Windsor—from one who has conveyed us much intelligence, and never has deceived us—a friend in the King's bed-chamber—*verbum sat*; he writes us that Charles Stuart hath been all yesterday in deep debate with Ashburnham, that firebrand of the Queen's—that their resolves are taken—and a letter—of a surety in cipher—but then we hold the key, the Lord be thanked for it—prepared for Henrietta, to be conveyed right cunningly this night to Dover, by an unconscious messenger. What the contents may be, our friend might not discover, though, as he writes, he left no stone unturned ; but of this he is certain, that it is all-important, and decisive of the King's intention as to the pending treaty. This letter we *must* intercept ; and, therefore, we rode straight in this disguise to Brentford, and thence took boat, to baffle prying eyes ; and so far all goes rightly. Now attend—the bearer of this letter will come

at ten o'clock to night, carrying a saddle on his head, to the Blue Boar in Holborn, thence to take horse for Dover. The man will wear a green plush riding-coat, and breeches of the same, the elbows of the doublet, and the seams of the trunk hose guarded with neat-skin leather—a stammel waistcoat, and a red ribbon round his hat, which is of common straw. The saddle will be old and somewhat patched and ragged, and in the off-side flap, between the tree and pommel, the letter is concealed. The man knows not that it is there, deeming he goes to buy a famous hunting-horse from one John Styles, a horse courser. He is to put up at the Red Lion inn in Dover, and there will be one, knowing his description, who shall search the saddle and—find nothing!—for we must have the packet.”—
How goes the night, Sir Edgar?”—

“Past seven, I am sure—nay”—after looking at his watch—“but it lacks scant a quarter of an hour to eight. I thought not that it was so late!”

“Nay, then, we are but just in time—you will go with us, sir, and aid us. We must have three, and know none else in whom we may so perfectly rely. You are aware that Charles is on parole not to hold secret intercourse with France—his parole broken, there is no breach of honesty or honour in seizing and perusing his despatches.—That package—open it quickly Ireton—contains a dress like these that we now wear—the uniform of one who hath about your inches, borrowed for the nonce. It savours somewhat of tobacco-smoke and stale october, but we must not be nice. I pray you don it speedily. Nay, Ireton, you forget, where is the net to gather up his lovelocks, and the peruke? Quick!—quick!” he cried impatiently, binding up Edgar’s flowing hair, and covering it with a foxy wig, close-clipped, and cut into a hundred little peaks.

Some pigment was now laid on Edgar’s whiskers, and mustaches, suiting them to the colour of his false hair. A kerchief of coarse cotton next replaced his collar of fine lace, and a garb

similar to that of his companions, his well-fancied habits. A clumsy broadsword was produced, with a wide leathern shoulder-belt, from under Cromwell's cloak ; and this with an old pair of his own military boots, carefully soiled for the occasion and fitted with rough iron spurs, and an unpolished headpiece, completed his attire.

“ Mind now your bearing,” Cromwell said as they left the house ; “ smoke without ceasing, jostle a little those whom we meet with in the streets, and quote the strongest texts you may remember. When that we reach the inn, the great gate will be closed, the wicket only open.

We will all enter in, and drink till half-past nine of the clock ; then go forth you, as if upon some errand—loiter about the gates, until you see our man ; follow in after him, and when he passeth up the yard—for he will go directly to the stables—bar instantly the wicket, and advise us ! Now let us move on somewhat smartly.”

Without more words, they took their way across the town, toward Holborn, through

quarters which, though now the very heart and the most populous portion of the giant city, were then but sparsely built upon, with frequent gardens intervening between the scattered tenements, and miry lanes unlighted and unpaved instead of regular streets.

The night continued dark, and so unpleasant that when they reached at length the mighty thoroughfare of Holborn, the street was half deserted and nearly silent. Smoking much as they passed along, and speaking little, they reached the well-known hostelry. Its gate, as Cromwell had foreseen, was closed and locked, but a low wicket-door gave ingress to the yard; a long irregular space surrounded on three sides by the rambling buildings of the inn, with three tiers one above the other of open galleries, through which was the access to the chambers,—and bounded at the end by a long range of granaries and pack-stables. The yard was nearly dark—for but one lamp shone dimly over the entrance of the public room, just at the left hand of the

gateway as they entered; and except the lanterns of the hostlers flitting about the farther buildings, no other lights were visible within; but, as if to make up for the deficiency, a large glass lamp on either side the gateway rendered the street in front of it as light as day.

Abruptly entering the tap-room in which were some four or five grave-looking citizens, comforting themselves after the business of the day with poached eggs and canary, buttered ale, spiced claret, and half a dozen other drinks and dishes fashionable in those days, but long ago forgotten—

“Ho! Landlord!” shouted Cromwell—
“bring us three cans of your best double ale—good measure, and be quick about it! Surely my flesh doth thirst for a cool drink, even as the faint spirit thirsteth for a soul-searching exposition of the mysteries that be essential to salvation.”

“Such as Lieutenant Profit-by-the-Word poured forth to our great edifying yester even,

Ireton answered. “ Verily, good man, he was upheld most marvellously—four hours did he hold forth steadily, not waxing faint in flesh, nor weary in well-doing, but borne along in spirit with exceeding fervour, and his voice ringing like a trumpet, louder at every close. Truly a second Boanerges !”

“ Ay ! and he touched with the true unction on that hard rock that splits all weaker vessels, the] full justification of the soul by faith—the utter needlessness of works to save, when that the soul is filled,—ay as a tankard that doth overflow its brim—(and lo ! my can is out. Ho ! tapster, fill us the good black gallon jack, and fetch us more tobacco)—or as a mill-dam that doth burst its banks with the true grace of God !”

“ Yea !” answered Ireton,—“ yea ! verily he did ; but I bethought me somewhat, that he o’ershot the mark, when he did undertake to prove that those who have been once in grace

may never relapse into sin, and that unto the pure all things are pure and holy.”

“Why thou must be an infidel!” returned the other. “What, know you not that vice and virtue be but names—not of aught tangible or real—not of things that exist without the body—but of mere fantasies, abstractions whose seat is the mind? Surely it is the spirit in which a thing is done, and not the thing itself, that makes the virtue or the vice. Lo! when you slay a man, in hand to hand encounter, fighting it may be in the deadly breach, or riding the cannon’s mouth, truly it is imputed not as an act of sin, but an heroic and manly act of glory. As when strong Samson killed his thousands—ay, or yet more to the point, when Heber’s wife, the Kenite, smote Sisera within the tent and slew him, though a suppliant and guest;—but had she driven in that selfsame nail, to satisfy vile lust of gain, or murderous revenge, then had it been guilt in her—shame while on

earth and infamy—and though we should not judge—judgment hereafter and perdition. Thus in the soul is the distinction, it maketh its own righteousness—it maketh its own sin! All that is done for virtue, becomes virtue. To whom all things *seem* pure, verily all *are* pure! Yea if a man have the grace given him to look upon what to the unregenerate would be the darkest and most damning sin, and to believe it lawful—verily then to him it *would* be lawful!”

He continued thus, plunging into the wildest and most bewildering depths of metaphysics, half acting, as it seemed to Edgar, an unreal character, and half believing what he said. While Ireton, an enthusiast in politics, but sober and clear-headed in religious matters as compared with others of his class, kept up the conversation merely to play the part assigned to him; and Edgar—who, as Cromwell had once said in his defence against some who had termed him cavalier and half-malignant, had not the gift to preach or pray, yet had the gift

to counsel more advisedly, and fight more fearlessly than any sniveller of them all—joined not at all in the discourse, but smoked his pipe and drained his horn in silence, till the appointed time arrived,—when, making some excuse to his companions, he left the tap-room, and strolled out into the street.

Here he lounged carelessly about, now gazing vacantly into the lighted window of some cook-shop, now feigning some attempt at gallantry toward such wandering damsels as had neither been deterred from their nocturnal walks by the unpleasant weather, nor by the rigid morals of the puritans, and most successfully maintaining—while he in truth kept a strict watch both up and down the street—the semblance of a mere loitering idler.

Just as the clock was chiming the first stroke of ten, he saw his man approaching, bearing a saddle on his head, and clad precisely as had been described. He was a tall, stout, servant-looking fellow, ruddy and fresh complexioned

but without one gleam of intellect in his broad jovial face—the last man in the world one would have taken for a spy or trusted emissary. This Edgar saw, as he passed by him near a lighted shop. He suffered him to get some dozen paces in advance, and then with a slow sauntering gait pursued him. He saw him stoop beneath the wicket, and, without looking to the right or left, walk up the yard toward a group of hostlers, playing at odd or even on a horseblock round a dingy lantern. Silently and unseen he dropped the bar across the wicket, and looked into the tap-room.

“Tarry,” said Cromwell,—“tarry yet a while—the bird is ours !”

In a few minutes the sound of a horse’s hoofs were heard upon the pavement.

“Now then,” cried Oliver. “Now !” and instantly unsheathing his long tuck, he darted through the doorway, followed immediately by Ireton and Sir Edgar, likewise with drawn swords.

Cromwell had reached the man, before they overtook him, but Ardenne heard him say, "You ride forth late, my friend; but we be placed here in the name, and by the orders of the parliament, to search all goers out. But verily thou lookest like an honest lad. Thou hast, I warrant me, nothing that thou wouldst care to hide!"

"Not I, i' faith," replied the stranger, bluntly; "search away, master soldier, if such be your orders, but I pray you delay me not, because I am in haste."

"Lead the man's horse into the stable, Fast-and-Pray," said Cromwell, glancing his eye toward Ireton, "'twere shame to let the dumb beast stand here in the pelting rain; and thou, good Win-the-Fight, come in with us. Verily, friend, we will not long detain thee—but a horn of ale will not harm thee this damp night, I trow."

"Not it—not it!" replied the fellow, "what would you have now?"

“Oh! turn thy pockets out. Surely we will not be too hard with thee. Well! well! this is a purse—good lack! a heavy one! and this a letter—‘to Master Styles, horse-courser, Dover!’ Look sharply, that he be not too deep for thee, this John Styles—he played our colonel Whalley a foul trick with a spavined jade some two years past. He is a keen blade. Well!—this is a pipe—and this a bacca-box—so! so! in these there is no treason. Truly I said thou wert an honest fellow; and I was not deceived. Another cup of ale? Tush! never mince the matter, ’twill warm thee more than thy plush jerkin—Upseyes! So! down with it like lambs-wool. Well thou mayest go now, so thou wilt not tarry and have a rouse with us. Ho! Fast-and-Pray, bring out the worthy fellow’s horse; he is not such as we be sent to look for, and—now I think of it—our time of watch is ended!”

A quick glance interchanged with his son-in-law, assured the general that the letter was

secured; so, slapping the messenger upon the back, he bade him mount and God go with him. And as he rode away, unconscious that his journey was now useless, the three companions hurried to Ardenne's house, where they might profit by their prize in safety.

A short half-hour's walk placed them before his door—so quickly, goaded to their utmost speed by anxious curiosity, did they retrace their steps. Lights were set in the library—the curtains closely drawn, the door locked—and then Ireton produced the packet. It was a small despatch, and fastened with a plain flaxen cord and ordinary seal, addressed to 'Master Ephraim Mackleworth'—evidently a feigned name—'at the Red Lion, Dover.' Within this was a small letter, simply directed to H.M.R.—bound with a skein of white floss silk, and fastened with the impression of a finely-cut antique upon green wax. Oliver caught it with an impatient gesture from the hand of Ireton, broke the seal, cast his eye

hastily upon it, and exclaiming, "Nay, it is not in cipher!" read thus aloud :

"Dearest and best Marie,

"I have received your kind and most consoling letter of July, from the tried friend who bore it. The wisdom of your counsels I acknowledge, and, so far as in *me* lies, will follow them. But trust me, girl, better and brighter days are yet in store for us. I do assure you, I am even now more King—more powerful and free—than ere I raised my standard; so that I doubt not, with a little patience, and a small share of *finesse*, all shall be yet as we would have it. I am now courted by all parties—English and Scottish—presbyterians, independents—parliament and army—all prostrate at my feet—all rivals for my favour, and balanced, too, so equally, that whom I join soever carries the day. In truth, chiefly do I incline toward the Scots; but for the present seem for my own purposes to favour more the army. In the end, whosoever bids the highest, has me. You disapprove, you tell

me, my 'promising so much to those two villains, Ireton and Cromwell.' Now, I beseech you, be not alarmed nor troubled, but leave *me* to manage, who am informed far better of all circumstances, than you by any means can be! And on this head rest altogether easy, for in due season I shall know how to deal with these rogues, *who for a silken garter shall be fitted with a hempen rope!* This by a mode that can by no chance fail. Wherefore, though briefly (as my space compels), I yet write plainly. If all things prosper with me, as I have now good cause to deem they will—for all the factions, themselves cozened, look on the others as outwitted—I shall once more embrace the well-beloved queen and mistress of my heart, greater and far more powerful than ever, ere many months shall pass, in our own palace of Whitehall.

“ Until the Lord, in his good time, shall bring which things to pass,

“ Your loving husband and idolater,

“ C. R.”

With a calm voice, though bitter in the extreme and scornful, Cromwell read out this document. Ireton's eyes flashed fire, and, as his father-in law ended, he violently dashed his hand upon the table—

“Whose dogs are we!” he cried in fierce and ringing tones, “that we should be thus scandalously dealt with? As the Lord liveth, he shall die the death!”—

“But three days since,” said Cromwell—“hypocrite that he is! base knave, and liar!—he proclaimed, through me, his full acceptance of the army's terms—his last words were, ‘and for myself henceforth I hold me bound by them!’ And I, fool that I was, *I* did rejoice and triumphed in my heart, that England should have peace!—And now—he will *hang* both of us! ay, HANG!—Can there be any trust in such a man?”—

“None!” answered Edgar, mournfully—“There can indeed be none!—It is long since I have even dreamed there could! He is unstable

as the sands of the sea-shore, and false—as fortune !”

“Alas!—alas! for England!” Oliver exclaimed in deep impressive tones—“If it be thy will, Mighty Lord, that this thy servant be a prey and victim to this man of Belial, truly I am prepared. But for this godly and regenerate land, for this oppressed and miserable people, in whose behalf, already many times, thou hast displayed the wonders of thy might—the miracles of thine invincible right hand—not for myself—not for myself, O Lord, poor sinner that I am, and leaky vessel, do I presume now to remonstrate—to strive earnestly—to wrestle, as did Jacob in the dark, against thy great decrees—but for this lovely isle—this precious England!”

“With Caiaphas—*I say!*” returned the fiery Ireton—“With Caiaphas! Jew though he was, unrighteous judge, and murderer of the Lord’s Anointed! ‘Ye know not’—’tis to you I say it, my friends and fellow-soldiers—‘nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for

the people, and that the whole nation perish not !' ’

“This bold speech, for that night, ended the debate. Cromwell was silent—though the remarkable and resolute compression of his own mouth, and the deep frown that furrowed his high forehead, and the determined gleam of his hard eye, showed that his silence was produced by anything rather than doubt or fear.

Ardenne, at this last and heaviest blow, was, for the moment, wholly overcome. He saw the certain peril, the imminent and overwhelming ruin, but he saw neither refuge, nor escape. He felt that, while Charles lived, England could never be at rest—but he did *not* feel that his death would give her that repose, which she desired, now more almost than liberty.

In gloom that evening they had met—in deeper gloom they parted—save Ireton alone, who seemed elate and almost joyous;—for, fraught with a sincere unselfish patriotism that would not have disgraced an ancient Roman—a

wild and daring theorist—a confident and bold believer in the perfectibility of man, and in the supreme excellence of democratic forms—he fancied that he now foresaw the advent of his dearest wishes—the overthrow of monarchy and aristocracy for ever—the birth of a sea-girt republic—the creation of a British state, unequalled in the annals of the world!—more wise and eloquent than the free Athens!—in morals more severe than Sparta!—in grace more elegant than Corinth!—in empire, arms, and glory, more magnificent than Rome!

CHAPTER IV.

I have advertised him by secret means,
That if, about this hour, he make this way,
Under the colour of his usual game,
He shall here find his friends with horse and men
To set him free from his captivity.

King Henry IV.

SADLY and wearily the year wore onward ; the golden days of summer were already passed, the leaves, which had so greenly flourished a few weeks before, grew sear like human hopes, and were whirled wildly from their hold by each succeeding blast. Autumn had waned already into winter, yet still the leaders of the army, after

their seizure of the fatal letter, which necessarily ruined the King's cause, remained inactive, as it seemed, at Windsor, but in truth "hushed in grim repose," and waiting the maturity of those events, which they foresaw distinctly and expected with a stern and vengeful pleasure.

Meantime the privates became every day more restless and ungovernable. Distrusting their own officers while they held daily intercourse with the King's friends, now that they had withdrawn themselves from all communication, they imagined not that the correspondence was indeed at an end, but that some scheme had been determined to the exclusion and betrayal of their interests, and raved accordingly in their religious and political assemblies with equal fury against the carnal-minded parliament and the grandees, as they now termed their own superior officers.

The regiment of Ardenne was perhaps the only one of the whole army, which had entirely resisted this contagion; for, having taken arms—

many from personal attachment to their young leader, whose neighbours or whose tenants a great portion of them were—many from a sense of political oppression—but none from any feeling of fanaticism or religious fury (the most part being of the episcopal persuasion)—they looked on unconcerned, while their companions were indulging in the loudest tumults, and reposed all their trust in the high talents and integrity of their commander.

Oftentimes since the memorable evening of the intercepted letter, Cromwell and Ardenne had debated on the next step to be taken, and on the future prospects of their country! And both had often grieved at their inability to shape out any course, by which they might hope confidently to eschew the breakers, which they could see directly in their track. Both clearly saw that the King's union with the presbyterians could but be the beginning of a worse tyranny, both in the church and state, than that which they had overthrown;—and both saw likewise

that with these, rather than with the army, he would assuredly at last make common cause.

Cromwell, in this dilemma, hinted rather than openly declared his own opinion, founded in part upon the evident determination of the army, that the King should be brought to trial, and if found guilty suffered to reap the harvest of perjury, dissimulation, and oppression. Yet, while maintaining both the policy and justice of the measure, he was still at a loss to say what plan should be adopted for the future government of England, thus to be left without a head.

Avowing himself favourable to a mixed form, composed as heretofore of three estates, with the executive department vested in one officer of ample powers though limited, he yet could point out none on whom the choice could fall with safety and propriety.

Sir Edgar, on the other hand, acknowledging the perfect justice, doubted the policy of the King's execution;—thinking that wilder anarchy would follow at the first, and ultimately

either the presbyterian influence, which they now chiefly feared, prevail — or one strong-handed military tyrant rise from the chaos of licentious freedom.

Ireton, in the mean time, the leader of a powerful faction, declared at all times his desire for a republic, founded upon a general franchise of the whole people; and Harrison, who represented a yet more fanatical and phrensied party, calling themselves fifth monarchists, looked forward to the near approach of the millennium, and arrogating to themselves an absolute perfection, claimed an equality of rights — of power — and of property — for all men.

Meantime all alike agreed on the expedience of awaiting the recurrence of some overt action on the part of Charles, or of the presbyterians; and for this they had not indeed long to tarry; for on the morning of the twelfth day of November, the gentlemen whose office was to wait upon his chamber, found that the King was not

there, and his bed had not been used that night. Three letters in his own handwriting lay upon the table—two to the parliament, one to the Speaker of each House, and the third to General Fairfax.

After the first excitement had subsided, it was discovered that Sir John Berkeley, Legg, and Ashburnham, were missing; and the hoof-marks of four horses were traced readily in the moist ground, close to the postern of the garden into which there was a private passage from the chamber of the King.

In none of the three letters was it stated, whither he had fled, but simply that he had found it needful to withdraw himself, in consequence, as he was well assured, of plots existing for his assassination; and that he should hold himself concealed, until some settlement was made for the well governance and quiet of the kingdom.

The news of his escape produced the greatest tribulation in the Houses. It was believed, and

generally dreaded, that the King was in hiding somewhere, within the city—that the presbyterian party and the royalists had privily united, and that a sudden rising would ensue, and massacre all opposed to it.

An act passed instantly prohibiting, on pain of death and confiscation, any from harbouring the King without conveying notice to the parliament. Expresses were sent off to every sea-port-town, laying a strict embargo on all vessels, and every person who had fought on the King's side in the late wars was banished from the city and any other place within a circuit of ten miles round London.

Meanwhile the hapless monarch, having ridden day and night toward the south-western coast, frustrated by the mismanagement, or, as some say, the treachery of Ashburnham, in his desire of taking ship from the New Forest, sought refuge for a space at Titchfield House, in Hampshire; and, finally, with an incomprehensible degree of folly, surrendered himself to

Hammond, a strict friend of Cromwell, governor of the Isle of Wight.

It was the second day after the flight of Charles, while yet the Commons were in much confusion and dismay, that Cromwell, rising in his place with such an air of satisfaction as led many to suppose that he was privy to the whole proceedings, announced that he had received letters from Colonel Hammond — a man so honest and devoted to the service of the parliament that they should not distrust him, nor imagine him incapable of standing against any method of corruption—to the effect that Charles, with all his company, was now held in all honour, but with due care to his safe-keeping in the strong hold of Carisbrook until the pleasure of the House should be known.

Quieted instantly by this assurance, the parliament proceeded to draw up and remit to Charles four acts—containing in effect a greater cession of his powers than any heretofore demanded—as the sole terms on which they would

treat with him now at all. These he at once refused, and was in consequence committed into closer custody, means being taken by the removal of his royalist attendants, and otherwise, to frustrate any attempts at a new flight.

At the same time the Scotch commissioners went down with the conditions he had at Hampton Court indignantly rejected, by which they should engage to invade England with sufficient force to establish him upon the throne; but on condition that the prince and queen should presently repair to Scotland—that the presbytery and church-directory should be at once enforced throughout all England, and that a large proportion of the northern counties should be ceded to the sister kingdom. And in that moment of despair, these crafty plotters prevailed with him to sign and ratify that secret treaty—a treaty as injurious as degrading to his English subjects, and far more rigorous, in restrictions on himself, than the much easier

terms which his unalterable hatred and contempt of parliaments had led him peremptorily to refuse.

On the fifteenth of the same month, a statement of the King's escape, his present secure situation, and the propositions tendered to him by the parliament, was sent down to the army; with a remonstrance ably penned by Fairfax, refuting the strong calumnies which had been cast against the principal commanders, and setting forth the motives of their conduct.

Armed with this potent document, Cromwell, as the most firm, and, at the same time, best beloved of all the officers, was elected to this perilous, but honourable duty; and, taking with him Ardenne's well-disciplined and trusty regiment, without delay or hesitation, he repaired to Ware—at that time the head-quarters of some five or six thousand soldiers at the least who, stimulated by their adjutators, and believing that the flight of Charles was precon-

certed and connived at by the *grandees* of the host, were in a state of turbulence, bordering closely upon actual mutiny.

It was about eleven of the clock on a bright frosty morning, that Cromwell with his small life-guard reached Ware. Causing his trumpets to sound through the streets, he summoned all the regiments to get themselves together orderly upon the green, to hear a proclamation from the lord-general; and ere this summons had been well delivered, they turned out, not indeed orderly, or in good discipline, but in loud and tumultuous disarray. They were all under arms, although expressly contrary to orders; two regiments especially of musketeers who had their caps adorned with ribands inscribed, as a motto of insubordination, with the words, 'For the people's freedom, and the soldier's right,' were observed to be in full field order, with their bandoleers slung round them, and the matches of the arquebuses lighted.

Among these, as Cromwell advanced slowly

toward them, accompanied by Ardenne only, and followed at a little distance by a dismounted captain's guard, with drawn swords, but no fire-arms—the remainder of the regiment halting in line a little further in the rear—a wild disorganizing shout arose, “Equality of rights! Equality of rights! No King! no coalition! Down with the false grandees!”

But when with his long sturdy strides, and his stern features perfectly calm, but resolute and hard, as if they had been cast in iron, he had closed with them, the shouts ceased suddenly. Slowly he walked along their front looking each private full and firmly in the eye; and few were there who dared to meet with an unblenching brow his concentrated glare of anger and defiance. Halting at length directly opposite to the two regiments of musketeers, he drew out the proclamation.

“I have a paper here,” he said, “to read to ye, from the lord-general. Not to mutineers, however, but to soldiers, was I sent! Extinguish

instantly," he added in a tone somewhat louder, yet so severe and passionless that one battalion obeyed on the moment, "those matches!—How dare ye muster thus?—Out of your caps with those unsoldierly and villain mottoes—out with them! Nay! but ye shall trampel them beneath your feet!"

And awed by his immovable determination the same battalion once again complied; while the great bulk of that tumultuous assembly looked on in abashed wonder, and ordering as rapidly as possible, their unmilitary and ill-dressed front, assumed an air of perfect discipline and a right soldierly demeanour.

Not so the second regiment—for, brandishing their arms aloft, they raised a deep and scornful murmur, increasing gradually into a shout of absolute defiance. Nay, some brought down their arquebuses to the ready movement, and even cocked them; but not one man removed the motto of rebellion.

It was a moment of anxiety, if not of real

peril; for, though the great mass of the men were quiet, they yet wore an air of sullen, and almost savage discontent, which clearly showed their temper, and made it but too probable that any overt action of one troop, even, would kindle the whole body into a sudden blaze of fury.

“Heard ye not?” Oliver proceeded, in a voice pitched several notes below his usual key, but so full of intense resolve, of quiet but indomitable spirit, that it thrilled to the hearts of all who heard it, even of those who still resisted. —“Or do ye *dare* to disobey me? You, sir,” he continued, stepping close up the ranks, which now began to waver somewhat, and confronting a gigantic lance-pesade. “Ground your arms!” and the man overawed by his demeanour, slowly and sulkily obeyed.

“Shame! shame!” cried several voices from the rear—“thou braggart, that wouldst do so much, to shrink at the first word!”—

“Silence there in the ranks!” Oliver cried

fiercely, and at his word again the murmurs ceased ; but brief and trivial as they were, those murmurs had yet roused anew a spirit of resistance in the bosom of the half-terrified ring-leader. Silent he stood indeed, but his mouth worked convulsively, a red flush overspread his countenance, and his hand quivered, as it grasped the barrel of his musket.

“Soh ! thou art then a soldier,” continued Cromwell, once more confronting the delinquent. “Now then pull forth that rascal riband from thy cap !—cast it, I say, into the dust, and set thy foot upon it !”

The man spoke not, but bit his lip until the blood spirted forth ; moving, however, no limb or muscle of his body, whether to execute or to resist his officer’s command.

“Do as I bid thee, dog !”—and with a flash of furious and ungovernable ire lighting up every feature of his face, Cromwell stamped his heel on the turf as though he was in the act of trampling down a living foeman.

“No dog of thine at least,” answered the fellow. “Though, if thou hadst thy will, all Englishmen would be as slaves and dogs beneath thee.”

“Ha!—this to me!”—and seizing the gigantic trooper by the throat, he shook him to and fro as though he were an infant, and cast him, almost as it seemed without an effort, to the earth behind him. “Seize him, guards! Ho! Ye answer for him with your lives—He is a ringleader—and, as the Lord of Earth and Heaven liveth, verily he shall die the death!”

And as he spoke his handful of assistants dragged off the prisoner, struggling and shouting for a rescue, and placed him in security among their mounted comrades. But quickly as they did his bidding, yet quicker was the movement of the captive’s right-hand man to succour or avenge him; who at the very point of time when Cromwell seized the lance-pesade, levelled his arquebuse right at his head, within six feet.

Ardenne dashed forward sword in hand, followed by six or eight of his most active men, while his lieutenant shouted to the horsemen in the rear to charge! Yet, had their aid been needed, the career of Oliver had been concluded on that day in a poor paltry riot—but it was not needed! For in the very act of capturing the one, that keen-eyed and quick-witted leader observed the motion of the other mutineer! Before the heavy din, with which the armour of the first clanged as he fell was ended, his broadsword gleamed aloft in the bright sunshine—down, it came whistling through the air—down, like a flash of lightning, and, with his skull cleft through his headpiece to the chin, the second plunged head foremost, a dead man ere he touched the earth, his arquebuse discharged, though harmlessly, by the convulsed and quivering fingers after the life had left the body.

Cromwell paused not for a second's space to suffer them to rally or recover from the consternation, which had fallen on them with all the

chilling influence of a panic terror, but, "Charge!" he shouted in a voice of thunder—"Charge the rebellious dogs! Kill! kill! spare none who dare resist!"—

With the word Ardenne rushed in, and faithfully his gallant men requited the trust placed in their allegiance. Firmly as though they had outnumbered their opponents, that little handful dashed into the breach which Cromwell's energy had made already in the rebellious ranks; and at a full trot, with their rapiers levelled to the charge, up swept the horsemen. But the fall of their ringleaders, and the undaunted bearing of their officers, were too much for their nerves; and, ere the guard was on them, their musket-butts rang heavily as they were grounded simultaneously, and the obnoxious badges, torn with quick hands from every headpiece, fluttered on all sides in the air, or strewed the turf before their feet.

"Halt! Ho! Halt, Colonel Ardenne!" shouted Oliver, perceiving instantly and profiting by his

advantage. But scarcely was his second cry in time; for, though they curbed their chargers as the word reached their ears, the cavalry stopped not until their horses' chests were close upon the wavering ranks, and their long rapiers waving o'er their heads.

“Draw off your horse, Lieutenant Winthrop,” he continued, “advance two files of infantry, arrest each tenth man of the lance-pesades through this battalion—verily they shall learn, and that right speedily, what be the fruits of mutiny. Officers to the front—call a drum-head court-martial!”

Not a man stirred, and not a weapon was advanced, as one by one the decimated prisoners were arrested. Before five minutes had passed over, ten or a dozen officers had assembled to perform the saddest and most painful duty that ever falls even to a soldier's lot. The crime had been too flagrant—the proof too evident—the peril too immediate to admit of lenity; and without one dissenting voice the fatal sentence was

pronounced on all the wretched criminals, some five or six in number, who, now disarmed and bound, stood waiting the award in speechless agony.

“A file for execution!” Oliver exclaimed, in his most harsh and grating tones, “draw out a file for execution from that same regiment! Lead forth that fellow, whom I seized myself—he was the very foremost of them all, and may not hope for mercy! This grace will I accord the rest—they shall cast lots among them; but one must expiate his sins before his country and his God, ere the world be ten minutes older; and may the Lord have mercy on their souls! The rest will I refer unto the parliament.”

The lots were speedily prepared, and with an air of the most agonizing terror and anxiety, hope and fear blended into a fierce excitement, which it was truly awful even to look upon, the miserable wretches plunged their hands into the helmet, which contained the scraps of paper on which their mortal existence depended. It was a mo-

ment of intense and shuddering pain, even to those who in comparative indifference were mere spectators of the scene; what must it then have been to those, of whom one certainly was destined to be sent, from the fair face of the bright laughing earth, unhouſelled and unshriven, into the presence of his Maker, with scarce a moment even to prepare the spirit for endurance of the fearful shock which should disjoin it from the body.

The lottery of death was ended!—The soldier whose hard fate had been thus chance-decided, was a small, delicate, pale-looking man—of a weak frame, and a countenance effeminate, and betokening any thing save energy of mind or resolution. Yet was this frail and nerveless being perfectly cool and self-collected; while his companion—taken in the very fact—limbed like a Hercules, with high bold features and a brilliant eye—a man who would have ridden fearlessly, although alone, upon a stand of levelled pikes, or rushed upon a cannon's mouth just as the linstock was applied—shook like an aspen-leaf through all

his powerful frame—his brow, his cheek, his lip grew white as ashes—his eye was dim and senseless—he sobbed, he wept aloud, struggling violently with the troopers who conducted him to his last stand on earth, and yelling frantically for mercy.

With an air perfectly composed and fearless, the other threw aside his cassock and his vest, unbound the kerchief from his neck, giving it as a token to a favorite fellow-soldier, and having, in a clear unflinching voice, confessed the justness of his sentence, and exhorted his companions to take warning from his fate, he bowed respectfully to those who had condemned him, and stepped as lightly to the place of execution as though it were his choice to die.

There they stood, side by side—full of strong health and intellect, and life, and passion, in one short moment to be mere clods of soulless and unconscious clay—and there with their death-weapons levelled, paler themselves and far more agitated than even those on whom they were to

do the work of blood, the firing party chosen from the ranks of their own regiment!—composed perhaps of messmates, of familiar friends, of proved associates in many a scene of peril and of glory—perhaps of comrades, plotters,—instigators to the very crime which *they* were destined to avenge, *their friends* to expiate, their partners without doubt in this last fatal deed of guilt, and now their executioners!

The regiments were drawn up, forming three sides of a great hollow square, the criminals upon the fourth, the executioners already facing them at scarce ten paces distant. There was not a voice—a sigh—a movement in that mighty concourse; not a weapon clashed, not a foot rustled on the earth. But the sun shone in glorious beauty upon the burnished pike-heads and the waving standards; and the whole earth looked gay and smiling—more gay, more smiling, as it seemed to the poor criminals, than ever it had been before.

A short extemporaneous prayer was uttered

by the captain of their own battalion—a sad and doleful hymn was chanted by the now penitent and terrified assemblage, with a sound inexpressibly and strangely doleful. The fatal sign was given!—a bright flash, and a sharp report as of a single piece!—and when the smoke cleared off, there lay the bodies on the sod, lifeless and motionless, their sins and sorrows thus simultaneously and suddenly concluded.

There was no need of more severity; and the quick eye of Cromwell saw it. With the yet warm and palpitating bodies in full view, he read aloud the general's message, the soldiery listening to every word with a respectful and sincere attention, that denoted all the force of the example they had witnessed. As he concluded, every regiment presented and then grounded arms; the adjutators humbly advanced from the crest-fallen ranks, and with a deferential air expressed their complete satisfaction at the lord-general's exposition, their sense of their own past misconduct, and their gratitude to Cromwell

for the mercy he had shown them in taking but two lives where all so righteously were forfeit.

After a few more words of reprimand, blended with commendations of their former services and exhortations never to offend in the like sort hereafter, Oliver, whose point was amply gained, dismissed the soldiers; and the bands striking up in the impressive notes of a dead march, with colours trailed and arms reversed, they filed off to their several quarters, well convinced now that howsoever their commanders might connive at disobedience to the parliament, they would in no sort tolerate or wink at the most trivial mutiny against their own authority.

In fact, by his undaunted resolution in suppressing, and his inflexible severity in punishing the present disaffection, joined to the partial lenity he had extended to his prisoners, Cromwell had more than regained all that he had temporarily lost in the opinions of the army. Never, perhaps, at any previous time had he stood higher in power, or possessed more fully

the respect and admiration, not unmixed with wholesome fear, of those whom he commanded, than at the present moment.

The next night, in the most magnificent of England's palaces, in the great hall of Windsor Castle, the officers of that victorious army, which had not merely conquered but annihilated the high faction of the cavaliers, defeated the intrigues of the Scotch presbyterians, seen through and cut asunder, if they had not disentangled, the Gordian knot of parliamentary chicane, assembled in most solemn but most secret council. These, actuated by a single spirit, and speaking, as it were, all with one common voice—which they asserted and perhaps believed, such is the force of the heart's self-deception, to be a direct proof that HE whom they had sought so long in prayer, earnestly dealing with Him, that He should let that cup pass from them, had put the counsel by immediate inspiration into their hearts—those stern religionists determined that as a traitor, murderer, and tyrant, Charles Stuart

should be arraigned, and brought to answer for his deeds before the high court of the nation in parliament assembled.

It was remarked even then, and deeply pondered on in after-days, as something singular and strange, by Ardenne (who was not present at the council, having remained in London on his return from Ware, but who was instantly apprized of the proceedings), that neither before that assemblage, nor publicly at any other time, did Oliver urge on or advocate with his accustomed fervour, the measure which, as Sir Edgar knew full well, he had long since determined on within his secret heart. It seemed as if he did not choose himself to stir at all in that which had been mooted by the common soldiery in the first instance, and advanced by insubordination verging on open mutiny. Or perhaps seeing that, without his personal co-operation in the matter, all things were tending to the result which he believed the best, he was content to lend them the mere negative support afforded by

his presence at deliberations which he did not oppose or hinder; wisely reserving his great energies for the accomplishment of those great ends which could not be wrought to maturity without them; and holding himself, like the gods of the Grecian drama, aloof from matters which afforded no due scope for his unconquerable powers, from plots which could as well be disentangled and wound smoothly out by those who had, perhaps, imbibed his own opinions, and were unconsciously, while fancying themselves free and untrammelled agents, the mere tools and instruments of his superior intellect.

CHAPTER V.

Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
We all stand up against the spirit of Cæsar,
And in the spirit of man there is no blood :
Oh ! that we then could come by Cæsar's spirit,
And not dismember Cæsar ! But, alas !
Cæsar must bleed for it. And, gentle friends,
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully.
Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds.

Julius Cæsar.

THE indignation of the parliament, who after the retreat of the eleven impeached members had more and more come into the strong measures of the army, was fearfully inflamed by the

King's absolute refusal of the Four Acts; so much so, that a bill was passed forbidding all addresses for the future to Charles Stuart, and all renewal of negotiations with him for a settlement, though not till after two or three debates in which the military leaders, and above all the lieutenant-general, took active part. The last, indeed, on one occasion, ended a long and strenuous harangue by raising his voice to its highest pitch with these emphatic words:—
“Teach not the army—by neglecting your own safety and that of the kingdom, by which theirs too is involved—to imagine themselves betrayed, and their interests abandoned to the rage of an irreconcilable enemy whom for your sake they have dared to provoke. Beware,”—and as he spoke he laid his hand upon his rapier's hilt,—
“beware lest their despair cause them to seek safety by some other means than by adhering to you, who know not to consult for your own safety.”

And now, although the peril from the army's

insubordination had subsided, not a day passed without some riotous commotion indicative of the divided state of public feeling. Continual tumults between the London mob, now become once more loyal to the King, and the detachments of the veterans quartered in the metropolis, were not suppressed without some bloodshed; and in the early spring were followed by a general movement of the royalists throughout the kingdom, which, had it been planned with as much of concert and of wisdom as it was executed with high bravery and spirit, would have caused much perplexity to those in power. As it was, however, so ill-timed and unpremeditated were the risings of the cavaliers, that they were easily subdued in detail, although their numbers if united would have been truly formidable, and although they fought as individual bodies with all the resolution of despair, and in no case were vanquished without loss and difficulty to the independent army. The men of Kent were beaten, after a hard fought and well-

disputed battle at Maidstone, by the lord-general in person ; and the royalists of Wales, under the gallant Colonel Poyer, were defeated, and Pembroke into which they had retired taken by Cromwell after a six-weeks' siege.

This latter exploit over, that indefatigable leader hurried northward with all his wonted energy of movement ; came on the Scottish army, now united with the northern cavaliers of Langdale, at Preston on the Ribble ; and, though with forces vastly inferior, hesitated not to give them battle. Having defeated them so utterly that their army was in truth wholly disorganized and scattered, he pursued them closely into Scotland, where he compelled the citizens of Edinburgh, deeply averse and hostile to his party, to put down the royalists, and to replace the power of the state in Argyle's hands, who had now joined the independent faction with his whole heart and spirit.

While there, the Earl of Leven and Sir David Lesley so totally disclaimed the covenant as to

cannonade the royalist troops from the castle; and to agree with Oliver, at a convention held in my Lady Home's house in the Canongate, that there was a necessity, now fully obvious, for taking the King's life.

Meanwhile Lord Goring, who had advanced to Blackheath, hoping that by his presence London would be encouraged into action, being checked by Fairfax, shut himself up in Colchester; but after a long and vigorous defence was forced, when all was over, to surrender at discretion; and had the further misery of seeing two of his bravest officers, Sir George Lisle and Sir Charles Lucas, shot by the conquerors as rebels:—a rigorous and cruel exercise of power for which the general did not escape much obloquy, although it was alleged in his defence, and probably with truth, that he was instigated to such unwonted harshness solely by the suggestions of the fierce and unrelenting Ireton.

This absolute suppression of the King's friends by land was poorly compensated by the defection

of the navy, Rainsborough, its commander for the parliament, having been set on shore by his rebellious crews, who bore away for Holland, and casting anchor at the Brill, after a short time took on board the Prince of Wales, accompanied by Rupert, as their admiral; not in compliance with the wishes of the queen, who would have lavished that high dignity on her unworthy paramour Lord Jermyn.

About the same time, the young Duke of York, afterwards James II., by the assistance and the skill of Colonel Bamfield, made good his flight from London, and reached the Netherlands in safety. And now beyond all doubt was the atrocious infidelity and wickedness of Henrietta proved, who—although the revolted fleet had full and undisputed mastery of the Channel, and might with ease and certainty have forcibly delivered Charles from the hard durance in which he was now held, after an unsuccessful effort to break forth, at Carisbrook—prevailed upon the Prince of Wales to waste his time in

frivolous and useless enterprises up the Thames and on the coasts, until the parliament had fitted out another fleet under the Earl of Warwick! when, after what a seaman would term lubberly manœuvring he sailed toward Holland, closely pursued by Warwick's navy, and never performed any action serviceable to his unhappy father's cause, or creditable to his own fame.

During the progress of the futile struggle, which had terminated in rendering obvious to all the hopelessness of any effort at armed interposition for the King, the parliament, while Cromwell was in Scotland, had held fresh negotiations at Newport, in the Isle of Wight, with Charles, who to the last, despite the urgent prayers both of his friends and the more moderate of his opponents, refused compliance with the conditions offered, though he must now have apprehended this to be the only means by which he could retain possession of his crown.

The temper of the Commons, after receiving tidings of the King's unconquered obstinacy,

evinced by the distaste of the majority toward an angry speech of Vane, so much alarmed the leaders of the army that, finding Hammond more disposed toward the parliament than they had hoped, they caused by stratagem the custody of the King's person to be transferred to Colonel Ewre, a man entirely in their interests, and caused him to be moved at once to the strong solitary fortress of Hurst Castle, on the coast of Hampshire. A letter from the Commons to the general, demanding instant restitution of the royal person to his former guardian and abode, was answered by a demand for payment of arrears due to the army, and after a few days by the march of the most zealous and enthusiastic regiments to London; the general taking up his quarters at Whitehall, and other officers with their detachments at Durham House, the King's Mews, Covent Garden, Westminster, and St. James's Palace.

Still undeterred by this bold step the presbyterian party, after a violent debate, carried it by a majority of thirty-six against the independents

and the army faction, that “the King’s answer was a ground for the Houses to proceed for the settlement of the peace of the kingdom:”—a resolution which, had it been carried into force, would have effectually undone all that had been accomplished by the long and bloody strife which had preceded it, and left the King as powerful for good or evil as he had been at its commencement, provided he should, as his true policy would dictate, hold to the friendship of the parliament.

That afternoon a large committee of the Commons waited upon the general at his lodgings of Whitehall, but met from him only a supercilious and cold welcome, and no satisfaction. The following morning when the members went to take their seats, a guard of musketeers was at the door headed by Colonel Pride and the Lord Grey of Groby, who held a list of those who should not be permitted to go in to the debate; and these were held three days in custody in different inns of court, while the remain-

der of the House (called afterward by royalists "the Rump") voted that the King's answer to the propositions was not satisfactory.

Sir Edgar Ardenne, in the earlier part of the late tumults, had served with Fairfax, and, after the surrender of Colchester, had resigned his commission, disgusted by the fate of Lisle and Lucas, and, in the mean time, had been re-elected to the House, the presbyterians considering his departure from the army as an earnest of his accession to their party; while the independents, wiser in this than their antagonists, foresaw that, howsoever he might disapprove their violence, he would at the least never join their enemies. On this account then he was suffered by the soldiers to assume his seat, his name not being on the list of those excluded. The first step which he took, was to move instantly for an inquiry into the causes of the present outrage, and though, when overruled in this by a majority of those remaining in the House, he coincided with the opinion that the King's an-

swer was unsatisfactory, he refused peremptorily to give any vote on the occasion. Then, after several vain attempts to find out the devisers of the violence, Fairfax denying any knowledge of it, and the guards merely stating that they had their orders, he at the first resolved to vacate his seat once again; but after much reflection he held it the manlier and more upright course still to continue in the House, opposing to the best of his abilities all inroads on the liberties of Englishmen in their most delicate and dearest point, the privilege of parliament.

Just at this juncture,—indeed upon the very evening of the day which had been signalized by the exclusion of the presbyterian members—Cromwell returned from Scotland and took up his abode in the King's palace at Whitehall. To him indeed Ardenne's suspicions had first pointed as the real mover of this outrageous measure; yet on his charging it directly to him, he answered with so much of ready frankness, that "he had not been acquainted with the design, yet

since it was done, he was glad of it, and would endeavour to sustain it," and asked as warmly for his presence and advice at a council to be held that evening in the house of Ludlow, that he succeeded almost in convincing him that his suspicions were unfounded.

An early hour of the evening found Sir Edgar at the place appointed, where he was shown into a large well-lighted chamber, filled with about two score of gentlemen ; for the most part the leaders of the army, among whom at the first glance he recognised Ireton, Harrison, and Lilburne, afterwards nicknamed Trouble-world, with Hacker, Hutchinson resembling a cavalier in his rich dress and flowing hair, and some of the most eminent civilians, Sir Harry Vane the younger, and some few of the presbyterian party ; besides the master of the house, and Cromwell, who sat aloof, as it would seem, engrossed in weighty meditation : Fairfax was not among them.

When Edgar entered, Harrison was declaiming with much vehemence, as well of gesture as of

speech, and not without a species of wild eloquence, against all forms of monarchy, which he asserted neither to be “good in itself, nor yet good for the people;” quoting the whole eighth chapter of the book of Samuel, and arguing therefrom “that to be governed by a king was in itself displeasing to the King and Monarch of the universe, and absolutely sinful—for that the Lord himself bade Samuel yet solemnly protest unto them, and show the manner of the king that should reign over them, and afterward that he foretold to them ‘that ye shall cry out in that day because of the king ye have chosen you, and the Lord shall not hear you in that day.’ Wherefore,” he added, “let us put away from us this sin and this abomination—let us wash from our hands the stain of this iniquity—yea! let us cleanse ourselves with myrrh, with aloes, and with hyssop, ay, and with blood—even the blood of sacrifices!—from this offence which stinketh in the nostrils of Jehovah! and let this man—the firebrand of civil conflagration—the drawer of the slaughtering sword

against his people—the slayer of our brethren and our sons—the spoiler of our vineyards and our oliveyards—this faithless gentleman and perjured prince—this tyrant, traitor, murderer, Charles Stuart—let him be driven out even as the scape-goat sent into the wilderness to bear away the sins and sufferings of the people—let him be cut off utterly, and cast upon the dung-hill, and let the dogs lick *his* blood, as they licked that of Ahab, when the Lord smote by the arrow of the Syrian, smote him at Ramoth Gilead that he died—and let his name be never heard in Israel thenceforth evermore!—So let it be with him, and let the people cry Amen!”

To Harrison succeeded Ireton, and Ludlow after him, both urging the expediency of the King's death, no less strongly than its justice—descanting loudly on the faithlessness which he had shown in all his previous dealings—“his often protestations and engagements in the name of a king and a gentleman,” which he had so often violated—and the small probability that any new bond

or restraint of conscience should now be found to fetter one, whom neither his own coronation oath, nor the laws which he had sworn to honour, uphold, and obey, could hinder from endeavouring to subvert his country's constitution and build an autocratic throne upon the ruin of his people's freedom.

When these had finished speaking Sir Edgar Ardenne calmly but impressively addressed them, beseeching them to ponder deeply and pause long ere they should take a step irrecoverable, and if it should prove evil, irretrievable and ruinous. Admitting, as fully as the warmest advocates for the King's death, his guilt in aiming at supreme unconstitutional dominion—his guilt in plunging the whole population intrusted to his care—even as children to a father's charge—into the misery of civil slaughter, merely to gratify his own ambition—his guilt in violating every covenant and compact he had made ;—owning the utter hopelessness of any effort to re-establish peace while he should be within the realm, in how close custody

soever—the folly of imagining that England's liberties could be in safety while he should hold the reigns of government, how limited soever in his sway,—declaring that he believed him in all justice to be guilty even unto death:—“ I yet conjure you,” he exclaimed, “ to pause before you shed his blood. If ye depose him from the throne, and banish him the realm, ye will gain all advantage that his death could give you, and more also ! ye will disarm the tongues of those who would cry out against his execution as against a sacrilegious and accursed parricide, and fill the very mouths that would be open to revile you, with praises of your clemency and grace ; ye will deprive him wholly of the means to do you evil ; and ye will have this further safeguard, that, while he lives, no other can lay claim to England's crown : whereas, once dead, his son will instantly succeed to all his father's rights, and more than all his father's influence on the minds of men maddened with loyal sorrow and a thirst for vengeance. It was a wise and politic saw of the old Romans

‘to spare the subject, and subdue the proud!’ To slay Charles Stuart, is but to elevate a bad king to an honoured martyr!—to depose and banish him, is to degrade him from a suffering prince into a scorned and abject beggar!—Men will compassionate, and honour, ay! and bleed for royalty in chains, when they but jeer and scoff at royalty in tatters! Banish this man, and he may wander forth from court to court of Europe; he may be treated with mock deference, may be styled king and brother, and pensioned with the crumbs that fall from royal tables. But ’twill be hollow all and insincere! Scorned and despised he will drag out a life, held by your sufferance, weary and painful to himself, and innocent to you even of momentary cause for apprehension! Slay him, and ye will buckle harness on the back of each legitimate hereditary prince of Christendom against you!—ye will concentrate and re-nerve the partisans of royalty now scattered, hopeless, and undone!—ye will enkindle a consuming flame, which, though for a brief space it

may smoulder or burn dimly, shall yet wax hourly more broad, and bright, and high, till it shall roar in triumph over the liberties of England, shrivelled again, and blasted perchance never to revive!"

His views shrewd and far-sighted as they were, and couched in language bold and perspicuous produced a great effect on the more moderate of either party, and he was followed by several of the presbyterians on the same side, and even by one or two of the milder officers. But the more zealous held to their opinions and urged them with all their wonted force and ingenuity, and the debate waxed warm, a strong majority, however, leaning evidently toward the death of Charles and the abolition of all royal power in Great Britain.

It was moreover brought into debate and discussed very earnestly, by what means—if it should be decided that Charles Stuart must die—his death should be effected?—some hesitating not to advocate his private taking off by

poison or the dagger, so to avoid the scandal and the odium of his public execution—to whom the honest but fanatical and visionary Harrison replied in words of fire, repudiating the idea of such foul and midnight murder, and declaring that, as their cause was just, so should their vengeance be both bold and open!—that as his crimes were evident, so should their punishment be manifest and in the face of day!

“What!” he exclaimed with real eloquence, “shall we, the workers of the grandest revolution earth ever has beheld—the conscience-armed deliverers of England—the champions of a nation’s freedom—the Christian warriors of an all-seeing God—shall we take off our foe by ratsbane in the dark, or slay him with a hireling knife, for a mean paltry dread of what the world shall say?—Not so! not so; but we will point the world’s voice by our actions, fetter its opinion by our boldness! Let Charles—I say—let Charles THE KING be brought to trial in the presence of his peers—THE PEOPLE! There

if he be found guilty, let him be led to execution in the world's eye and the sun's! Let him be slain as a deliberate and solemn sacrifice—offered as a high victim at the shrines of freedom and of God! with honour and respect to the great station he has held, but with implacable and stern resentment toward the crimes by which he has defiled it. As he hath done to others so let us do to him, not as vile stabbers and assassins, but as elected judges, acting for men below, and answerable to the Lord on high! Let *him* henceforth be an example unto those who would enslave their fellows—let England be a precept to all nations, that when oppressed they shall arise in the unconquerable strength of purity and honesty and truth!—that they shall battle boldly, and unto success!—that they shall judge impartially!—and execute inflexibly the high decrees of justice and of vengeance!”

Throughout this stirring scene, to Edgar's great astonishment, Cromwell took no share in the argument, nor did even seem to pay the grave

attention which the subject merited to the opinions of the speakers. Much of the time he was engaged in whispering, and even jesting, with those who sat beside him, and once or twice indulged in those rude ebullitions of practical humour which had made him such a favourite in the camp, but which were most unsuitable and unbecoming in a grave and sorrowful debate, involving, it might be, the life and death of thousands, the fate of a most ancient line of kings, the future government of a great and glorious empire. Not a little astonished and disgusted at this conduct, Sir Edgar watched him closely to detect, if possible, the causes of his mood and the internal workings of his mind. But after a long survey, being still in doubt whether he had brought to the council a mind predetermined and unalterably fixed, or whether he had put on levity of manner to conceal irresolution and a perturbed spirit, he called openly on Cromwell to give his opinion.

“ Verily,” answered he, “ verily I am yet un-

resolved. Have at thee, Ludlow!" he continued springing to his feet with a loud boisterous laugh, and hurling at the head of the republican a cushion of the sofa, on which he was sitting, with such violence as almost to overturn him, upsetting at the same time several candles, and throwing the whole council into confusion, under cover of which he ran out of the room, and was already halfway down the stairs, when Ludlow, who had pursued him, struck him between the shoulders with the same missile, and drove him head-foremost down the flight and through the door, which had been opened by a servant in expectation of his exit.

Thus ended the discussion and the council for that evening; but within a week the House of Commons appointed a committee "to prepare a charge of high treason against the King, which should contain the several crimes and misdemeanors of his reign; which being made they would consider the best way and manner of proceeding that he might be brought to justice."

About the same time some idle intercessions at the request of the prince were made in the behalf of Charles by the States-general of Holland, and a letter yet more idle sent by the queen to be delivered to the parliament.

In a short time the charge of the committee was prepared, and approved by the Commons. The House of Lords, indeed, rejected it; and instantly adjourning for a week, on their return found their doors locked by orders of the Lower House, and being thus excluded sat no more for many years.

Then a high court of justice was appointed of the most celebrated and influential men, civil and military of the realm. Bradshaw, a lawyer of great talent and inflexible boldness, was named Lord President, invested with much state and having lodgings suitable to his high office assigned to him at Westminster. The royal prisoner was brought up from Hurst to Windsor under a powerful guard of Harrison's command, and thence to his own palace at St. James's

where he was held in rigorous custody, while every preparation was made for the accomplishment of that great tragedy, with the report of which "Europe was soon to ring from side to side."

CHAPTER VI.

Mal. If such a one be fit to govern, speak ;

* * * * *

Mac. Fit to govern !

No not to live.—O nation miserable !

Macbeth.

THE day at length arrived, big with the fate of England and her King—the 20th of January, memorable thenceforth through every age for the most solemn and sublimely daring measure recorded in the annals of the world.

At an extremely early hour the members of the high court of justice, which had been constituted with the utmost labour by the military council that swayed the helm of state, so as to be

a fair representation of all ranks and classes of society, assembled in the painted chamber. All the chief members of the independent party in the Commons—Lord Fairfax, Cromwell, Skippon, Ireton, as the four generals, with all the colonels of the army—the two chief justices and the chief baron—six peers—five aldermen of London—several from the most leading barristers—and many baronets and country-gentlemen of note, had been at the first summoned to the discharge of this unprecedented trust. But when the House of Lords refused its sanction to the ordinance for bringing of the King to justice, the peers and judges were omitted.

Sir Harry Vane, Algernon Sidney, St John, and some other stanch republicans who, although friendly to the King's deposition, were not consenting to his death, refused to sit as members of the court, and many more either from fear or conscience failed answering to their names.

While the commissioners were here assembled, Ardenne among the rest, news was brought to them on a sudden that his majesty had landed at

Sir Robert Cotton's stairs, on this announcement Cromwell, who had been previously conversing with sundry of his intimates among the judges, with the same air of jocularitv which had so strongly marked his conduct during the earlier consultation, rose suddenly from the place where he had been sitting and moved with rapid but equal steps towards the window. The keen eye of Sir Edgar followed him, and to his no small wonder he perceived that the hands, which the daring chieftain laid upon the wainscot to support him as he leaned his body forward to look upon the royal captive, quivered so violently as almost to communicate a tremour to his frame. And when he turned away after a long and anxious gaze upon the destined victim, although his eye was steady and unblenching, and his mouth firmly compressed and calm, his whole face, usually so rubicund and sanguine in its colouring, was ghastly pale, and his lips white as ashes.

Marvelling greatly at this change in one so stern and inaccessible to ordinary feelings; re-

membering too the widely different glance with which, at a more early period of his great career, the eye of Cromwell had completely quelled the proud man at whose aspect he now faltered; and wishing to investigate the state of mind which caused so strange a revelation of contending passions,—Sir Edgar was just stepping forward to address him, when the doors were thrown wide open and the judges summoned to the court.

Westminster Hall, that most sublime and ancient specimen of architecture, brought to a perfection which modern art has vainly sought to imitate, by those whom in our overweening vanity we children of a later day presume to style barbarians, had been prepared, with singular attention to display, for this most dread solemnity. Benches, row above row, covered with crimson velvet, for the commissioners filled all the upper end; Bradshaw, the learned and undaunted president, was placed in the centre of the front rank on a splendid chair, attired in rich dark-coloured robes, and supported on the right hand and the left by his

assessors Say and Lisle, with a long table similarly decked before them. The galleries were crowded almost to suffocation by spectators pale with excitement and anxiety, while the whole body of the building was filled by an enormous multitude upon the right, and by a regiment of musketeers upon the left, in caps of steel and polished corslets, with their pieces loaded and their ready matches lighted, a narrow passage being marked out with silken cords between the soldiers and populace, affording a free passage from the doorway to the bar.

The judges entered in the midst of a silence so stern and deep that the slight rustling of their mantles and their feet on the thick carpets, which were strewn within the bar, was clearly audible. Solemn, severe, and sad they took their seats — each man of them, as it appeared, almost oppressed by the intense feeling of the vast responsibility which had been laid upon him, and each determined to acquit himself as became one called

to act, as it were, before the real and imbodied presence of his country and his God.

As Ardenne looked around him, he felt the blood thrill painfully in every pore of his own frame; he saw that the same process was at work in all around him. Never had he beheld so pale a concourse;—yet amid all that colourless and ashy pallor, there was no sign of trepidation or dismay; it was the outward aspect of a mind within so rigidly and painfully resolved that it had gathered all the blood towards its citadel the heart; not the weak failing of the flesh through doubt or terror.

Scarce had their seats been taken, ere the doors of that great hall were opened, and a sedan-chair, preceded and surrounded by a guard of carbineers, was carried to the bar, when a large chair of velvet was set forth for the King's accommodation.

There was a pause of intense interest as the prisoner stepped out. It seemed as if the heart

of each man in that huge apartment had ceased from its pulsations:—not a hand moved, not a breath was drawn. It was, however, but for a moment; for the King instantly came forth, dressed in his usual garb of sable silk, decked only by the star and garter, and wearing on his head his high-crowned hat, which he did not remove.

After a stern and haughty look of mingled pride and sadness on the assembled court, he calmly took the seat prepared for his reception. Nor did he then by any glance or sign of courtesy acknowledge, or show any reverence to the court; but after sitting still for a few minutes' space, arose again and, having turned completely round with his back toward the judges, gazed steadfastly down the long area of the hall, with the same severe aspect as before, until the crier of the court began to read the ordinance of parliament commanding his arraignment, in a sharp ringing voice, that filled the whole apartment with its distinct and high-pitched tones. Then he again sat down

with his eyes fixed immovably on the commanding and undaunted features of the president.

The parliament's commission ended, the names of all the judges were called over,—and first that of the president who answered in a clear voice, calm and unmoved by any tremour. Then the lord-general was summoned, and straight there was a pause of unexpected silence, for no one answered. Again the crier's accents awakened the echoes of the hall—"Lord Fairfax!"—and this second time a shrill voice, though musical and soft, replied, "He has more wit than to be present here!"

The court rose in confusion; there was a momentary tumult, and a clamour of stern import both from the judges and spectators; but Bradshaw's high notes, pealing like a silver trumpet's above the din of tongues, enforced tranquillity, and calling on the officers to seize the person who had dared contemn the court, appeased the short-lived riot. But, when after a hasty search no one could be discovered, the calling of the com-

missioners proceeded until nearly eighty had answered to their names.

Then with an air of deep religious feeling, mixed with the consciousness of high authority, engraved on his strong features marked as they were by lines of wearing thought and pale from studious vigils over the midnight lamp, Bradshaw arose ; and his voice, though it faltered not, was subdued almost unto tenderness, as he addressed the royal culprit.

“ Charles Stuart, King of England—the Commons of England, being deeply sensible of the calamities that have been brought upon this nation, which are fixed upon you as the principal author of them, have resolved to make inquisition for blood ; and, according to that debt and duty which they owe to justice—to God—to the kingdom and themselves, they have resolved to bring you to trial and to judgment ; and for that purpose have constituted the high court of justice, before which you are brought.”

This said, Cook, the attorney of the Commonwealth, who sat close to the person of the prisoner, rose to address the court ; but the King, having in his hand a staff of ebony tipped with a little head of silver, laid it upon his shoulder, and in the deep tones of authority, commanded him to "Hold"—which word he still reiterated with warmth, that might almost have been termed violence, when he perceived that he was disobeyed at the lord-president's command.

"My lord," the attorney said, "I am come here to charge Charles Stuart, the King of England, in the name of the Commons of England, with treason and high misdemeanor. I desire that the said charge may be read!" And the lord-president giving directions to the clerk to read the charge, the King in a yet louder and more angry voice cried "Hold!"

But Bradshaw, his large black eyes flashing with indignation, sternly forbade the clerk to notice the rude interruptions of the prisoner at

the bar, but to get on to his duty—and the indictment was read instantly, containing in effect, “that he had been admitted King of England, and trusted with a limited power to govern according to law; and by his oath and office was obliged to use the power committed to him for the good and benefit of the people; but that he had, out of a wicked design to erect himself an unlimited and tyrannical power, and to overthrow the rights and liberties of the people, traitorously levied war against the present parliament, and the people therein represented.” It then enumerated the calamities which had befallen England—the free and noble blood which had been shed like water—the devastation of the fair face of the land, the burning of its rich and thriving cities, the slaughter of its bravest sons;—it pointed to the causes—the commissions signed by his own hand for levying this domestic war—the raising of his standard in the town of Nottingham—his presence at Edgehill and other battles fought in his presence and at his instigation: so many flagrant proofs that

“ he had been the author and contriver of these unnatural, cruel and bloody wars, and was therein guilty of all the treasons, murders, rapines, burnings, spoils, desolations, damages, and mischief to the nation, which had been committed in the said war, or been thereby occasioned; and that he was therefore now impeached for the said crimes and treasons, on the behalf, and in the name, of all the good people of England.”

As the clerk read these words, while all the vast assemblage was hushed in the deep silence of attention and excitement, the same shrill voice, which had before proclaimed the absence of the Lord-general Fairfax, again exclaimed in tones so thrilling that they penetrated every portion of the building—“ No !—nor one hundredth part of them.”

The tumult which ensued was yet more wild and more alarming than before; the whole crowd sprang to their feet with a hoarse savage murmur, and a rush and rustling of their feet and garments, that might be heard to a considerable

distance. One officer, a grim hard-featured fanatic, leaped forward from the ranks, and pointing with his sheathed rapier to that division of the galleries whence the disturbance had proceeded, furiously shouted to his men, bidding them level their muskets and give fire.

A fearful scene ensued—the heavy rattling of the matchlocks, as they were thrown forward ready for instant use by the fierce soldiery, was almost drowned by the cries, shrieks, and exclamations of the spectators, many of whom were females, all now in mortal terror at the prospect of receiving an immediate volley, rushing in all directions to and fro, and some of them endeavouring to drop down into the body of the hall.

Before, however, time was given for the men to fire, it was announced to the lord-president that the disturber of the court was in truth no other or less personage than the Lady Fairfax, who had taken this extraordinary mode of testifying her dislike to the proceedings, and had now been persuaded to withdraw.

On this announcement, silence and peace was once again restored, and after a few moments the clerk went on with the arraignment, repeating the offensive words more loudly than before—"On the behalf, and in the name of all the good people of England, as a tyrant, traitor, and murderer—and an implacable enemy to the commonwealth of England."

Then, with remarkable and singular ill-taste and as ill-judgment, Charles, who had been continually gazing about the court in different directions, as if entirely free from interest of any sort in the proceedings—now lowering on the judges with cool contemptuous haughtiness—now glaring with an eye of bitter hatred on the dark soldiery which kept the avenues—now gazing with an air of sad reproachful gravity, not all unblent with pity, on the bulk of the spectators—actually burst out into a loud and ringing laugh, as the word "traitor" was pronounced.

Bradshaw again arose majestically firm and steady—though evidently moved to anger by the

open undisguised contempt of Charles—and with strong emphasis, and evident determination to check this disrespectful levity on the King's part, though not without consideration for the high place and natural displeasure of the prisoner at the proceedings of the court, rebuked him for the tone and air he had adopted—a tone and air becoming neither his own dignity, his position at the present moment, nor the exalted duties and great power of the court before which he stood thus arraigned.

With the same air of unconcealed contempt which he had hitherto displayed, Charles listened to the president's address, and answered by a denial of the existence of any authority whatever in the court—of any right pertaining unto them or to the English people to hold their King to trial—or of any legal power at all vested in those before whom he now stood.

Little occurred worthy of further note, during the three days of this singular and all-important ceremonial. The King, persisting in denial of the

court's authority, refusing to plead to the indictment under which he stood arraigned, and constantly breaking in with frivolous and uncivil interruptions upon the business and proceedings of the trial, was at the end of the first day remanded, and the commissioners adjourned to the ensuing Monday, the twenty-second.

Upon this second day, the prisoner's behaviour was the same; and, after some considerable altercation, he was again remanded, and led back under close custody to Sir Robert Cotton's house, where lodgings were assigned to him during the hearing of his cause.

Again, on the next day, the twenty-third, the court resumed, and on the King's appearance at the bar the commonwealth's attorney instantly craved judgment on him, as contumacious, saying that the innocent blood shed by him cried aloud for justice.

For the last time, the prisoner was commanded by the president to plead, and warned that, by persisting in his present course, he would but draw

upon him an immediate judgment. But Charles again refused to offer any answer or defence, crying out that he “valued not the charge a rush”—that he “would not now violate the trust his people had reposed in him by owning a new court of judicature,”—that “it was for their liberty he stood, and but for this he would not here object to giving satisfaction to the English people of the clearness of his past proceedings.”

The clerk was now ordered to record the prisoner's default; and the court once again adjourned until the twenty-seventh, sitting, throughout the interval caused by the King's determination, in the painted chamber daily, and hearing witnesses to the fact of his setting up the standard of his cause at Nottingham—the leading of his troops in armour at Edgehill, Newbury, and Naseby—the issuing mandates and commissions to his officers for prosecution of the war; and seeking to establish proofs with which they judged it needful to hold themselves pro-

vided, in case of the King's choosing at the last to plead.

After this pause, they met as previously stated, upon the twenty-seventh, in the great Hall at Westminster, and the cause was once more resumed; but still the King refused to answer or submit; and then the president informed him that the court had considered, and agreed upon a judgment; but yet—if he had any thing to say in defence of himself in respect to the matter charged—they were prepared to hear him.

In reply, Charles demanded to be heard before both Houses of Parliament, assembled in the painted chamber, before the passing of the sentence.

This, after an adjournment of the court for half-an-hour to consider on the King's proposition, was refused, as being in effect but a new denial of their jurisdiction as now constituted, and a fresh contempt. On the return of the commissioners he was at once informed that he had too long delayed the court already by his

contempt and contumacy, and that they were resolved unanimously to proceed to judgment and to punishment.

Then in a long speech, eloquent, and lucid, and replete with arguments, such as appeared most fitting to excuse and justify such a proceeding, and to convince the world of the right *moral* justice of a measure, not certainly in strict conformity with *legal* precedents, Bradshaw proceeded to pass sentence on the prisoner—and toward the end of his oration urged on the King the scriptural example of David's late repentance for his imitation.

Unmoved and haughty, with his dark features marked by no expression, save a slight scornful sneer, Charles rose, still covered, and strove once again to interrupt him—demanding to be heard concerning those great imputations, thus laid to his charge; but he was again reminded that he had refused to own the court, and that too much delay and liberty had been already granted to him.

The sentence was then read—the president affirming it to be “the sentence, judgment, and resolution of the whole court,” and all the members standing up to testify their full concurrence with their speaker.

For the last time, the royal culprit claimed to be heard; but at the president’s direction the guards withdrew him, still exclaiming loudly—“that, since he was not suffered for to speak, he might expect what sort of justice other men should have of them!”

Various and wild were the expressions of disgust and approbation among the multitude. Some said, “God save the King!” despite the angry scowls and bitter menaces of the fanatical and furious guards; others, and far the most in numbers, shouted with inflamed visages and bitter tones, “Justice!”—and “Vengeance!”—and “Away with him!”—and one more brutal than the rest offered to strike him with his hand as he was led forth from the hall, and actually spat upon his beard!

The court arose—the members dispersed to their homes—the most unprecedented, singular, and solemn trial on record in the annals of the universe was ended—a trial, wherein a puissant nation was the plaintiff—a king, the son and grandson of a long line of mighty and hereditary monarchs, the defendant—and the point at issue, the momentous question, whether the kings of England should be despots over cringing and soul-shackled slaves, or the first magistrates of an enlightened and wise, a free and potent people !

What were the real motives of that man, who, if he did not absolutely bring about, might beyond question absolutely have prevented, the execution of the King—no human understanding may divine. But the great probability is, that, like most human motives, they were of a mingled character.—Sir Edgar Ardenne, in the course of the proceedings, had been convinced to his full satisfaction that the mind of Oliver was strangely and unnaturally overwrought. His coarse and vulgar jocularities at Ludlow's house—his pale-

ness and unwonted trepidation on the King's first appearance—the little share he took in any portion of the trial,—for, except one outbursting of fierce temper when Mr. Downes, during the last adjournment, most pathetically urged the members to grant his Majesty's demand of a joint conference of the three estates, he had scarce taken any interest in what was going forward ;—and above all, his brutal and half-frantic jests during the same adjournment, when he daubed Henry Martin's face with ink and jeered and laughed so as to move the wonder of all present :—all these things, taken in connexion with the state in which he found him when he visited his chamber after the sentence had been passed, had proved to Ardenne beyond all doubt that he was awfully perturbed in spirit.

It was late in the evening of the day on which the trial ended that Sir Edgar (who, though he had concurred in the sentence, wished its mitigation) sought Cromwell's lodging at Whitehall ; nor was it without some urgency that he com-

pelled the soldiers and domestics to admit him.

The fortunate commander was already in possession of the superb apartments which had so lately called his fallen rival master. In the first antechamber of that gorgeous suite, two privates of the ironsides were sitting by a blazing fire, its bright light flashing from their steel armour and accoutrements in strong and painful contrast to the luxurious decorations and appliances of royal ease among which they were seated. The second and the third rooms of the suite were vacant, although dazzlingly illuminated by many waxen lights.

Long ere he reached the door of the last room, Ardenne's attention was aroused by the deep groans, mingled with broken exclamations, snatches of fervent but disjointed prayer, and bursts of passionate and painful weeping, which fell upon his ear as he advanced. He rapped against the panel, but his signal was unheard, or, at the least, unheeded;—a second—a third

time he struck the door—but still no answer—though the sounds which he had heard had now ceased, saving only the sullen echoes of heavy and irregular steps distinctly audible even as they fell on the soft texture of the three-piled Persian carpets.

Scrupulous though he was, and jealous almost to excess of undue familiarity, Sir Edgar was too much excited now to stand on points of form.—He turned the gilded handle, and almost noiselessly the door revolved upon its hinges, and in one of his most dark moods, hypochondriac, or conscience-stricken, that wonderful man stood before him. The large apartment sumptuously decked with furniture and hangings of splendid crimson velvet—the toilet-table with its appurtenances of transparent crystal and plate of solid gold—the royal arms of England embroidered on the tester of the bed, piled high with coverlets of down and satin ;—these passed scarcely seen before the eyes of the spectator, engrossed in observation of the strange being who thus

tenanted the halls of England's sovereign. A single light, and that obscure and waning, stood on the central table of some rich eastern wood, and on the hearth a few decaying brands, which had been suffered to burn low, smouldered with more of smoke than flame, casting a sickly and unnatural light about the chamber.

But HE—the tenant—with blood-shot eyes, and features ghastly wan and haggard—he strode to and fro with steps irregular and almost staggering—now waving his extended arm on high—now striking it upon his broad breast with a violence denoted plainly by the heavy and dull sounds of the oft-repeated blows. Tears—copious and agonizing tears—those which console not nor relieve, but burn like vengeful fires—flowed down his hollow cheeks—and his words, wild as his gait and gestures, were now of bitter self-reproach, of accusation, and remorse—now of sincere and humble penitence—and now of fierce ecstatic triumph!—But in an instant, in the twinkling of the eye, as he perceived that he was

not alone, his air and aspect were, as if by magic transformation, utterly changed and new.

“ Ha ! good Sir Edgar,” he exclaimed, “ this is a pleasure, such as I have not long experienced — nor, though such friendly visitations were once ordinary things between us, of late days expected !”

“ I have called on you now, lieutenant-general,” Ardenne gravely replied, “ not on mere ordinary reasons whether of friendship or of ceremonial—but upon matters of great weight and interest to England ! To come to the point at once, I have called here believing — and hoping likewise—that I shall find in you a real and unselfish patriot—one that regards not self-aggrandizement, or fame, or wealth, or power, when compared to his country’s weal. In this hope—this belief—I have come to implore you as a friend and faithful councillor, that you will interpose your powerful influence to shield this most unhappy king from death. Justice required that he should be condemned—justice is

satisfied! The great example is set forth to England, and the universe!—all ends are answered, that his execution can attain! And you, sir, who have won the brightest crown of warlike honour, that has been witnessed in these later days, beware! Beware, I say, lest present times, ay! and posterity to boot, shall deem that in permitting Charles to perish by the headsman's act you have looked rather to your own, than to your country's interests! Kill him—(for in neglecting to preserve, you actually kill no less than if alone, and by a single mandate, you condemned him)—kill him, and it may well be you shall reign yourself as monarch over England.—But to gain a precarious, short-lived, and unhappy eminence, you shall lose present peace, and future glory—you shall cast from you the esteem and love of those who *have* bled, and *would* die, for you—you shall stand high in solitary friendless state—without the lingering consolation of a self-approving spirit! Spare him—preserve him—and you shall be the first

for ever in the hearts and judgment of every honest Briton—while England's name exists, yours shall live in coeval glory—the title of the loftiest worth—the purest patriotism—the most disinterested clemency that earth has witnessed, since her surface bore the steps of giants and of angels !”

“Nay! you wax warm in eloquence!” Oliver answered coldly. “Surely your zeal doth eat you up! yea! the desire of your heart doth rise up to your brain, and cloud its better reason. I would—ay of a surety I do profess to you—I would lay down not merely the poor honour—that vainest and most fickle breath of human fantasy—which you ascribe to me, to whom it is not due, but to the Lord of Hosts!—but my life even!—my existence upon earth!—my hope of seeing England the freest and the first of European pryncedoms!—that so this bruised and bending reed might not be trodden in the mire—this frail and half-cracked potsherd might not be shivered into atoms!—But when the Lord hath spoken—what mortal shall gainsay him—was it

not borne in on our hearts—branded with characters of living fire upon the inmost tablets of our souls—‘ye shall avenge my people—for their blood, and their children’s blood, which he hath spilled upon the ground that hath not drunk it up, calleth aloud for vengeance!—Yea! ye shall slay the King.’ So is it not written that ‘ye shall not suffer one of them to live!’—And what are we that we should contradict Jehovah? I could not if I would—and I say not that I would. As the game stands, I could not now save Charles Stuart from the infliction of that righteous sentence, which you have aided to pass on him!—The people have risen in their might—the people’s voice has gone forth to the uttermost portions of the world—‘The King shall surely die!’—The people’s voice is God’s voice! Hear it and tremble—hear it and obey!”

At once the latest hope of Edgar vanished—the firm determination, evinced not by words only, but by the cold hard eye, the compressed

lip, the clenched hand, and the hard-set teeth through which the low stern voice was sent out in a harsh and hissing whisper, proved to him so distinctly, as to banish even hope, that Charles had not a possibility, much less a chance, of life at Cromwell's intercession, and from the lip of Cromwell only could any intercession come that should prevail over the angry prejudices and morose fanaticism of the army.

Seeing the fruitlessness of the effort, Ardenne desisted. With a sick heart and boding spirit, he departed from the presence of the Arbiter, whom, even now he knew not whether to think an over-zealous patriot, or an ambitious hypocritical adventurer, playing a deep game for a mighty venture; and strode away to find in his lone lodging a sleepless bed disturbed by ominous and sad presagings—by doubts, by sorrows, by remorse; for he already had begun bitterly to repent the part which he had borne in the great revolution now about to terminate so tragically

for the ruler—so disastrously, as his fears told him, for the ruled—and above all, so fatally for England's permanent and real peace.

Scarcely had Edgar gone from Cromwell's presence, before a new petitioner arrived, and, with yet more of difficulty than the former had experienced, gained access to the presence of his kinsman; for that petitioner was no other than his cousin, Colonel John Cromwell, an officer of the Dutch service, and commissioned as his agent with the parliament by the Prince of Wales, who at this time resided at the Hague.

In the commencement of the interview the able and accomplished soldier confined himself to solemn and ceremonious remonstrances against the act in contemplation; assuring his great relative of the resentment, horror, and disgust which this atrocious crime—for so he hesitated not to call it—would kindle throughout every Christian land!—would kindle not against England, nor the parliament, nor army—but against him alone, who, as the world well knew, could wind

the reins of government just as he listed, pointing the councils of the one, and wielding the war-weapons of the other !

“ Tush ! cousin,” answered Oliver, “ tell me not of atrocity and crime !—’tis a great act of sovereign and solemn justice ;—but, were it as you say, I have no power to alter it.—It is the army, and not I, who *will* inflict this justice on the King, brooking not any let nor hindrance.”

“ Remember you not, sir,” exclaimed the other, “ how some twelve months ago, you did profess to me, that, rather would you draw your sword in the defence of Charles, than suffer these republicans to harm one hair upon his head !—Have you forgotten this, and other such asseverations—or do you wilfully, and of aforethought, violate your word ?”

“ Well—right well—I remember it !” Cromwell replied in tones of great asperity ; “ and well you do, now to remember me of it. For so you mind me of *his* base and lying insincerity, that drove the faithful and brave army into such

bitterness of wrath as not even I could stem, either by force or council!—The times are changed, and strangely! since so I spake to you—and on his own head be his blood!—for by his own craft, his own ingrate and selfish subtlety, hath he dragged down on him this ruin. If it be true that whom the gods have destined to destruction they first deprive of reason, as the wise Ethnics did believe, then hath the Lord of Hosts hardened the heart of this man, that he should die, not live!”

“You are determined then to do this deed of infamy and horror?” the foreign officer demanded.

“I am determined,” Oliver answered sternly, “not to interfere with England’s course of judgment. I have prayed for the King—and fasted!—yea! I have striven with the Lord, these many times, that some way might be given me to save him—but no return hath yet been made to me, nor any sign, nor answer!”

Then Colonel Cromwell rose up from his seat,

and walking with light steps toward the doorway cautiously looked out, and satisfied himself that no one was within earshot; then turning the key with a wary hand, and dropping a strong night-latch, he returned, and drawing from his bosom an emblazoned parchment, containing his credentials and a large sheet of vellum perfectly blank and vacant, but signed at length and sealed, in his own name and for his royal father, by Charles Stuart Prince of Wales and heir apparent, he laid them on the table, under the eyes of his bold kinsman.

“Cousin,” he said, “it is no time to dally now with mere words in this matter,—Look here at this *carte blanche*. It is in your sole power now to make—not yourself only, but your posterity and family and kindred—happy and great and honourable, through all ages! Else, as they changed their name in bygone days from Williams unto Cromwell, so now must they be forced to change it once again; for this one fact will bring such infamy upon the name

and the whole generation of them, that no after ages will be able to wipe out the shameful stain!"

The general's features worked convulsively, and his face flushed crimson, and paled, and flushed again, as he heard this address; and his hand drooped down to his dagger's hilt, and griped it with such force, as if he would have buried his strong fingers in the ivory pommel; but when his guest had ended, he answered in a quiet voice, though evidently guarded and constrained.

"You have done, sir!" he said, "and I have heard you out!—I have been hitherto calm!—very calm," he continued, gradually warming, as he spoke, into fierce ire; "I have endured to hear my motives questioned—my assertions doubted—and the great cause, of which I am a most unworthy, but a most sincere, supporter—scoffed at, and vilified, and held up as atrocious in the world's eye, infamous, and shameful! Calmly I have endured all this!—nay I

have heard my own good name traduced, my family dishonoured, the name of Cromwell coupled—coupled I say, as if synonymous, with villany, and its reward—disgrace! Calmly—I have endured this also! But you have dared to *bribe* me! presumed to fancy that you could buy me, not like a fettered captive in the body—but, like a renegado and apostate, in the chainless mind. How! you—a Cromwell—have ventured, face to face, to offer me the basest of affronts—to proffer to me gold—and rank—and titles—to turn me from my righteous purpose—to seduce me from my conscience, my allegiance, and my honour!—Thank God!—I say—thank God, if you believe in him—that I am regenerate, and you a Cromwell; for were *I* one jot more a sinner than I am, or *you* one tittle less connected with my blood—then had I sheathed this dagger”—and as he spoke, he drew and dashed the weapon furiously upon the ground before his feet—“dudgeon deep in your heart!—Begone! you have your answer!”

Truly had Oliver said that the tempter was of his own blood—for he rose firmly from his chair, and with an erect and unflinching carriage looked full in his enraged kinsman's eye, till he ceased speaking; and then—

“Tush! cousin Oliver,” he said; “I care not for your vagaries of passion. I am a soldier, man, and not a woman, or a child, that words can daunt me. But now you are distempered—think of this matter deeply, weigh it, and ponder on it, ere you answer. I shall wait, at my inn, your reply until to-morrow morning. Give you good night and better temper!”

And he withdrew, believing in his heart that Oliver's rage was but assumed, and that the golden bait would take. But sadly was he destined to be undeceived;—for at about an hour after midnight a messenger came to him, from Whitehall, and told him he might now go to bed, for he must not expect any more answer than he had, unto the prince;—for that the council of the officers had again been seeking

God—and there was no hope for it, but the King must die.

Accordingly upon the following morning, the celebrated twenty-ninth of January, Charles, after a mournful parting with his children, was led through the palace garden and park of St. James to his own chamber at Whitehall; where he prayed for a space with Bishop Juxon (who afterward accompanied him to the block); thence to the banqueting-hall, and thence, through a passage broken in the wall, unto the scaffold. There, after a short speech, which he concluded by declaring that he “had a good cause—he had a gracious God—and therefore he would say no more,” he laid down his head on the block, and died, with such a perfect dignity, such a serene and modest fearlessness unmixed with any thing of boldness or bravade, as to justify the observation, applied originally to another, that “no action of his life, became him like the leaving it!”

CHAPTER VII.

—Now, there he lies,
With none so poor to do him reverence.

Julius Cæsar.

Tot populis terrisque superbum
Regnatorem Asiæ. Tacet ingens litore truncus
Avolsumque humeris caput, et sine nomine corpus.

Æneid ii. 556.

MIDNIGHT was on the mighty city. The happy sleep had swept away the cares of thousands in its still, deathlike oblivion. The multitudes, who had assembled to sate themselves

with gazing on the sad yet exciting spectacle of the morning, wearied and worn out with the unnatural tension of their nerves during that day of horror, had passed away to seek a contrast in the repose of their domestic chambers. The very guards were slumbering on their posts about the precincts of Whitehall, and not a sound or breath disturbed the silence of the night. Within the palace, in one of those sublime apartments which he had loved so well while living, upon a lofty bed adorned with crimson curtains, and rich ostrich plumes, and the gold-blazoned arms of England, lay a plain oaken coffin, half-covered with a pall of sable velvet. Many tall waxen torches blazed around the room in candlesticks of solid silver, six feet at least in height, and their light glanced upon a narrow plate of silver decking the coffin's lid, whereon were these few words: "King Charles, 1648."

No mourning crowds wept round the couch, whereon the hopeless prince slept that cold sleep

that knows no earthly waking. No coronetted peers watched over the embalmed remains—no flippant pages hushed their accustomed merriment in reverence to the ashes of their master—no guard of honour with trailed arms, and down-cast visages, stood sentinel without the door. But with their carbines loaded, sheathed in their buff coats and bright armour, two privates of the iron-sides strode to and fro, passing each other and re-passing at brief intervals—the ringing of their heavy armature, and the loud sounds of their spurred and booted footfalls, awakening strange echoes in that apartment of the dead.

The night wore onward, and the stars began to wink in the cold skies, and the first coming of the morn was felt in the increasing chilness of the air—hitherto had the watch of those unusual mourners been lonely and uninterrupted. The clock, however, was just striking three, and its loud cadences were vocal still through the long vacant halls and vast saloons of the deserted palace, when a remote and stealthy footstep

broke upon the silence which was succeeding fast to the loud chimes. The soldiers interchanged alarmed and jealous glances, blew their slow matches to a vivid flame, and, listening with wary ears and ready weapons, resumed their guarded walk. Nearer and nearer came the step, firm, regular, and low, but evidently not desirous of avoiding observation. Now it was at the door—it paused, and, bringing simultaneously their weapons to the level, the soldiers halted between the body and the door, and challenged loudly.

“Stand, ho!—the word—stand, or we shoot!”

“Justice and freedom!”—answered a harsh and croaking voice; and bearing in his right hand a small waxen taper, and in his left a staff of ebony, Oliver Cromwell entered. He was dressed plainly in a full suit of black cloth with silken hose, and a loose cloak of broad-cloth faced with velvet; a very light black-hilted rapier hanging from his girdle in lieu of the long heavy broadsword, which he so rarely laid

aside. His face was very pale, but perfectly composed and grave, with the mouth firmly closed, and the eyes shining with a steady and unaltered light.

“Good watch,” he cried, as he came in,—
“you keep good watch. Cold work, I trow, and cheerless. What would ye say now to a flagon of october—hey Stephenson, hey Bowtell?—So! so!—ye are on duty, ye would say—well interrupt me not for that—I will relieve ye for a brief space—but one at a time—one only! Stephenson, give me thy carbine, and the match—and now get thee down to the buttery. Tarry not over half-an-hour, and return straight-way to take bluff Bowtell’s place!”

The soldier grinned significantly, gave up his weapon to his officer and walked off, greatly pleased at this brief intermission of an unpleasant duty. Cromwell looked after him as he departed, and when his footsteps had sunk into silence, depositing the carbine he had taken in

a corner, he walked up slowly to the coffin, with a strong stately step and unmoved aspect.

“He hath not broken on thy watch then?”—he demanded, with a grim smile, but evidently speaking thoughtfully and with emotion, although wishing to conceal his feelings by an assumption of unfeeling merriment.—“He hath not waked to scare ye?”

“Now may the Lord forbid!” returned the superstitious soldier, half-alarmed at the words and manner of his officer—“What mean you, worthy general?”

“Why, how now, simpleton?” Cromwell replied, “you look in truth, as if he had walked forth in his untimely ceremonies to affright you. But fear not, Bowtell, fear not!—The King sleeps sound!—and shall sleep, till the day when the great trumpet of Jehovah shall call him to a mightier judgment, and it may well be to a darker doom!—Have they screwed down the coffin?”—he continued—“I fain would

look upon him :”—and he moved closer to the bed, and throwing back the pall of velvet tried to raise the lid ;—but though not permanently fastened down it yet resisted the attempt, being held tightly by some two or three stout spikes. After a moment’s pause he thrust the ferril of his staff into the chink, and made an effort thus to draw the nails out of their sockets ; but they had been driven in too firmly, and the staff creaked as though it would have broken.

“Lend me thy rapier,” he exclaimed ; “its steel hilt will have strength enough ;” and, with the word, he forced the pommel into the aperture between the lid and side, and, leaning heavily upon the weapon as a lever, wrenched up the cover with such a sudden impetus that the nails flew up into the air, and struck against the canopy which overhung it. Then he stood fixed, and for a short time speechless, regarding with a disturbed and cloudy brow the mangled body of his victim.

The body, which had been opened and em-

balmed, was swathed in bandages of linen drawn so tightly round the limbs that, when the shroud was lifted, the perfect form and the development of all the muscles might be traced as plainly as while he was in life.—The head, partially covered by an embroidered napkin bound about the brows, and a broad riband of white silk fastened beneath the chin, was in its proper place, but a small interval, that showed like a discoloured streak of dingy red, marked its dis-severment. The face was pale, but scarcely more so than its wont, and far less ashy in its hues than that of the undaunted warrior who leaned over it. The lips retained their usual and healthful colour, with something of a smile still visible about them—the eyes were closed, but naturally and as if in sleep—the nose preserved its wonted form, unsharpened as yet by the iron-hand of death. There was, indeed, no sign or symptom of a painful and untimely dissolution on those serene and comely lineaments—something there might be of a languor not

characteristic of the living man—of a placidity and peace more deep than usual; but nothing which could have led any one to fancy that the thread of life had been snapped violently by the rude weapon of the executioner, for him who slumbered there so tranquilly.

For a long time Cromwell spoke not a word, nor moved a limb, nor even winked an eyelid, steadfastly, gazing on the features of his fallen foe and rival.

“He sleeps—indeed! how peacefully and well! That eye shall flash no more with kingly pride, that lip be wreathed no more into the calm but haughty sneer! The busy brain that plotted so much woe to England—the indomitable mind, that would not swerve one hairbreadth from its purpose; no, not to purchase life—are these—are these too, in repose, like that cold, voiceless lip, that nerveless and inanimate right hand? Is that sleep dreamless? Doth the soul, plunged in a dark and senseless torpor, lie paralyzed and shorn of its pervading

vigour in the abyss of Hades?—or hath it but awakened from this trance, after the turmoil of mortality, to more complete perfection—to consciousness, and wisdom, and unchanged immortality? Dost thou know now, thou cold form, who stands beside thee? He, who continually strove against the tyranny thou wouldst have set up in the land! He, who beat down thy banner in the field, and swept thy gallant cavaliers like dust before the whirlwind! He, who brought down thy glory from the throne, and paved thy path to that still hostelry—the grave! Dost thou know this—and yet not start from out thy bloody cerements? I do but dream,” he went on, after a moment’s pause; “the king is nothing! a mere clod in the valley! ‘Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we?

art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee! How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer! son of the morning! how art thou cut down, which didst weaken the nations! Thus was it written of a mightier one than thou—thus hath it been with thee! Thy place is empty upon earth, thy country no more knows thee! Verily thou art fallen asleep—asleep for many a thousand year—until thou shalt be summoned to make answer in the spirit, for all thy deeds wrought in the flesh. Yet then, even then, wilt thou, fallen great one, have nothing to witness against me. But for thine own self-will—thine own tyrannical and senseless folly—thine own oppression of the saints, and trampling under foot the delicate and tender consciences of men: nay, more than all this, but for thine own false dealing and foul treachery toward those who would have served thee truly thou mightest have still sat in the high place of

thy forefathers! thou mightest have outshone them, so far as the sovereign of a free and mighty nation outshines the chieftain of an enslaved and paltry tribe!—thou mightest have been served by hands and swords, through the Lord's help, invincible—honoured and loved by hearts loyal, sincere, and single-minded! thou mightest have fulfilled the number of thy days, dying in green old age, amid the tears and lamentations of thy people, and bequeathing to thy sons that puissant and time-honoured sceptre, which now shall never more be wielded by thy race? Alas, for man! Who that looked on thee in thy fair and princely youth, would have presaged so sad an end to thy bright-seeming fortunes! Surely this frame of thine, which mine own eyes have seen so proud, enthroned upon thy charger's back, rallying thy followers through the havoc and the terror of the battle—surely this frame of thine so strongly knit, and muscular, and manly, was formed to baffle hardships, and to brave long years!

Surely, but for thine own insane and selfish folly, thou wast formed to die old! Lo!" And, as thus he spoke, he laid the finger of his right hand in the gaping wound, and with cool scrutiny, examined the consistency and texture of the muscles. "Lo! how sound is this flesh, how wiry and elastic these dissevered sinews. There is no symptom here of disease or debility! no decay—no corruption! But for the axe, he had lived years—ay, many and long years! But verily all things are of the Lord—and had HE not predestined him to die, then had he hardened not his heart—nor raised up foes against him, of whom it is a scripture, that, 'none shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken.' Whom the Lord listeth to destroy, surely he striveth but in vain, for who shall find strength in the sword, or refuge in the speed of horses, against the Lord of Hosts? Then say not that I slew thee, but the Lord—

how had I defended thee against the God of Battles—or how had I acquitted, whom HE had judged to destroy ?”

He paused from the long wild declamation, which he had poured out in the perturbation of his spirit, half conscious, and perhaps half self-convicted of criminal ambition, and struggling to convince himself entirely of the truth of the dark creed he had adopted, and thus to satisfy his restless spirit by a half voluntary self-deception.

The sentinel, meantime, had stood beside him, with his hand still outstretched as when he first extended it to receive again his sword, gazing partly in admiration, partly in fear and awe, now on the calm and rigid countenance of the dead king, now on the varying and agitated features of his almost remorseful judge ; but less astonished at the scene, than would have been expected, in consequence of the prevailing custom of his party to pray and preach, with every species of whining cant or furious raving,

on all occasions anywise uncommon or surprising.

For several minutes' space Oliver gazed again in silence on the body, and then replacing the lid, gently, and almost tenderly, "Farewell," he said, "farewell on earth for ever! strangely have we been linked together here below, and wonderfully do we part! Hadst thou prevailed, my fate had been more bitter! Farewell, farewell! we meet no more, whether for good or evil, until that final meeting, when God must judge between us two. Till then sleep soundly—and then awake—HE only knows—to what!"

He then replaced the screws, and threw the pall across the coffin as before, the soldier Bowtell, holding a torch, which he had taken from the nearest candelabrum, to assist him. This finished, he withdrew a pace or two, wrapped his cloak closely round him, and sat down upon a settle near the bed. The soldier, having replaced the light, stood for a little time in silence, and then said,

“ I pray you tell me, lieutenant-general, what mode of government shall we now have ?”

“ The same as then was !” he answered, in a sharp decisive tone ; and instantly relapsing into silence, sat in deep sullen thought, until the other soldier came back ; and then forgetting quite or disregarding his first promise of relieving Bowtell in his turn, he took up the small taper he had brought with him, and left the room in his dark mood, speaking no word to either of the sentinels.

CHAPTER VIII.

To hold you in perpetual amity,
 To make you brothers, and to knit your hearts
 With an unslipping knot, take Anthony
 Octavia to his wife. * * *

* * * By this marriage,
 All little jealousies, which now seem great,
 And all great fears, which now import their dangers,
 Would then be nothing.

Antony and Cleopatra.

SOME months had passed after the death of Charles, during which a new form of government had been established.—By a vote of the commons the existence of the upper House was

declared dangerous and useless, and without more ado, it was abolished. About the same time, by another vote, monarchy was extinguished, and it was made high-treason to proclaim, or otherwise acknowledge, Charles Stuart, commonly called the Prince of Wales, as King of England.

A council of state had been next composed, of forty-one members—among whom were Fairfax, Cromwell, Bradshaw, with St. John and the younger Vane—on whom devolved the duties of the executive, with a proviso that they should resign their powers to the state, as soon as the republic should be settled on a permanent and stable basis.

Some disaffection of the army and tumults, which for a short time threatened to be dangerous to the new government, were put down and punished rigorously by the zeal and energy of Cromwell, and all domestic matters wore now a show of happier and fairer promise, than Ardenne had ever hoped to witness; while the republic

had already been acknowledged and received with greetings by many of the most powerful potentates of Europe.

Spring had grown into early summer; but while all things around him gradually wore a fuller and more perfect beauty—while buds expanded into full-blown blossoms, and woods put on their freshest garniture of green, and the rich fields gladdened the farmer's heart by their broad promise—the hopes of Ardenne had been blighted more and more, had faded into sorrows, had been seared and dried up into absolute despair. A very few days after the King's execution, he had been summoned to repair with speed to Woodleigh, where Sibyl—his beloved—his last and only link to the cold world—was dangerously if not desperately ill.—He found her—as his crushed heart too truly presaged—already dying. He watched beside her couch, and day by day marked the successive inroads of disease on that dear form!—He saw her hourly growing weaker, paler and less

earthly in her mortal frame ; and hourly, as he thought, more heavenly, more angelic in her mind.

Between them there was now no estrangement, no distrust.—Death, which to ordinary spirits is a separation, was to them a bond of union. Disguise was at an end—both felt, both knew, and both acknowledged that “some wintry blight,” indeed “some carnal indisposition,” was the immediate cause of her decline, yet that a pined and broken heart had sapped the corporal energies, and betrayed the fortress to the insidious spoiler.—Sorrow, regret, deep mourning, cast their dark shadows over them ; but remorse came not near them—nor reproach—nor any bitter feeling except the sickening sense of hope deferred.

Sad though it was and pitiful, it was a lovely scene—that deathbed!—The bold and fearless soldier, unmanned utterly, and sobbing like a sickly infant over the wreck of her, whom he felt that he now loved better when stricken,

blighted, and cut off already from communion with the sons of men, than when she was the pride and admiration of all who chanced to meet her.

It has been said already that there was no disguise between them; and now, when every possibility of selfish motives was removed; when there could be no more the slightest misconception; when all asperities were, in truth, softened down by the approach of that great alchemist of mortal deeds and mortal causes—death! all that had been before obscure and intricate was rendered plain as noonday; and Sibyl shamed not to confess her sense of her own hapless error, an error which had robbed her lover of all chance of happiness on earth—had robbed herself of life!

Ardenne, melted and tortured by contrition, half repentant, as has been shown already, of the part which he had played, and morbidly dissatisfied with the result of the experiment, sat groaning in the spirit by her pillow, and

confessed in very hopelessness of heart that he had cast away his all for a mere vision—for a most vain and senseless fancy.

But in these bitter moments it was hers, as the true woman's part, still to enact the comforter—to point the real evils, which while in health and happiness she scarce would have admitted such, that he had battled to put down—and the more real benefits which must spring up hereafter from the anarchy that had succeeded to the fall of Charles, as darkness follows the decline of day only to bring forth the more pure and mellow moonshine.

At length she died—and Ardenne was indeed alone—alone for ever!—without one tie on earth—without one kindred creature, through whose veins the pure blood of his fathers poured its unmingled current—without one selfish hope—without one feeling left that could disturb or alienate his absolute devotion to his country's weal.

But he felt that England was as far from

rational and real liberty, as at the war's commencement, and how much further from the blessed calm of an established peace! A cold and bitter mood of grief had fallen on him, obscuring all his brighter qualities, and overpowering the energies of a mind once as elastic and pervading as the tempered steel.—It had changed his very soul.—It had made him even more than all the previous sorrows he had known, the previous perils he had faced, the previous disappointments he had writhed in bearing—an altered—a new man!—The brilliant dreams, and the warm hopes of youth had faded long ago!—The high and noble purposes of middle age—the pure ambition to be a benefactor not of his countrymen alone, but of the universal human race—the steady longing after an honest and clear fame—the sacred fire of patriotism itself,—all these were now, if not extinct, so chilled and overwhelmed by the dull apathy of settled woe, that it had needed much

again to raise them into luminous and active being.

It was just when he was the most absorbed in this sad stupor, some three or four days only after the death of his lost Sibyl, that an express arrived to rouse him from his sullen musings among the shades of Woodleigh, which had become once more his own as being next of kin to his untimely-parted cousin. It was an express from that great man, who more than ever now, since the decease of Charles, swayed as he chose the destinies of England—craving his instant presence to confer on matters of the highest import both to themselves and to their country.

It is true that, long before this period, Sir Edgar Ardenne had ceased to feel that deep respect and almost veneration which he once had entertained for Cromwell. He had long found his suspicions growing daily and hourly more strong—daily and hourly more confirmed by overt actions. Still with such wondrous

skill and subtlety had the arch-schemer wound along his path, onward, still onward!—that it was quite impossible to say at what point of his ascent, or if indeed at all, he had passed the confines of sincerity and patriotism, to enter the stern regions of ambition.

That Cromwell at this time enjoyed a power eminently great, and at the same time dangerous, Ardenne could not deny ;—that he had attained to that power by his own energy was self-apparent ; but whether he had framed the course which had exalted him according to the dictates of religion and of conscience, and so found his own high fortunes while seeking but for England's weal ; or whether he had struggled forward to his own grandeur, as his only goal, he could not, even now, decide. One thing he clearly saw, that the experiment had for the present failed!—that, by the death of Charles, tyranny was indeed put down ;—but put down only to be followed by anarchy—or by a tyranny more mighty than the former. But seeing this,

he saw no present way of extrication, save through the medium of the very man, whom he suspected—whom he feared—the most. He therefore judged it most advisable not to permit the alienation, which had been growing up between them, to become total—but keeping a shrewd watch on his motions, to discover if possible what might be his ulterior views, and, so far as his own influence might avail, to keep him in the path of honesty and honour.

“He *can* do more for England than any living man,” he muttered to himself, as, in obedience to the unexpected summons, he shook off his lethargy and set his foot in the stirrup—“He *can* beyond all question; and let us hope he *will*. He *had* high virtues once, no less high than his brilliant talents; and certainly I know not why I should assume it as a fact that they are now extinct. And I—since I have lost all else—since I have worn away the flower of my years, wasted the sweetness of my whole existence, in struggling for my country—why

should I hesitate to pour out the dregs of an unprized and wearisome existence, why should I hesitate to cast away life itself—a life which only separates me now from her—if that my life can profit England?—I will, as I have begun, so persevere. Consistency and honour now alone are left to me, and never will I disobey their dictates!—A name, which, though I never shall transmit to others, I, at least, its last owner—never, never will disgrace!”

He took his solitary way to London, and if not the less sad, was at the least less bitterly absorbed by sorrow; he mingled, with a grave aspect, certainly, and a subdued demeanour, in the chance society of men, and struggled, not all unsuccessfully, to shake off a melancholy which, though it was a luxury to indulge, he felt it was a duty to repress. The third day toward nightfall found him already in the heart of the metropolis, which under its new masters wore a composed and steady aspect of society, not

indeed very gay or pleasing, yet praiseworthy at least from the entire absence of rude revelry or riot in the crowded streets.

Ardenne found Cromwell, as when he last had visited him, occupying the royal chambers of Whitehall, but with yet more of pomp and show than he had as yet witnessed about the person of the independent leader. Two or three officers richly attired waited in the ante-rooms, and a page sumptuously though not gaily dressed opened the door of his apartment to the gallant baronet, with deep and silent reverence.

The cordial warmth which Oliver exhibited would in itself have called forth something of suspicion from the mind of Sir Edgar; for latterly, although not absolutely estranged from each other, there had been a passing coldness, a want of frank and cheerful confidence, between them, which caused the present alteration of the general's air and manner to be very obvious. But, to confirm his fears, after a short discourse

on various matters connected with state policy, and questions of the day—

“You have not heard, I know, Sir Edgar,” Cromwell began abruptly after a little pause, “of the new trust the parliament hath now of late conferred on me?—even the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, with command of the forces needful to crush the embers of this accursed rebellion, that yet devours the land!

“I have not,” answered Ardenne—“have you accepted it?”

“Surely I have,” returned the general—“for of a truth, the Commons House, ay! and the council of state also, were very urgent! yea! unto the taking no denial! For at the first I would have fain declined it. Truly my soul is sick of war and tumult, and would retire to the privacy of humble and domestic life. But as I say, they would take no denial! And, moreover, after a while, diligently searching the Lord’s will, praying myself with earnest zeal, and

profiting too by the prayers of better men, I have been convinced that my repugnance to this duty was not of the Lord—but a backsliding rather, and a fainting of the flesh; a yielding to the vain temptations of the world and the devil!—It is not for me to draw my hand from off the handle of the plough, when *He* hath manifestly fixed on me the task of turning up the hard and stubborn glebe.”

“A powerful army, doubtless, is assigned to you,” said Ardenne—half musing, half inquiring.

“Doubtless! Twelve thousand horse and foot—the picked men of the host, that hath so gloriously worked out the freedom of the land—the regiments, and their commanders subject to my own choice!—One hundred thousand pounds of sterling silver in the military chest, and all things corresponding! Verily, by the Lord’s help, soon shall we have peace as settled, in the wildest bog of Ireland, as in the heart of London.”

“ It is a great trust,” Ardenne again answered coldly, “ the *greatest* for a subject ! When set you forth ? ”

“ Speedily,” Cromwell replied ; “ right speedily. But ere I go, I have yet one thing to perform—the parliament, as not content with their high honours it hath done me, commands me to appoint all the chief officers. The master of the horse is a high post—important, onerous, and of great weight ! Now, Edgar Ardenne, though we have differed somewhat lately, I do know you able, valliant, honest, and trusty—such are the attributes needful for this great office—go with me—it is yours ! ”

“ I thank you,” Edgar replied, perfectly unmoved. “ Think me not ignorant of the honour ; nor yet ungrateful, when I decline that honour. In truth I am sick of blood—blood of my countrymen ! I would to God no drop of it had been shed here in England—for I do fear me very much it hath been shed in vain. ”

Oliver was evidently discomposed ; he rose

abruptly, and took many turns about the room, muttering to himself; then stopping suddenly.

“ Mark me !” he said. “ I love you, Edgar Ardenne, I have loved you ever ! Yea ! since that first night when we met nigh Royston, I have felt ever that in you there is an honesty different from that of men. You preach not, neither do you pray much in public, yet I do well believe you have more true religion than half the saints of the land. You can fight too, with the foremost—and counsel better than the wisest. You must go with me—you must strike on my side. Surely the Lord shall yet do greater things for this regenerate land, than he hath done already, though wonderous are his works, and great his loving kindness; and it is graven in my heart within me, that by me shall he do them—although I be but a rough instrument, a blunt and edgeless tool, for his omnipotent right-hand ! Go with me now ! and I say not that I will make you great—for of a truth it is not for a grovelling worm upon the earth to speak of

making earthworms great ! creation is the Lord's and the Lord's only ! But I do say, that my fortunes shall be thy fortunes also ! and my hopes thine ! Lo you ! I have a daughter— one yet a maid—comely too, in the flesh—discreet, and virtuous and sage—even my youngest—Frances ! Again ! I say not that I will give her to thee in the bonds of wedlock ; for truly hearts cannot be given and transferred like golden dross—neither do I esteem it wise or lawful for a parent to do any force to those most strong and inward inclinations ! But this I will say—for it is a truth ; I do profess to you a very truth !—that I believe the maid hath looked not hitherto on any man to love him—and that rather than any man on earth would I see thee my son-in-law ! Thine own high qualities, so that the Lord look down upon this work, will do the rest ! Give me thine hand ; say that thou wilt go with me ! Surely thou shalt be next in power unto myself—next in the glory of the deeds we shall accomplish in the Lord's

cause and England's. Thou shalt see yet, and share in very mighty changes."

"I were dishonest," Sir Edgar interrupted him with vehemence, "a base traitor to my cause, my conscience, and my country, did I pretend to doubt your meaning! I read you, sir, I read *you* as you were an open book before me. But *me* you know not, nor can comprehend at all. Neither, great as you are, and greater as you wish to be, can you tempt me one inch from the straight path. My heart, General Cromwell, is in the grave! in the grave with that peerless woman, who once, at your hands, saved me from a father's madness! Not! not to be a queen's, an angel's husband, would I forego the memory of her on earth—the hope of her in heaven! As for what you call greatness, I care not for it—nay I do loath it! for it is villany, dishonour, shame! Farewell! I leave you, sir, in sorrow—in strong and bitter sorrow! Fairly I tell you to your face, I do suspect you very deeply, and if it be as I sus-

pect, I will oppose you to the death! Pause! pause! and oh! consider! it is a little thing to be a king!—a tyrant! an usurper! It is the mightiest of all things—to have the power to be so—and the virtue to decline that power! Be, as you may, your country's friend, its guardian, its father! Beware! I say, beware, how you attempt to be its ruler! Better is a pure conscience than a golden bauble! He who cannot err, hath said, 'What shall it avail a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul!' You say you love me, I did once love, honour, esteem, ay, venerate you,—you—Oliver Cromwell! and rather would I hew off the best limb of my body, than see you play the part which I do fear you meditate! Answer me not, sir; no profession can convince me. Actions, actions, sir, actions only can prove to me your truth. Sincerely I pray God that I may be in error. Sincerely I pray God you may be strengthened to cast temptation far behind you, to be the great, the glorious, the immortal benefactor of your land. You *may* be

so if you will! Go then to Ireland, go do *your* duty, I will adhere to mine. My sword is in its scabbard, never to come forth more unless my country shal Irequire it against a foreign foe, or—a domestic tyrant! Farewell! may Heaven give you strength—farewell!”

“Do we part friends?” asked Oliver, whose strong nerves were greatly shaken, and whose mind, wholly impregnable at ordinary moments to such feelings, was penetrated by a sense of absolute humiliation, and overpowered by the influence and genuine force of real virtue—
“Do we part friends?”

“And shall I trust *meet* friends!” Edgar replied, clasping his hands with fervour, while a tear stood in his dark eye! “You have no truer friend! no more sincere admirer, be but yourself, within the four seas that gird Britain! May Heaven protect you, and preserve you, as I have thought you, as I would think you ever—noble!”

Again he grasped his hand, wrung it hard, turned, and left the room.

“Can it be so?” cried Cromwell, in a low thoughtful tone, “and hath he read my inward soul—read it more truly than myself?” He strode across the room with a loud step and a kingly port. “Not king—but the first man in England!—ha!” But again his proud glance sunk, his firm step faltered, and he struck his bosom with the eager violence of passionate repentance. “Avaunt, avaunt! get thee behind me!—no, no! he erred! Yet had he well-nigh made me deem myself a villain! ‘Not king, but the first man in England!’ Well—first in virtue! first in sincere, God-seeking piety! First, it may be, in good report—which men call fame!—in the Lord’s favour, and the people’s love! But not—not first in power, or wealth, or rank! not first, as that bold Ardenne said, in villany! No, no! *He* erred, and *I* am sound at heart—my breast is proof to thy devices! Avaunt! thou crafty devil, I am strong in virtue!”

He saw not Ardenne any more for many a

year of peril and success—of labour and of sin—and of the world's arch-phantom—glory!—But six days afterward Edgar beheld *him*, seated in his coach of state, dragged by six stately horses, tossing their plumed heads and shaking their superb caparisons as proudly as though they were conscious of the freight they drew along the crowded streets. He marked the quiet air of exultation and of triumph that sat on his firm lip, and glanced from his deep eye. He noted the unwonted splendour, the gorgeous dresses and accoutrements of his life-guard—some seventy young men—majors and colonels of the army, mounted more splendidly than the pretorian band of any king in Europe; sheathed in bright steel, with waving plumes, and floating scarfs, and all the bravery of the cavaliers! He saw the haughty bearing of his son, Henry—his lieutenant and master of the horse!—he saw the soldiery in their magnificent array trooping along, with their proud banners flaunting in the summer sunshine, and the tri-

umphant clangour of their military music waking the merriest echoes, behind their adored leader!—and above all, he heard the thundering acclamations of the multitude, as that pomp swept along!—and with a heavy sigh, he turned from that sight, in all other eyes so glorious, and majestic—a sigh for Cromwell's glory!—a sigh for England's peace!

BOOK IV.

Now could I, Casca,
Name to thee a man most like this dreadful night;
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars
As doth the lion in the capitol:
A man no mightier than thyself, or me,
In personal action; yet prodigious grown,
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are.
Casca. 'Tis Cæsar that you mean; is it not, Cassius?

Julius Cæsar.

CHAPTER I.

The stubborn spearmen still made good
Their dark impenetrable wood,
Each stepping where his comrade stood,
 The instant that he fell.
No thought was there of dastard flight ;
Linked in the serried phalanx tight,
Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,
 As fearlessly and well.

Marmion.

A YEAR had passed since Cromwell, invested with his new dignity of lord-lieutenant, landed in Dublin Bay—a year—during the course of which his arms, attended every where by vic-

tory, and edged by deadly vengeance, had swept like a tornado over devoted Ireland. Her strongest holds were levelled to the dust, piles of fire-blackened stones quenched with the life-blood of their massacred defendants. It was a year of merciless destruction—of unsparing, indiscriminating slaughter—a year which cast a deep stain on the name of Cromwell, never before attained by the dark charge of cruelty—a year, the miseries of which were such that they have branded that name on the memories of the Irish with such imperishable hate, that even to this day their direst malediction is, “The curse of Cromwell be upon you!”

From his career of victory and havoc Cromwell was summoned in the earlier months of 1650 to return to England, and oppose the Prince of Wales, who, having landed in the north, had been proclaimed and crowned the King of Scots; and at the head of a large army was preparing to assert his rights.

With his accustomed energy, Oliver instantly

appointed Ireton his lord-deputy, and Ludlow his lieutenant of the horse, delegating all his powers to them, and leaving them to finish what he had so effectually set in motion, and in a very short space was in London to receive the parliament's instructions. Here he was welcomed with the highest honours and rewards; and, after some delay, owing to the refusal of Lord Fairfax, who was himself a presbyterian, to command against the Scottish presbyterians—a refusal which, with much urgency and, it would seem, with real and unfeigned sincerity, Oliver strove to combat—he set forth, invested with the supreme command of the land forces of the parliament, to crush, as was expected, at a single blow the power of the Scottish royalists, and lead the second Charles in triumph to the footstool of the proud republicans, or to expel him from the kingdom of his fathers a despairing fugitive.

In this their overweening confidence, however, the English government were for a time

disappointed; for having crossed the Tweed, and advanced almost to the walls of Edinburgh before the last days of July, their general was so far from gaining any real or definitive advantage that, after two or three smartly-contested skirmishes and much manœuvring against the veteran Lesley, who resolutely declined a general action, he was compelled by want of forage and provisions, to reship five hundred of his men from Musselburgh for Berwick, and with the remnant, described by one of his best officers as “a poor, shattered, hungry, and discouraged army,” to fall back in some confusion on Dunbar, where he might be supported by his fleet and storeships.

Having been pressed so closely by the Scottish horse, on his retreat from Musselburgh to Haddington, that he was at one time in much danger, his rear-guard, which had been outstripped by the centre and advance, being exposed for a short time to the chance of an attack from the whole power of the Scots, by

favour of a misty night he arrived within a few miles of Dunbar late in the evening of the first day of September.

In the morning of the second, Oliver's army lying in a low swampy plain, with an exhausted country in their rear, a mountainous ridge held by a superior force in front, a stormy and tempestuous sea upon his right, and the weather such as to prevent any communication with the fleet, scarce any situation can be fancied more desperate and appalling than that of the invaders. Throughout that morning he saw the host of Lesley holding the hill with resolute determination, in a position of such formidable strength, that he himself has mentioned it as one wherein ten men were better to hinder than a hundred to make a way.

Below this hill was a small narrow plain, running down on the right hand to the sea, between the ridge then occupied by Lesley, and a deep cleugh or dell, through which a rapid and impetuous stream found its way to the

German Ocean, into which it falls at Broxmouth Park. But toward evening he perceived a movement in the hostile lines, and shortly afterward a mighty shout rang on his ears. Immediately he leaped upon his horse, and galloping forth with a handful of his chosen guard, rode to the brink of the ravine, from whence he might behold the Scottish ranks pouring tumultuously down from their commanding station into that narrow stripe whereon their very numbers would but operate against themselves, vociferously calling on their officers to "lead them down to Ramoth Gilead that they might slay the foe—even the blasphemous accursed Philistine!"

For a while Cromwell gazed steadily upon them without speaking, and by the curl upon his lip and the deep sneer of his expressive nostril, many of those around him fancied that he saw and detected some deep purpose in the hostile movement; but when band after band came rushing down, column on column of dark

pikemen—brigade after brigade of guns—and finally the horse and the reserve, with Scotland's royal banner—shouting “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon”—their favourite war-cry,—the gloom which had sat on his brow for many days passed suddenly, and was succeeded by a wild gleam of joy—“The Lord,” he cried, flinging his arm aloft, and giving the spur to his charger till he plunged and bolted from the earth,—“the Lord of hosts—he hath delivered them into mine hands!”—And while the numbers of the Scottish, vastly superior to his own, and ten times more than could be marshalled fittingly upon that battle-ground, were drawing up as best they might their crowded and disordered ranks, where they had neither room to fight, nor any way by which to fly if routed, he coolly reconnoitred the ravine passable only at one point, and that, though pervious even to artillery, a rugged ford between steep banks shadowed with timber-trees, and commanded by earthy mounds scaped naturally by the wintry

floods—determined instantly in his own mind on an attack *en masse* upon the morrow—ordered an advanced guard of horse and foot to occupy this all-important station—selected nine of his best regiments to force the passage at the earliest dawn of day—and then announcing his design to his assembled officers in council, and ordering all things to be in preparation for the attack, with the first glimmering of the east, threw himself down on his camp-bed without removing any part of his attire, and slept so soundly that his attendants had no easy task to rouse him from his dreamless and untroubled slumbers, when the appointed hour had arrived.

Ere he was in the saddle day had dawned fully; and then, having relied on Massey for the due execution of the orders on which his plan depended, he galloped to the front expecting to find all in readiness, and wondering that his artillery was not yet heard covering the passage of his troops. He reached the advanced lines, and all was in confusion. During the

night Lesley, aware of the importance of that point, had utterly cut off the guard detached for the defence of the ravine—so utterly, indeed, that not a soldier had escaped to bear the tidings of defeat to his superiors—and occupied it with a force equal, at least, to that which Cromwell had appointed to oppose him.

The sky was gray already, but the approach of morning was delayed, or at the least obscured, by a thick mist arising from the sea-board, and spreading over the flat land on which both armies had slept upon their weapons, in grim preparation for the coming strife. A powerful horse-regiment which had been chosen to advance the foremost, was in the very act of passing; some indeed had crossed the stream and were laboriously struggling up the banks on the Scotch side, and the rest were battling with the heavy current.

At this moment a tremendous fire of musketry and ordnance was poured upon them while in confusion; and when, despite this fearful ob-

stacle, they forced the pass, they were charged instantly, and thrown into disorder, by a brigade of cuirassiers appointed for this duty by the veteran Lesley.

While they were fighting with a desperate obstinacy, that had they been relieved or reinforced, would even yet have rendered them victorious, the infantry, who in advancing to support them had suffered terribly by the well-served artillery of the presbyterians, were in their turn charged, broken, and pushed back across the cleugh by the pike-regiments, which then as in all former periods composed the pride and strength of the Scottish host.

Just at this moment Cromwell reached a small eminence that overlooked the scene. He saw his scheme wellnigh frustrated; one of his best brigades of horse almost annihilated—his infantry repulsed—his attack not merely disappointed, but on the very point of being turned against himself:—and all this time Massey, his major-general, had not brought up a single gun,

much less attempted to assist the charge, or cover the retreat, of his defeated squadrons.

A dark red flush rose to his cheek and brow—his eye flashed lurid fire—as Oliver dashed up to the artillerists, fiercely commanding them with a voice tremulous and hoarse from ire, to “shoot sharply and upon the instant, or, as the Lord Jehovah liveth, ye shall swing from these oaks ere the sun rises!”

Awed by his threats and stimulated by his presence, they struggled nobly to redeem their error;—gun after gun belched forth its cloud of smoke and flame, and the shot plunged, with accurate aim and awful execution, into the serried masses of the Scotch, enabling the discomfited and shattered cavalry to draw off and repass the stream.

“Ride for your life!” cried Oliver to one, the nearest, of his staff, “and bring up my pike-regiment,—mine own, I say—under the trusty Goff—and Jepherson’s horse-regiment, and Lumley’s musketeers. Ride, I tell thee,

on the spur. And thou," he added, "away to Massey, Kingsland—let him bring up more guns—more guns!"

Too impatient to await the execution of his orders in quiet inactivity, he galloped furiously, attended only by a slender staff, and captain's guard of cuirassiers, down the steep banks of the ford. There he stood, sternly gazing on the advancing ranks of Lesley, a mark for the artillery, and even for the smallarms of the Scottish, the balls from which shivered the trees and tore the ground about him, but harmed not, strange to say, either himself or any of the little group behind.

It was indeed a critical conjuncture, a stout division of field-guns was whirled up, at the speed of powerful and active horses, to the brink opposite the very spot where Cromwell stood—and now they were unlimbered—and now with matches lighted the cannoniers were busily engaged directing them towards him. Then, from the dark and wooded gorge beneath,

a prolonged flourish of their trumpets announced the presence of the enemy; who now, the independents having been forced back bodily from their position, were crowding down in numbers almost irresistible in their turn to attempt the passage.

The eye of Cromwell for the first time grew anxious, and his lip quivered visibly, as with the blast, the heavy tramp of the advancing pikemen was heard above the ripple of the water, and the bright heads of their long weapons were glimmering above the mist-wreaths, which partially obscured the ranks that bore them. A mounted officer dashed up to him—spoke a few hurried words—and, ere the gloom had cleared from Cromwell's brow, the steady march of his own regiment fell joyously upon his ears! They halted, as the heads of their long files came up, abreast of their commander; while with their matches ready lighted six hundred musketeers, under the gallant Lumley, hastened to line the hither bank, availing them-

selves of every crag or stunted bush whereby to hide themselves, and whence to pour their unseen volleys on the host below.

With a few words, fiery and terse, and full of that enthusiastic confidence which had so wonderfully gained the hearts of all that followed him, Oliver now addressed his chosen veterans. In deep, and as it might seem sullen silence they attended while he spoke; but as he ended such a shout arose as startled Lesley's host and roused them from their dreams of victory. "Oliver! Oliver! Hurrah!"—and with the words they rushed down headlong on the spears of the advancing foes, shouting their cry, "The Lord! the Lord of hosts!"

Meanwhile the musketry of Lumley was not silent. Bright and quick it flashed from every gray stone, every bracken bush, and every tuft of broom that fringed those broken banks; and to increase the din, ten guns, which Massey, wakened at length to energy, wheeled up at the full gallop, opened their fire upon the feebler

ordnance of the Scottish, killing the cannoniers, dismounting their light pieces, and silencing, after a single ill-directed volley, their fruitless efforts.

Taken thus absolutely by surprise, the presbyterian squadrons reeled in their turn, and louder from the depths of the ravine arose that awful shout, "The Lord, the Lord of hosts!" as, through the waters whose current, dark with human gore, flowed feebly now, choked and obstructed with the bodies of the dead and dying, that irresistible and never-conquered band charged onward, bearing the relics of the enemy before them, with shriek, and yell, and execration, up at the very pike's point, up to the level ground whence, flushed with hope of easy triumph, they had but now descended, and still the well-aimed shot of Lumley's skirmishers fell thick among the flyers.

With half a glance Cromwell perceived his advantage: and with him to perceive was instantly to profit by it. Putting himself at the

head of Jefferson's brigade of ironsides, which came up at a rapid trot, just as Goff's pikemen were appearing on the further brow, brandishing high in air his formidable rapier, and pointing with a grim smile to the strife raging and reeling opposite, he spurred his charger down the bank! Two bounds bore him across the chasm, and, with a louder clang of corslet, spur, and scabbard, than had resounded yet that day, down rushed those zealot horsemen.

The morning hitherto had been dull, gloomy, and dispiriting; but as the leader of the ironsides spurred his black charger up the steep ascent, and paused an instant there (a breathing statue, bolder and nobler, and more massively majestic than any sculpture from the inspired studios of the Greek), contemplating the features of the already half-gained battle,—just at that instant, the mist bodily soared upward, and the broad glorious sunlight streamed out rejoicingly, kindling up all the field of battle, and the rich valley to the right, and the superb ex-

panse of the wide German Ocean, now calm and cradling on its azure bosom the friendly vessels of the commonwealth, that loomed like floating castles through the dispersing fog.

It was a wonderful, a spirit-stirring change, and he who witnessed its effects the first, inspired by the sublimity of what he looked upon, struck by a thought no less sublime, cried out, flinging his arm aloft, in proud anticipation of his coming triumph, "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered!"

The aspect of the man, rising as it were suddenly from out the bowels of the earth, the stern composure of his halt, the simultaneous outburst of the sunbeams; and, above all, the wonderful quotation, delivered in a voice so loud as to be heard by hundreds of both hosts, and yet so passionless and clear as to strike every heart with something of that awe, which would attach to aught miraculous, completed what the ordinary means of warfare had so well commenced.

Their broadswords flashing in the newly-risen beams, and their united voices pealing forth, as it were by inspiration, the apt words of their leader, the ironsides swept onward to the charge; and, without pause or hesitation, catching enthusiasm from the cries of those who went before, regiment after regiment of the invaders poured unopposed over the perilous chasm; and forming as they reached the level ground, plunged in with shot of arquebuse, and push of pike, upon the wavering masses, that could now offer only an inert resistance to their impetuous onset.

For a short time the native valour of the Scots supported them, after their flank was turned, and their whole line confused and shaken, beyond all hope of restoration. For a short time they stood firm with their serried spears, shoulder to shoulder, foot to foot; when one man fell, another stepping instantly into his place, and only ceasing to resist, when each one ceased to live. But, charged front, flank, and rear, by horse and

foot, pellmell, the cannon-shot making huge gaps in their dense columns, it was impossible that they, or any, should hold out. They broke, they scattered, they retreated not, but fled in wild and ir retrievable dismay, pursued, cut down, and slaughtered by the fresh cavalry of Cromwell, who for eight miles had execution of the flyers; while the triumphant general calling a halt, when he perceived the battle won, sung, with his legions swelling the stormy chorus, the hundred and seventeenth psalm, in honour of that Lord who, as he said, "after the first repulse, had given up his enemies as stubble before the godly arms, and the victorious weapons, of his own elected people."

CHAPTER II.

And Worcester's laureat wreath.

MILTON'S *Sonnets*.

No blame be to you, sir; for all was lost.

* * * * * The King himself

Of his wings destitute, the army broken,

And but the backs of Britons seen, all flying

Through a straight lane; the enemy full-hearted,

Lolling the tongue with slaughtering.—

Cymbeline.

FOR several months after the battle of Dunbar both parties rested in comparative inaction. Edinburgh castle, after a brief siege, was surren-

dered by Dundas without, indeed, if the assertions of the royalists are to be credited, any sufficient reason.

During the winter Oliver remained in the metropolis of Scotland, engaged for the most part in disputations with the presbyterian clergy, who hated him with bitter and incessant rancour; and here he was attacked by a strong fit of ague, threatening to undermine his constitution, and actually reducing him so low, that it was early in July before he was prepared to take the field.

Meanwhile, Charles had been crowned at Perth, on the first day of January, '51, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, most of the nobles being present in their robes of state and coronets—had sworn both to the “national covenant,” and to the “league and covenant”—had levied a strong army under command of the stout veteran Lesley—and had taken post, meaning to act on the defensive, on strong ground in the neighbourhood of Torwood. Here for some days the hostile armies faced each other, ma-

nœuvring to gain, if possible, advantages that might ensure success—Oliver continually desiring, Lesley as obstinately shunning, any contact that might lead to a general action. Skirmishes occurred almost every day between the cavalry and outposts, but none of much importance, whether from loss sustained or permanent results on the campaign; till at last, wearied by a game in which he had sagacity to see that he in the long run must be the loser, Cromwell transported his whole army into Fife, besieging and in two days making himself the master of the town of Perth.

Cromwell's object in this bold manœuvre was to draw down the Scottish army from its ground of vantage, and in this he succeeded fully, though not perhaps exactly in the manner he had contemplated; for, breaking up his camp at Torwood on the 31st, Charles turned his face toward the border, leading some twelve or fourteen thousand men, with the intent of concentrating his powers at Carlisle, where he expected to be

reinforced by a great rising of the royalists *en masse* from all the northern counties.

The consternation throughout England at the news of this advance was general and excessive. The parliament were in extremity of terror and suspicion ; Bradshaw himself, stout-hearted as he was in public, privately owned his fears, and more than half suspected the good faith of Cromwell. Their terrors grew more and more real daily, when it was told in London that the cavaliers of Lancashire were gathering head under Lord Derby, and the presbyterians threatening to make common cause with them under their major-general Massey ; and in good sooth, had it not been for the insane fanaticism of the Scottish clergy, who, with a fierce intolerance that ruined their own cause, would suffer none to join the standard of the King, without subscribing to the covenant, the forces of the royalists would have been truly formidable, and might have, not improbably, succeeded in restoring Charles to his ancestral throne. But, happily for England

hundreds of gallant cavaliers, and hundreds of stout-hearted English presbyterians, were refused the miserable boon of sacrificing life and fortune in behalf of the least grateful prince of an ungrateful line, because forsooth they would not sacrifice the interests of their native land to the intolerant and selfish policy of Scotland.

Still, though his ranks swelled not as rapidly as, under a more prudent system, they would assuredly have done, Charles marched with little opposition and still less real loss, as far into his southern kingdom as the fair town of Worcester—Lilburne, indeed, with a small independent party surprised and utterly defeated, at Wigan-lane in Lancashire, three or four hundred gentlemen commanded by the Earl of Derby, who, himself desperately wounded, escaped with difficulty from falling into the hands of his rude conquerors.—Lambert and Harrison attempted with inferior forces to dispute the passage of the Mersey with the King; but, after a few ineffectual charges, and offering Charles an opportunity of

bringing on a general action, were forced to draw off, and permit the enemy to enter Worcester unmolested. Here he was instantly proclaimed amid the acclamations of the mob, and the good wishes, faint though faithful, of the loyal gentlemen assembled in that city.

While tarrying here it became visible to Charles and his advisers that succours came not in by any means so rapidly as they had hoped; that the Welsh cavaliers, who had been most severely handled in their last insurrections, were not disposed to risk a general rising; and that there was but little hope of any common or extensive movement of the royalists, until some such advantage should be gained, as would at least be a justification to their daring. In this predicament it was decided that they should await Cromwell's arrival from the north, and give him battle there before the walls of Worcester.

They had not long to wait, for with his wonted energy of mind and motion that able leader had pursued the footsteps of his enemy; so that in a very few days of the King's arrival the

various detachments of the advancing army concentrated on the Severn, and on the 28th of August Oliver joined in person, and found at his disposal not less than thirty thousand soldiers of all arms, regular troops and militia both enumerated.

No sooner were the hostile armies face to face, than skirmishes, in which there was much desperate fighting and much loss on both sides, commenced and were continued daily. Lambert, after a well-contested struggle, carried the bridge at Upton and established his position, Massey having been wounded so severely as to be wellnigh *hors de combat*.

The Scots, on the first day of September, destroyed two bridges on the Team about three miles from Worcester, and the second was consumed in preparations for re-establishing the communication.

Late on that evening Oliver dismounted from his charger at head-quarters, and issued his directions, brief, luminous, and rapid, for the morrow, which, he reminded his high-spirited but superstitious officers, was his peculiar day of glory,

—“a day, whereon from his first childhood, by the Lord’s wondrous grace up to that present time, he never had attempted aught, but he had therefrom reaped a golden harvest.

“Wherefore,” he said, “let us fall on more boldly—mindful of the last anniversary which saw the glorious blessing of Dunbar—and putting trust in our own stout right-arms, and in the aid of that Lord, who is all in all—trusting, I say, that this shall prove a final and decisive end to our labours—yea ! and a crowning mercy !”

Fleetwood was then commanded to force the passage of the Team at noon ; when they supposed the cavaliers would have abandoned any thoughts of a decisive action for that day. While Cromwell should himself establish a bridge of boats across the Severn at Bunshill.

The morning of the third broke gloriously and bright. The independent forces were full of ardour for the onset, inflamed even beyond their wont by the prophetic exhortations of their leader, who, himself kindling like a war-horse to

the trumpets, proclaimed to them, no longer darkly nor in doubtful hints, but in wild glowing eloquence, that they should now ride forth to glory—that their right-hands should teach them terrible things—that they should smite the sons of Zeruiah utterly, and not suffer a man of them to live.

At the appointed hour, Fleetwood attacked in force, and, after a most furious cannonade, carried the passage of the Team, and was already strengthening his position, when Charles, alarmed by the incessant firing, despatched strong reinforcements to support his friends, with orders at all hazards to prevent a bridge from being formed.

Again the action became hot and doubtful, and now the independents were forced back, although fighting foot by foot, before the masses of the royalists.—But just when these imagined their success decisive, Fleetwood in turn was reinforced, and acting with a fiery daring, that was well seconded by his stout veterans, charged

instantly along his whole line, and repulsed the Scots. Those sturdy troops, however, rallied immediately, thus hoping to afford their countrymen a chance of breaking Cromwell's regiments on the other side the Severn.

The ground on which they fought, though for the most part level, was intersected every where by thick strong fences of old thorn with banks and ditches; and each of these positions was lined with musketry, and was defended with an obstinate and dogged courage, that cost the independents hundreds on hundreds of their bravest soldiers. One by one they were forced, however, at the pike's point; and still, as Fleetwood's men advanced, the Scotch pike-regiments rushed on, charging with more of spirit than they had displayed throughout the whole course of the war, and still, when forced to give way, leisurely and in perfect order, falling back to the next fence, which was by this time glancing with the sharp volleys of the musketeers.

But, notwithstanding all their efforts, ere night-

fall they were driven from their every line with unexampled slaughter—beaten at every point—and forced to seek for refuge in the walls of Worcester.

On the other side the river, the battle raged with equal fury, and almost equal doubtfulness, during five hours at the least. Cromwell, who had, from a flying battery of heavy guns, commenced a cannonade upon the fort built to defend the main gate of the town, and brought up all his forces in two lines to assault the place, was charged at all points by a general sally of the whole infantry of the King's army, which, issuing simultaneously from several gates, firing and cheering till the welkin rang as they came on, burst on the newly-levied regiments and the militia, with such enthusiastic valour, that they drove them back in absolute confusion, took Cromwell's battering-guns, and turned them with effect on his disordered squadrons.

But at this juncture Charles was unequal to the great part, which he had to play. Had he

brought out his cavalry, and charged again while the militia of the independents were forced pellmell into the ranks of the reserve, he hardly could have failed gaining a complete victory. But his horse, save one squadron, were within the city,—he saw his error when it was too late ; for the keen eye of Cromwell saw it likewise, and gave him not a second's space even to struggle to redeem it. Leading his cavalry—his own invincibles—at a quick trot by squadrons through the intervals of the defeated regiments, he set up one of his triumphant hymns, and sweeping on, like a spring tide, with full five thousand horse, he beat the victors back—regained the cannon, sabring the artillerists over their guns ; and while his cavalry reformed, brought up the whole of his reserve—the conquerors of Marston, Naseby, and Dunbar—column on column—with a succession of tremendous charges, that no troops then in the world could have resisted.

Scarce had his musketry and pikemen shattered the Scottish masses, ere he again came

thundering down on them with his unrivalled horse. And back they were borne, hopelessly, irretrievably defeated. Still they had steadiness enough to retreat corps by corps, facing and firing till all were within the walls, who had the power to crawl into that too precarious place of refuge.

The last beams of the setting sun glanced red and lurid on the weapons of the last band that filed into the gates—a feeble cheer arose! and then a heavy cannonade ensued from the whole line of battlements, compelling Oliver to draw his forces off for a short space of relaxation and repose. Short space it was, however; for twilight was yet lingering upon that fatal plain, when Cromwell's trumpets summoned the fortress to surrender. The summons was refused, and instantly a dozen rockets rushed up the darkening sky—and then, with Cromwell personally leading them on, sword in hand, with an appalling shout the forlorn hope rushed forward—with ladders and fascines, and boarding-axe and pike, and every instrument most fearfully de-

structive, they hurried to the walls, which now from every port-hole, battlement, and embrasure, poured forth the ringing volleys of their ordnance.

Scarcely ten minutes passed before the cannon again ceased—and the loud roar of thousands, blent with the maddened shrieks of women, and all the horrid noises of a captured city, announced that all was over. The gates were instantly thrown open, and in poured the furious zealots. Throughout the livelong night, the din, and rage, and agony, and sacrilege continued. Full fifteen hundred men were slaughtered in the streets.—The thoroughfares were choked with corpses—the kennels ran knee-deep with human gore!

The morning of the fourth arose, like that of the preceding day, serene and glorious. The massacre was checked, peace was restored, and comparative tranquillity; the King was a despairing fugitive—with scarce a hope remaining, even of personal escape; his army was annihil-

ated — his party was no more — his friends slaughtered, or hopeless captives—his kingdom numbered—weighed—divided—and apportioned; and, with a steady countenance, lit by no fiery exultation, the winner returned praises to the Giver of all Goodness—for this HIS CROWNING MERCY.

CHAPTER III.

Thou, who with thy frown
Annihilated senates.

Childe Harold.

Can tyrants but by tyrants conquered be,
And freedom find no champion and no child
Such as Columbia saw arise, when she
Sprung forth a Pallas, armed and undefiled ?

Ibid.

By that one blow the empire of the parliament was confirmed through every corner of Great Britain, the last hope of the Stuarts was in the

dust, never, as it seemed, more to rise; and he, the conqueror, was received in the metropolis, as no scion of a royal stock had ever yet been greeted. Congratulations, not of tongue-loyalty, but of sincere and grateful love, were showered upon him, as he drove into London in a gorgeous carriage, escorted by the Speaker and the leading members of the Commons, the mayor and sheriffs of the city, and an enormous multitude of every age and sex, who had gone out to Acton to show their gratitude and favour to one, whom many thought it no flattery to term the father and saviour of his country. A lodging was assigned to him in the late residence of England's monarch!—a solemn vote of thanks was tendered to him, all the members standing, when he resumed his seat!—petitions, couched in humbler language and decked with loftier adulation than any sovereign since Elizabeth received from his subjects, were sent up to him daily!—and lastly, his praises were hymned forth by a lyre, whose

melody shall never be forgotten while England's language lives upon the earth—the lyre of the immortal Milton!

Although no king, Cromwell was truly the first man in England. Modestly, however, and decorously, and without any symptom of disorganizing or misproud ambition, did he bear his high honours. Wisdom and mercy marked his elevation in no less degree, than energy and valour signalized his rise.

His first act in the senate of the regenerated land was to obtain the passing of a general amnesty in the behalf of all who had engaged in the late war; with the exceptions only of some two or three, so obstinately and incurably devoted to the exiled family, and hostile to the commonwealth, that public safety rendered their public punishment a measure not of cruelty or vengeance, but of necessity.

His next act was to procure a vote for taking speedily into consideration the expediency of fixing a time for their own dissolution. The

period named accordingly for the abdication of their immense and, thus far, well-exerted powers, was the third day of November, 1654—a distance of three years—a period neither justified by any rule or precedent of the constitution, nor any way desirable or necessary; but proving merely that having, by their exertions in past time, put down the tyranny established on the abuse of prerogative, they were determined now to build another on the more popular but scarce less perilous abuse of privilege. Having originally met in the year '40 they had already held the reins of government for a far longer time than any former parliament—than would have been endured in times less turbulent—than was, in short, consistent with the rules of sound and equitable policy. Having originally been composed of the best, the wisest, the most independent men of England, they had been gradually, but continually, reduced by death, desertion, and proscription, to a mere knot of party politicians, possessing nothing of a parliament except the

name, desirous solely of their own emolument and power, and as entirely different from that magnificent assembly which had resisted the first Charles in all the terrors of his puissant sovereignty, as it is possible for one deliberative body to be different from another.

This then was the House which now passed a vote, securing to themselves the supreme power of the realm, for three more years at least, in absolute defiance of the wishes of the people, of the army, and of the wisest patriots of the kingdom.

Scotland, meantime, subdued completely by the arms of Cromwell, wielded by Monk, his able deputy, was in a state of orderly and calm tranquillity widely at variance with the confused and hopeless anarchy, in which it had been plunged for centuries by the fierce and continual rivalry of its dogmatic and intolerant sectarians; who had been now at length, by the wise energy of Oliver, compelled to endure one another peacefully, and to forbear the angry disputations that

had incessantly convulsed the country since the first era of the reformation.

Ireland, unhappy Ireland, desolated by the fierce vengeance of the independent conquerors, was perforce quiet; and England united, free, and wealthy, required only a short interval of time, under a firm and liberal government, to recover from the injuries which intestine discord must bring upon a state, how great soever may have been the benefits acquired by the means of the keen remedy which is to nations as amputation to the human frame. Abroad, her navies rode the ocean in triumphant, if not undisputed mastery; baffling at every fresh encounter, and subduing the brave and dogged Hollanders, who had so lately ploughed the narrow seas with brooms at their mast-heads, as though they would have swept their island foemen from their path like worthless dust,—bringing in, unresisted, rich and gallant prizes of the volatile and fiery Frenchmen, who dared not (so had the genius of the proud republic overpowered the spirit of that valiant

nation) offer resistance to that people now, which they had set at nought while governed by a king; winning respect from the cold and haughty Spaniard; making her fame as universal, and her flag as widely known, as winds could blow or billows bear; and justifying the high boast of Oliver, which he had uttered years before to Ardenne, while yet an undistinguished member in the great council of the kingdom, that the time should come wherein the quality of Englishmen should be as widely and as greatly honoured, as ever was the name of antique Roman.

It was then evident that there was now no cause of fear, which should in any degree sanction the continued *usurpation* (for such indeed it was) of the parliamentary party, who seemed at this time to have again determined on trying the same line of measures, which had failed so signally before the death of the first Charles. At this time England had been, for nearly four years, under the nominal form of a republic.— The merit of successive parliaments and unbiassed

representation was on all sides acknowledged, yet was no step taken or even contemplated toward the establishment of such form, or the self-dissolution of the present House.

Month after month matters continued thus, until another year had wellnigh joined its predecessors in that great catacomb—the past. The country was dissatisfied; the army waxed indignant—the rather so that (as before in the year '49) foreseeing the determined opposition of the soldiery to their unlawful measures, the Commons once again began to agitate the subjects of retrenchment of expenses and the disbanding of one-half the standing forces.

Thus things went on, all prosperous abroad, all turbulent at home and dubious, until the month of August in the year succeeding the defeat of Worcester. At this time the leaders of the army, which had now reached the very winter of their discontent, presented a petition of the host by means of a deputation of six officers, the devoted friends of Cromwell, the boldest and

most uncompromising favourers of universal freedom in elections, and universal toleration (papisty alone excluded) in religious matters.

A council had been held some days before, at Lenthall's house, of all the most important personages of the land, civil and military ; whereat it was debated gravely, whether it would be better to perpetuate the commonwealth on terms to be fixed now immutably, or to establish once again the government as vested in a limited mixed monarchy. The officers in general were adverse to all form of royalty, as holding the name ' King,' alone and in itself, subversive of true freedom !—The lawyers on the other hand, with the sage Whitelocke at their head, maintained that the time-honoured constitution of the land, as comprehending Commons, Lords, and King, was suited better, both for stability and safety, to the feelings and the principles of Englishmen than a new form of democratic sway.

Cromwell during this council, as before, held himself much aloof; but at the last, when urged

for his opinion, admitted that he, "so far as he had thought upon so grave and onerous a question, inclined his judgment rather to the last expressed position, could it be any wise decided what person might be called advisedly to fill the vacant throne; since of a truth he thought not any of the idolatrous and heaven-condemned scions of the late man admissible to dwell among—much less to govern—this regenerate and freedom-seeking people."

By some most underhanded means, the tidings of this meeting, and the opinions held therein, were treasonably carried to the parliament, and they proceeded instantly to force a bill for their own dissolution through the House, encumbered with provisions wholly at variance with the freedom of election, and obnoxious to the bulk of the people. It was in vain that Harrison conjured them with most moving eloquence to pause in their career of reckless and unprincipled ambition—it was in vain—they were that instant on the point of voting that a new election should be

holden for four-fifths of the members of the Commons, the one-fifth remaining, to hold their seats for a yet further time, and to possess the right of sanctioning or disallowing the admission of the newly-chosen delegates, as they might deem them honest and worthy vessels, or unsuited to the work in hand.

At a late hour Oliver, who was waiting at Whitehall in his own private chambers, was advertised of these strange and unjust proceedings; and instantly commanding a company of soldiers to repair to the house, entered, and took his seat among the members. He was more plainly—nay, even slovenly attired than at any time when he had appeared in public for several years. His dress was of plain and coarse cloth, all black, doublet, cloak, and hose; with stockings of gray worsted rolled up to his mid-thigh.

While the debate continued, Cromwell sat immersed apparently in thought, and listening most attentively to the opinions of the different orators. The speaker, at length, rose, as if to

put the question—then, beckoning to Harrison who sat opposite him, Cromwell stood up calmly, and as that officer approached him—“Now is the time!” he said, “now I must do it!” and forthwith he put off his hat, and began speaking in a mild tone, and more to the point than usual in his harangues; expressing his disapprobation, although moderately and in measured terms, of the motion before the House. But gradually, as he kindled with his subject, his speech became more vehement and fiery—his words rolled forth in one unbroken stream of bitter and severe invective, scorching and blighting as the electric flash—his features were inflamed with tremendous passion—his eyes lightened—and his whole frame expanded with a most perfect majesty of wrathful indignation. He rebuked them for their self-seeking, and profaneness, their frequent denial of true justice, their oppression, their inordinate and selfish love of power, their neglect to the brave and honest army, their idolizing the lawyers, their trampling under foot the valiant

men who had bled for them in the field, their tampering with the false and time-serving presbyterians.

“ And for what,” he cried, with loud and vehement tones,—“ for what all this? what, but to perpetuate your own ill-gotten power—to replenish your own empty purses—empty through riot—and debauchery—and bribery—and every kind of ill, which it befits not *you* to perpetrate—and which it were to *me* degrading, even to mention or to think of. But now, I say,” he went on, stamping fiercely on the ground, “ your time hath come! The Lord hath disowned you! The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, hath done with you! He hath no need of you any more!—Lo he hath judged you, and cast you forth, and chosen fitter instruments to him, to execute that work in which you have dishonoured him!”

“ Order!” exclaimed one of the bolder of the members. “ Order!—I rise to order—never have I yet heard any language so unparliamentary! so

insolent!—the rather that it cometh from our own servant—one whom we have too fondly cherished—one whom, by raising to this unprecedented and undue elevation, we have endued with the daring and the power thus to brave us!”

For a few moments Cromwell glanced on the bold speaker, as though astonishment at the excess of his audacity had robbed him of the faculty of speech—then casting his hat on his disordered locks, he pulled it doggedly down upon his brows, and with a stride that made the whole house echo, advancing on the gentleman who was yet speaking,

“Come sir,” he said, in a low hissing voice through his set teeth, griping the while his dagger’s hilt, as if he would have stabbed him on the spot,—“come, come sir—I will put an end to your loud prating!”

Then turning his back suddenly on him whom he addressed, he paced to and fro the hall, his whole face black with the blood which rushed to it as violently as though it would have burst

from every pore and vein, his broad breast panting and heaving with emotion, and his entire aspect displaying the most ungovernable and tremendous passions.

“You are no parliament I say,” he shouted at the pitch of his stentorian voice, “you are no parliament! Ho! bring them in!—without there! Bring them in!”

There was a sudden pause—a moment of unutterable terror!—for such was the expression painted upon the faces of the grave members of the long parliament. When, years before, a king had dared to violate in a far less degree the privileges of that high assemblage, their own undaunted valour, fired by a sense of right—a proud uncompromising feeling of their own inborn worth—had wellnigh armed those patriots to battle with such weapons as chance afforded them against the licensed cut-throats of the Sovereign. But as the door flew open, and Colonel Worseley entered with a guard of twenty musketeers, blank and base apprehensions sat on the pallid brows

of three-fourths of those present; nor did one man, of the whole number, offer to make the least resistance, to draw a sword, to raise a hand, or even to exchange a look with the strange person, who from so lately being their servant, or at least their equal, had then by one bold effort rendered himself their master—their unquestioned, undisputed master!

“This is not honest!” cried Sir Harry Vane, at length, when he had rallied from the first surprise; “it is against morality, and common honesty!”

Words cannot picture, language of man cannot describe, the change that flashed across the speaking lineaments of Oliver. An instant—a short instant only, ere Vane addressed him, all had been virulent and active fury, lashed as it were by its own goadings into a state purely animal and uncontrollable. Now the fierce glare of anger instantly subsided; leaving the face for the moment passionless and vacant as an infant’s; but ere there was time—not for words, but for

thought—the deepest sneer of scorn, of loathing and unutterable undisguised contempt succeeded.

“Sir Harry Vane!” he replied in a low stern whisper, which drove the blood curdling through his veins. “O Sir Harry Vane! The Lord deliver me from Sir Harry Vane! Honesty and Sir Harry Vane! Morality and Harry Vane!—who if he so had pleased, might have prevented this! who is a juggler—a mere hypocrite—and hath not common *honesty himself!* A parliament! I do profess, a precious parliament!—of drunkards!—knaves!—extortioners—adulterers!—Lo! there,” he added, pointing to Challoner,—“there sits a noted wine-bibber—a very glutton and a drunkard! There!” casting his eyes towards Henry Marten and Sir Peter Wentworth, “there two most foul adulterers!”

Then turning on his heel, as if he had already said enough, he waved his hand toward

the soldiers, and in a voice as quiet and unruffled as if he had not been in any wise excited, commanded them to clear the house !

“ I,” exclaimed Lenthall boldly, for seeing that no violence was offered he had recovered his scared spirits, “ I am the Speaker of this House, lawfully by its members chosen, and save by vote of those same members, or by actual force, I never quit its precincts, while in life !”

Then Harrison stepped slowly up the body of the long hall to the chair, attended by two musketeers ; he laid his hand on Lenthall’s shoulder, and prayed him to descend, and without further words, he came down from his seat, and putting on his hat, departed from the house all crest-fallen and astounded.

Algernon Sydney followed him at once, though with a statelier mien and bolder bearing, eighty more of the members moving with him towards the door.

While there had seemed to be the slightest

chance of any opposition to his will, Cromwell had stood in silence, with his arms folded on his breast, facing the speaker's chair with a dark scowl upon his brow and his lips rigidly compressed; but now, when he perceived that all, without more words, were skulking away from the house, he once again addressed them. "It is you," he exclaimed,—“it is you, who have thrust this on me. Night and day have I prayed the Lord that he would slay me, rather than put me on the doing of this work.”

“Then wherefore do it,” asked Allen bluntly, ere he left the house, “if that be so grievous to you? There is yet time enough to undo that which is already done—and, as your conscience tells you, *ill-done*, my Lord Cromwell!”

“Conscience! Ha! Conscience! Alderman,” retorted Oliver, “and what did *thine* tell *thee*, when thou, as treasurer of the army, didst embezzle much more than one hundred thousand pounds to thine own uses? What sayest thou to that

good Alderman?—Ho! Ho! methinks I have thee.—Guards, apprehend this peculator! Away with him! Away with him! I say,” and he stamped angrily upon the floor, as to enforce his words, “until he answer for his deep misdoings!”

Sullen, humiliated, and unpitied, for they had lost already the respect of honest men of all denominations, the members of that parliament, which had dethroned and slain a powerful monarch—destroyed the constitution, and disenfranchised the people of a mighty nation—vanquished all foreign foes, and raised their country from a secondary to a first-rate power in Europe, now sneaked away to find a miserable refuge in the despised obscurity of private life,—deserted by the people in their turn, whom they had first deserted at the dictates of a depraved and poor ambition.

When all had gone forth from the hall, the worker of this mighty revolution fixed his eyes on the mace, which lay upon the board before the

Speaker's chair. "What shall we do," he said, "with this fool's bauble? Here, carry it away!" and, at the word, a private of the guard bore off that ancient emblem of the people's delegated power, on which not to preserve his soul, Charles Stuart would have dared lay a finger of offence—and bore it off at the first bidding of the simple citizen of a small English borough, raised by his own strange sagacity and the indomitable firmness of his simple will, to a far loftier station than the proudest despot of the East.

Cromwell then snatched the instrument of dissolution from the trembling fingers of the clerk; ordered the great doors to be locked; and, girt by his devoted guard, returned to his own palace at Whitehall, in all save name a king.

The same day saw the dissolution of the council—and, ere the members were forgotten (short as the period was before they were so), the army and the navy sent their addresses to the Lord General, declaring that they were content to live or

die in the support of these his measures ; and every corner of the island resounded with the loud hymns of the fanatics, exulting that ‘ the great and long-desired reformation was now near the birth ! blessing the God of heaven, who had called Cromwell forth, and led him on, not only in the high places of the field, but also among those mighty ones whom God hath left—to the dissolving of the late parliament—rejoicing that the fifth monarchy, the kingdom of Messiah was at hand, and that the promised reign—the grand millennium of the saints—was now to be established in the renovated commonwealth.

And he—the self-deceiver—the fool of fancied destiny—waked through the watches of the night to seek the Lord in prayer—to read the oracles of the fates in the unquiet workings of his own restless spirit—to detect in the success of his ambitious projects—projects unknown or disguised to his inmost soul—the wonderful fulfilment of the prophecies of old ! to cry aloud in the

dark solitude of his nocturnal chamber, “ True ! true !—It *was* true, that the spirit thundered at midnight in mine ears !—Lo ! the accomplishment is here !—Am I not—am I not the first in England—though I be not as yet called King ?”

CHAPTER IV.

Cyriack, this three years' day these eyes though clear,
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot ;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear,
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of Heart or Hope ; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask ?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence, my noble task.
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.

MILTON'S *Sonnets*.

IN the old parlour, still decorated, although
years had flown, with the same faded hangings
—more faded now—of dark-green serge,—
before his desk of ebony, and near a sea-coal

fire which threw a brilliant care-dispelling light upon the features still comely and unwrinkled, upon the soft hair scarcely streaked with any tinge of gray, and the bright eye still clear and vivid, as though it were not robbed of its intelligence, sat that far greater and more holy poet, who, as himself has told us, did not

“ sometimes forget

Those other two, equall'd with *him* in fate,

So were *he* equall'd with them in renown,

Blind *Thamyris* and blind *Mæonides*—”

but to whose blameless spirit, fraught as it was with knowledge of his own mighty genius, it was not given to know, that he should no less supersede in fame, in immortality of praise, the objects of his emulation, than he exceeded them in the solemnity, the fervour, and the cultivation of his unrivalled intellect.

He sat not now, however, as before, alone ; for two young females, not perhaps, to speak strictly, beautiful, but still attractive, and bearing in their pale features undoubted tokens of

Nature's richest dower—high intellect—were seated in the same small apartment. One placed before the organ had just ceased drawing from its vocal tubes that flood of rich religious harmony, which ever was the strongest source of inspiration to the soul of her benighted parent. The other, having just received a packet from a servitor who was now passing from the chamber, was in the act of opening it, speaking the while, in a voice which though more feminine, and, at the same time, very similar in its peculiar sweetness, was still less musically soft than her father's tones of unmixed melody:

“If I err not,” she said, “this should be from the hand of your much-valued friend, Sir Edgar Ardenne.”

“Is it indeed?” cried Milton, eagerly. “Dear, spirit-wounded friend—fain would I hear of him. Quick! my girl; truly my soul thirsts for his tidings, as thirsts the panting hart for the cool water-brooks! Is it a foreign letter?”

“Not foreign, sir,” she answered; “but surely from your friend. It hath for date, ‘The commonwealth’s ship Jael, now off Spit-head, November 29th.’ I will proceed to show you the contents.”

And, without further words, she read it out in a clear fluent voice, her father listening all the time with a most earnest and unwavering attention depicted on his pregnant and expressive features.

“How shall I offer to console you, my most honoured and beloved friend,”—thus ran the letter,—“under the grievous dispensation with which it has seemed good to HIM, who cannot err, to make yet further trial of your excellence? If I should set down aught, it would but be, I know, as a weak and whispering sound, when brought beside the powerful and all-assuaging harmonies which your own tutored mind, mature in wisdom and far superior no less in fervid piety to mine than in the gifts of science,

hath poured forth in a never-ceasing stream, to lull the pains and minister to the repinings of the flesh. Condolence, therefore, I nor offer—nor would you, I think, receive. Nothing except a conscience such as yours can bear the body up beneath so sad a deprivation—and such an one *can* do much more—and *doth*. Moreover, if in such circumstances any thing can be termed happy—happy it is that your enjoyments are, for the most part, of that spiritual and internal nature, which change of day or night—of noontide splendour, or of everlasting darkness—can nothing take away nor yet deteriorate. Truly you have laid up for yourself treasures, ‘where the moth and the rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.’ I have read through your task, in leisure moments of my perilous and weary watches—your defence of the English people—and **IT IS A DEFENCE!** Had you written never any thing before, this should prove you both patriot and poet—should win you what, I fancy

you, no more than I esteem at an inordinate or priceless value—the vain world's voice of praise—and greater far than this the approbation of all good and wise men now, and the eternal reverence and gratitude of ages that shall be hereafter.

“ But of this enough ; no words of mine, alas ! can remedy or soothe those griefs, if there be any, which your own high philosophy has not removed already—and, to assure you of my real sympathy, they are, I know, even more needless—of that you can want no assurance ? I would that we could hold more intimate communion—for I have many things to say to you, which I love not to trust to paper;—the rather that that paper *must* now pass under eyes not yours, before its sense can be transmitted to your ears. But since we cannot converse freely face to face, as in more happy days of old,—days which to both of us are now but a delightful memory of things that never can return,—why we must even interchange our

sentiments, as best we may ; setting down what we may in prudence and with safety, and supplying, each from his own knowledge of the other's wonted train of thought and feeling, that which must be omitted. This, for my own part, I will entreat you to assay to do, bearing in mind the last important conversation which took place between us—with my own fears concerning things and persons of no small weight in England, and your assurances that those my fears were fruitless and ill-grounded. We have learned here in the fleet, but a few months ago, how the Lord General hath dissolved the parliament by actual and armed violence ; and now we further hear that he doth exercise in person all the prerogatives and duties of an absolute, uncontrolled monarch—making, at his own pleasure, peace and war—signing and ratifying treaties with foreign potentates—excluding or admitting whom he will to the great council of the nation ; bearing himself, in short, as if he were legitimately

and of right, the master of the liberties and lives of freeborn, but alas no longer free, Englishmen. I may not here disguise from you that shortly after the intelligence of his first usurpation—for such I, for one, hold the dissolution of the parliament, as I may say, at the pike's point, how worthless or inadequate soever it might be—a general council held by the delegates from every vessel of our victorious fleet, voted an address to the general, approving of the measure which I reprobate, and promising to live or die in his support. Nor, I imagine, have I any need to state to you, that neither I, nor a far more important person, to wit, our great commander Blake had any share or portion in this vote or address—both of us for the time holding ourselves content to do our duty to our country against her foreign foes, whatever the complexion of her internal policy. The flag of England must not float less superbly now, than when it overcanopied the crowns of our immortal sovereigns of old.

But now I will entreat you, ere I lay down my pen, which I must do somewhat more in haste that the last signal from our admiral is to weigh anchors and stand out to sea in chase of a Dutch squadron, to inform me at your leisure of the more intricate and hidden motives of late matters in the state. Whether this man hath indeed by his own daring only, and at the prompting of insatiate ambition, compassed an usurpation, so beyond all conception flagrant and audacious, that I comprehend not how even his sagacity can cloak it in the eyes of men with a fair semblance—or whether the times be indeed so much out of joint, that these most marvellous aggressions on the privileges and the liberty of the parliament, can be in any wise required or justified, on grounds of hindering greater anarchy and detriment to England than shall arise from this invasion of time-honoured usages. Our anchor is apeak already, and some of our light brigantines having slipped their cables are, as we well

believe (for we may hear their cannon although it is so hazy that we can see scarce a league to seaward), even now engaged with Van Tromp's rearmost vessels. I send this with the pilot, who shall despatch it by express to London. I pray you once again write to me as one secluded from intelligence of all those things which are most dear to him—we shall, 'tis very like, put back to Portsmouth after action, should it seem fit to the great Moderator of the universe to grant us victory to which our endeavours shall be in no wise wanting.—To Him I now commend you. *Valeas, igitur, haud immemor observantissimi tui.*

“ EDGAR ARDENNE.”

Several times during the space occupied by the reading of this letter, had Milton interrupted it by comments to his gentle secretaries, on its style, its language, and above all, the noble sentiments which breathed in every line of it. At moments he was affected almost to the point of tears, and again at others a bright

benignant smile would kindle his whole aspect into sunny animation. After his daughter had ceased reading—

“Kind heart,” he said, “kind heart, and generous as kind, we must forthwith reply to him. He knoweth not, moreover, how dear and intimate a secretary and attendant is vouchsafed to us in our dismal gloom. Hast thou thy vellum ready, girl, and pens? I will endite forthwith, for lo! his letter hath been long delayed upon its route and he hath anxiously, I doubt not, looked for an answer to his queries.”

Having received an affirmative reply from her who had been playing on the organ, and who now placed herself beside him at the desk he commenced dictating in his wonted voice of slow and silvery music.

*“To the most noble gentleman, and much esteemed
Sir Edgar Ardenne.*

“The letter which you sent to me, my true

and honoured friend, addressed from Spithead—hither—previously to the renowned and memorable victory of July, wherein not only was the indefeasible and ancient right of England to be the queen and mistress of the ocean wave, permanently and triumphantly established by the tried arms of our stout seamen, but that most brave and dangerous foe, during whose whole lifetime never had the sturdy Hollanders yielded to us the palm, Van Tromp, was laid at rest from troubling us now any more,—hath but now reached me, although frozen winter is already treading hard on the retiring footsteps of his more lusty predecessor. Grateful, indeed, and pleasing to my spirit are the kind sympathizings which you have therein displayed with my infirmities. Great truly is the loss of light—the shutting out of wisdom from one of its most easy and familiar entrances—the quenching of the finest—the most delicate—and subtile of the senses. But surely under this affliction mighty and manifold, all

glory be to Him who to the shorn lamb tempereth the wind, are still my consolations—and truly I can use the word in its full sense, my joys! First—do I feel this proud conviction, that ere mine eyes were sealed in night, they had performed their task, not negligently, nor with a niggard and reluctant labour, but with such ample execution, such overflowing measure of success, that not alone the cause which I have laboured to uphold, even to the self-sacrifice of God's first gift of light, hath been admitted true in every land of christendom, and I its author robed in a vestment of high repute as might compensate for any loss less grievous; but more, the ill-advised and senseless wretch who dared to strive against me in the arena of the schools, hath paid for his temerity not only by the utter deprivation of all renown which might before have been conceded to him—but by his own decease perishing of the rankling hatred and mean jealousy which follows ever on defeat, when sustained by a poor, base

spirit. These things then are to me a great and wonderous consolation—first that I, in my degree, have done my duty to my beloved country—secondly, that to her the sacrifice hath not been profitless, nor the devotion unacceptable—and thirdly, that to me it hath brought that best boon of the world's, giving that boon to pant for which is of a truth 'the last infirmity of noble minds,' a high, and though myself I say it, not an unmerited renown. Nor fancy, my kind friend, that in my blindness I am deserted quite and robbed of natural enjoyments—No! by the gracious mercy of that Lord, who never casts us into peril, or temptation, or adversity, but likewise he finds for us a way of escape from the same, I am so piously attended by the affectionate and loving cares of my two daughters, my organists, my secretaries, nurses, and companions, that less acutely do I feel the greatness of my loss, than it were easy for you to imagine. Besides, long since have I looked forward to

this consummation of my daily and nocturnal labours, as to a certain unavoidable result—and poor indeed were the resources and the energies of him, who having long foreseen a coming evil, should lack the power to reconcile himself to its endurance, when it seems good unto the Lord to send it in his own appointed time.

“Now with regard to what you say touching the difficulty or the danger of intimate communion between us by epistles—relieve yourself from any terror—it is a child’s tongue which conveys the sense of all the letters he receives to her blind parent’s ear—it is a child’s hand which commits to writing each syllable that flows from her blind parent’s mouth. Wherefore, whatever you would say to me, write now, and ever, with all fearlessness and freedom, as I will answer to your queries. Surely the matters which have caused so much of grieving and anxiety to your most noble mind, have likewise been a stumbling-

block to many—though certainly they too are of the Lord. Needful it was for England's weal, for her salvation I might say, that the self-seeking carnal-minded junto, who arrogated to themselves the rights and titles of a parliament, and who, having once liberated, were now striving to enslave their country, should be cast forth from the high-places of their usurpation. And by whom could they be cast forth save by the excellent and most wise person whom I am grieved to see that you do still mistrust? Deeply, most deeply, was he moved—and fervently, with tears and prayers continually and supplications earnest and importunate, did he beseech the Ruler of all mortal councils that this cup should pass from him—but it might not be granted. Had Cromwell been ambitious, would he at once have yielded up the power which he for a short time assumed, to a new-chosen parliament assembled at the earliest?—Truly, had he so willed, he might have then been king—but no!

he laboured for his country's weal, and he has won it! And again, if he be now Protector of the land, wielding the sword of execution, and weighing with the balances of justice—I pray you, how was he so eminently raised above his fellows? Did he so elevate himself, carving his way through patriot opposition to that thorny seat of power?—Doth he sit now upon unruly and unwilling necks of subjugated and rebellious citizens? Oh! no. But by the resignation of the free-elected parliament—which succeeded that base remnant one over whose fall not one man shed a tear in England—of all their delegated powers—powers which they soon learned they could not profitably wield—into the hands of him whom they saw—and saw truly—to be the only person capable of holding England's helm aright amid the turbulent and stormy seas of foreign warfare and domestic anarchy. Remember you, how we discoursed one time touching the possibility of the existence of republics?—And how I,

dazzled by the immortal glare of classic stories, caught by the light which I then deemed a star—a living star of glory—but now have ascertained to be a false delusive meteor—how I contended that as Rome and Greece were free and mighty once, so England should be likewise when modelled to a form of pure democracy? Do you remember this—and your own arguments against me? Now, I confess it, you have conquered—and I, wise as I held myself, was groping like a benighted traveller amid the ruined labyrinths and fallen shrines of false divinities. Truly there is no tyranny like to the tyranny of multitudes. Till the majority of men shall be, as you then said, wise and unselfish, virtuous, honest, and enlightened, till then it is in vain to hope for good from any government administered by that majority,—that hundred-headed, fickle-willed, false-hearted monster, which is called the people. England was tottering on the brink of ruin, in the years that preceded the

all-glorious '49, and Oliver stepped in, and rescued her from lying the dishonourable victim of one tyrant. England again was falling headlong—headlong into an abyss of anarchy and vice and misery and folly—and now again has the same guardian of his country—the same great Oliver stepped in, and saved her from becoming the most miserable slave and harlot of ten millions, fiercer each one and more tyrannical, than he who paid the forfeit of his crimes upon the scaffold of Whitehall. Never, in any former day, were all men's liberties so well defined, so jealously secured, so strictly and so punctually guarded, as they now are. Never was justice yet so equably administered, without respect of persons or estates—never was virtue yet so honoured and rewarded—never was vice so loathed, so execrated and so punished. Each man of England can indeed sit now under his own vine and his own fig-tree fearless, content, and free. Happy and virtuous and rich at home, honoured and

feared abroad — succouring the oppressed in every foreign clime, riding the ocean in secure and undisputed mastery—shielding her sons, in whatsoever quarter of the wide world they may be wandering, by the mere shadow of her name—what more than this could the most ardent patriot wish to be his country's lot?—And this is England's now!—When was it so before? And now that it has once been won for her—won by her Great Protector—who shall e'er wrest it from her—when shall it cease to be?

“But I grow warm—enthusiastical—as who would not, that knows him^d as he should be known, in praise of this most wondrous man. I have a boon to ask of you—a boon, which I beseech you, by the memory of those pleasant days when we two wandered by the classic waters of the Tiber and Ilissus, when we two mused among the ruins of the Colosseum and the palace tombs of the dead Cæsars, grant to me. It is the first I ever asked of you, and

you will not refuse it. Peace is concluded with the sturdy Hollanders ; our fleets may float from the white cliffs of Albion, beyond the pillars of the Grecian hero, beyond the far Symplegades—beyond the islands of the blest, over the vanished Atalantis, even to the free forest-shores of that great western land, named of our virgin queen, and find no flag to brave them. Sheathe then your glorious sword. England hath need of you at home. Return, return, and know and love him, as you knew and loved him of yore—and you shall own me right in my opinion, and Cromwell ‘ clear in his great office,’ else will I be content that you shall call me now no longer

“ Your most affectionate friend and admirer,

“ JOHN MILTON.

“ *Westminster,*

This 14th day of January, 1654.”

BOOK V.

The third of the same moon, whose former course
Had all but crown'd him on the self-same day
Depos'd him gently from his throne of force,
And laid him with the earth's preceding clay.
And show'd not fortune thus how fame and sway,
And all we deem delightful, and consume
Our souls to compass through each arduous way,
Are in her eyes less happy than the tomb?
Were they but so in man's, how different were his doom !
Childe Harold.

CHAPTER I.

A more than earthly crown
The dictatorial wreath.

He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.
Though high *above* the sun of glory glow,
And far *beneath* the earth and ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.

Childe Harold.

IT was the evening of the twenty-sixth of June, some five years later than the date of Milton's letter urging upon Sir Edgar Ardenne the propriety of his return to England; yet since he had dictated it, the poet had received no line or token from his friend.

After the peace which closed the long and hard-fought struggle with the Hollanders, and decided the supremacy of England on the seas, Ardenne throwing up his commission had left the navy, nor, since that day, had any tidings been received of one, who had a little time before so occupied the general attention, and played a part so eminent in that great drama—the world's History.

Such is renown!—such popular applause! such human gratitude! The man who had preserved the life of Oliver on Winsley-field—who had secured his victory on Marston Moor, who had, to the abandonment of all that could have rendered his own life happy, laboured as the most strenuous and faithful of that great being's followers, so long as he believed him true to England and himself—who, with a yet harder sacrifice, quitted his side the very moment he perceived the dawning symptoms of ambition, in one whom he had loved and honoured, as men but rarely love and honour—this man was now forgotten—forgotten by the land for which he had so deeply suffered—

forgotten by the friend he had so deeply served !

The previous anniversary of this day had been a day of splendour and rejoicing—the night had been one of joy, festivity, and mirth. From every steeple in the huge metropolis the merry bells had chimed with their most jovial notes—from park and tower the loud voice of the cannon thundered in noisy concert—from every casement, tapers, and lamps, and torches sent forth unwonted radiance—and from each court and square great bonfires streamed heavenward, while by their light the multitude sat feasting and carousing to the health of the Protector. The previous anniversary had witnessed the superb and solemn ceremonial of his installation to the office, which he had filled with so much dignity and honour to himself, with so much profit and advancement to his country, during the four preceding years.

With all the glorious preparation, the “pride, pomp, and circumstance,” which attended the coronation of a monarch,—with proclamation of the kings-at-arms, and homage of bare-

headed lords, and acclamations of the multitude, and addresses from the delegates of foreign potentates,—Oliver had been decorated with a robe of purple more splendidly elaborate than the attire of any former king; he had been girded with the rich sword of state; he had received a sceptre massive with solid gold, with which to sway the destinies of England, and a noble copy of the Holy Writ, whereby to wield that sceptre rightly. Generals had borne his train; the parliament had sanctioned his investiture, as performed by its Speaker; the people had assented. In all but name—that “feather in the hat,” which adds not any thing to him who wears it, that “toy and bauble,” which he had oftentimes rejected, partly in politic accordance to the prejudices of his more fanatical advisers, partly in superstitious, although unconfessed obedience to the prophetic voice, which had forewarned him of his coming greatness—in all but name the citizen of Huntingdon was now the KING OF ENGLAND!

Great—powerful — triumphant—unresisted!

— His every project splendidly successful! — His every wish fulfilled! — His love of glory — thirst of power — ambition to be **FIRST** — all satisfied, if not indeed insatiate! — His boast, that he would make the name of Englishman as potent and as far revered as ever was the style of antique Roman, completed to the letter. The country which he governed raised from the deepest degradation to the loftiest fame! — His navies irresistible, his armies every where victorious, his alliance courted, and his enmity most humbly deprecated by dynasties, which but one century before — and that too when the most mighty of her former sovereigns, the manly-minded virgin queen, had filled her throne — regarded England as a mere speck on the bosom of the sea, hard it is true of access and difficult to conquer, but powerless abroad and exercising scarce a shadow either of influence or power among the mightier royalties of Europe! — Was Cromwell happy? —

In a high chamber of his more than royal residence, while all without was rife with de-

monstrations of respect for his assured and legal dignity, Oliver sat alone. Sumptuously, though still plainly, clad in an entire suit of sable velvet, the jewelled sword of state which had been on that same day of the foregoing year buckled to his side, lying upon the board before him, and bearing in his altered mien, (altered most strangely and adapted to his altered station) that grave majestic dignity which had replaced the bluntness of his soldier-bearing, musing in solitude and silence, the greatest man in England passed the first anniversary of his assured and titled exaltation. There was, however, now no glow of exultation on that pale cheek, and careworn brow—no curl of triumph on the lip—no flash of gratified ambition in the downcast eye. Lines deeper and sterner than the wrinkles of advancing age were scored into that massive forehead—a shadow gloomy and sad had veiled that hollow eye—exhaustion; weariness of heart, sickness of spirit, were written visibly in the pale hollows of that haggard cheek.

There was a trifling sound—a casual rustling

in the large apartment, such as each hour brings a thousand to unsuspecting ears.—He started to his feet—he thrust his hand into his bosom—he bent a searching and disquieted eye into each corner of the room, which was so strongly lighted, that not a shadow could be seen in its most distant angle.—He listened, as the condemned prisoner listens for the foot of the law's last minister. The sound came not again—and he resumed his seat; but as he did so, a sharp and jingling clash, told that beneath the garb of royalty there lurked a shirt of steel; and the light glittered on the but of a concealed pistol, just rendered visible by the derangement of his doublet. The soldier of a hundred fields—the vanquisher and scorner of a thousand perils—he who had ridden to the fray as to the banquet—he who had stood all dauntless and unflinching among a storm of bullets, that cut down all around him—he—even he—wore hidden armour—shook at an empty sound!

A pile of papers lay before him on the table—threats from anonymous assassins—hints from concealed and faithful spies, dwellers at

every court in Europe—despatches intercepted—private correspondences opened and searched—and, on the top of all, a pamphlet, fresh from the press with the leaves partly cut, and a broad-bladed dagger, which he had used to open them, lying upon it, as if to mark the place. It bore the ominous and fearful title, **KILLING NO MURDER!**

After a long pause, during which, though seated, he still watched with an acute and anxious ear for a recurrence of the sound which had disturbed him, he again took up the pamphlet, and with a painful and intense fixedness of study, that marked the harrowing interest he took in its minutest arguments, perused its closely-printed pages.

Midnight had long passed ere he finished the perusal. With a deep sigh he closed and laid down the pamphlet—a sigh, not of regret but of relieved suspense, such as men heave when the catastrophe of some exciting tragedy is over.

“The villain!” he exclaimed. “The perilous and subtle villain!—Damnable arguments—

accursed perversion of the talents and the intellect, which God giveth unto man for good !”

He rose and paced the apartment to and fro, with steps now faltering and slow, now hurried, short, and rapid !

“And my own muster-roll, he says, contains the names of those who burn to emulate the glory of the younger Brutus—who do aspire to the honour of delivering their country—and by what—what but my secret murder !”

His brow became more gloomy than before, and yet again after a little space, it kindled with its ancient animation.

“A lie !” he cried aloud and in a tone of triumph, “I do believe a lie !—a wicked and malignant lie ! framed but to break my rest !—It cannot be—it cannot—that my brave fellows—my own ironsides—my followers in a hundred battles, it cannot be that *they* can be aught but true and loyal ! And yet,” he went on, the momentary gleam of spirit fading, “it doth crave wary walking ! ay ! and as Milton would say in his classic tongue, *fas est et ab hoste*

doceri! But I will watch—yea! with my sword drawn, and my light burning—surely the Lord of Hosts will shield his servant from the midnight dagger, as from the open-smiting sword! I will trust no man!—No! not one! Harrison hath looked cold on me of late, and prated much of Ehud and of Saul! and Fleetwood thwarts me! Hacker, who was my friend, is now my bitter foe! And they have dared to liken me to Ahab, and to cry, ‘Ha! ha! Hast thou slain, and dost thou take possession?’ And Ormond hath come over, as I learn to-day on another Syndercombe and Sexby business!—The snares are set—set I say, on every side!—pitfalls are digged for my feet, and arrows whetted privily against me! and wherefore?—They cannot say that I have wronged one man in England—that I have wrung one penny from their purses, or shed one drop of blood, save in due course of law. They cannot charge me with bloodthirstiness, for I have been long-suffering and merciful—ay! even to a fault!—but I will be so now no longer—Slingsby must come to trial, ay and Hewet—and if condemned,

as the Lord liveth they shall die ! die as murderers and common stabbers—die, I say, soul and body ! They cannot say that England is not free, and powerful, and happy as never was she heretofore ! and yet they hate me !—ay and take council for my death !—and poison all hearts—even of my own friends against me ! and ‘ I shall perish,’ this base fellow prophesieth, ‘ like dung from off the earth’—and they that look upon my greatness, shall ask of me, ‘ Where is he ?’ ”

He paused in his distempered walk, and falling on his knees, burst into a passion of loud sobs and tears.

“ My God,” he cried, “ my God, why hast thou thus forsaken me ? Oh yield not up thy servant to the power of the ungodly, nor suffer the blasphemers to prevail against him. For surely it is thou—thou, Lord—who hast thrust on me this undesired greatness ; who hast compelled me, though reluctant and rebellious, to wear these trappings of authority—when as thou knowest—even thou, who knowest all things—far rather had I dwelt by a woodside and

tended sheep, than been the ruler of this stiff-necked and ungrateful generation. But thou hast done this violence to my affections, thou hast disposed of thy servant for the best in thine own sight, as from the beginning it was written down—yea! thou didst send thy minister to warn him of thy pleasure, when but a child, foolish, and unregenerate, and a slave to sin, thou didst redeem me from the power of Satan, and sure I was in grace—and he that is in thy grace once can never more relapse! And by my hand thou didst strike down the man Charles Stuart, putting it nightly and by day into my soul, ‘thou shalt not suffer him to live’,—and thou hast set me up, not for my pleasure nor at my request, but at thine own singular especial choice, for the advancement of thy cause, the welfare and the safety of thy church! And thou hast made me, as thou promisedst of yore—though not a king, but **THE FIRST IN ENGLAND!** and yet, thou dost abandon now thy servant—thou dost yield up thy true and faithful one, who for thy cause hath yielded up his all, to the delusions of the enemy

—the power of the evil one!—I ask not, is this merciful?—but is this just, O Lord?—Thou knowest well, how I have served thee, neither grudgingly nor with eyeservice—but in all purity and truth of spirit—and now, even now, Lord, when thou hast, as it seems forgotten me, I turn to thee alone for aid, to thee for succour and for justice! Let me not perish utterly—let not my blood, which has flowed ever for thy cause freely, be spilt by a base stabber!—Let me not be cast forth from the high-place whereon thou hast seated me, as a thing worthless and despised; but let me die, when thou hast done with me, in fulness of my fame, either upon my death-bed, thence passing peaceably into thy presence, or gallantly upon my charger's back amid the blare of trumpets.”

A step was heard without—a low tap at the door—instantly he rose from his knees holding the bible, which he had opened as he commenced his wild, and in some respects, impious prayer, in one hand, while with the other he grasped the hilt of the short massy sword beside him.

“Enter,” he said in a stern calm voice, and at the word one of his body-guard stepped in, announcing that a stranger was below, craving to speak privately on matters of great import with his highness.

“What like is he?” Oliver asked sharply. “A stranger, ha! Is he a tall pale man, with a deep scar on his right cheek, a mantle of blue broadcloth with a red cape, a slouched hat and red feather?”

“Even so—please your highness,” replied the soldier.

“And doth he wear his right hand gloved, resting upon the hilt of a long tuck, and three rings on the fingers of his left?”

“Of a truth I observed not,” he began—

“Begone then instantly—demand his name—not that it matters—but mark his hands, I tell thee—they should be as I tell thee. On the forefinger of the left a plain gold hoop, and a large seal-ring of cornelian, with a small guard of jet upon the second. If it be so—say to him, I will go now no further in that matter, but will send one to confer with him at

three hours past noon to-morrow, in the place which he wots of. If it be *not* as I say to you, secure him on the peril of your life, and have him away forthwith to the gate-house! But in neither case trouble me any more this night. Begone!”

As the soldier left the room, he muttered something to himself inaudibly—drew out no fewer than three pistols from different parts of his attire, looked closely to the flints and priming, extinguished all the lights save one, locked, double-locked and barred the outer door—then raised the tapestry in a corner of the room, opened a panel in the wainscoting, and gliding through it into a devious passage in the thickness of the wall, stole like a guilty thing to a remote bedchamber, different from that in which he had slept the preceding night, known only to one old and trusted servitor.

CHAPTER II.

Perchance she died in youth : it may be bowed
With woes far heavier than the ponderous tomb
That weigh'd upon her gentle dust, a cloud
Might gather o'er her beauty, and a gloom
In her dark eye, prophetic of the doom
Heaven gives its favourites—an early death.

Childe Harold.

THE power, the wealth, and the prosperity of England daily and almost hourly increased. The ravages of war had long since disappeared from her deep velvet pastures and her happy homes. Every religion was endured, except when its professors intermeddled in state matters ; all parties, whether cavalier, or presbyterian, or fifth monarchist, shared equally the law's protection, alike relied on the Pro-

tector's evenhanded justice. The arts and sciences were more encouraged, learned and polished scholars were esteemed at the court of Oliver in higher and more just repute; morality was more rewarded, licentiousness and vice more frowned down, than ever they had been before.

Nor, though the court was rigid almost to excess in morals, was its decorum chilled by any touch of jealous puritanical moroseness. All innocent amusements were admitted and enjoyed freely, Cromwell himself keeping a stud of race-horses, and labouring to promote in all things lawful, not the mere welfare but the happiness and comfort of his meanest subject. No Christian sect was hindered in its worship or observances; even the trampled and scorned Israelite finding an advocate and friend in that great man, who went infinitely far in toleration, beyond—not his own age alone, but most liberal usages of the most tolerant of modern nations.

Still did *his* cares, his griefs, and his perplexities but multiply. No success was enough

to please, no general prosperity enough to satiate, the people, craving eternally something new—losing the tangible realities of present, in the dim longings after future happiness—forgetting benefits conferred—ungrateful for past merits—light-headed, fickle, and false-hearted,

Day after day new plots broke out ; and though they burst all harmlessly—the veteran bearing still, as it would seem, a charmed life—every detected scheme, punished or pardoned, left its deep sting behind. Cromwell's existence was no longer healthful—his spirit was no longer, as of yore, elastic and storm-riding as the eagle's pinion. His days were spent in bitter, because thankless, labours—his nights in agonizing apprehensions.

It was not that he trembled—it was not that a vile and dastard fear of death shook his soul from its eminence—it was not that he would have doubted any more, to hurl himself in open strife upon the deadliest hazard, now, when the monarch of the land, than when he fought a simple colonel of the ironsides—a theme of dread to others—himself dreading

nothing! But it was the suspense—the doubt—the inability to harbour trust or confidence in any of those nearest to his person—the gnawing, heart-consuming sense of being undervalued, dealt with ungratefully, wronged, hated, and betrayed. Still in the prime of intellectual manhood, his strong form was bowed and feeble; his hair, once dark as the raven's wing, thin, weak, and gray; his piercing eye down-cast, and veiled, and his whole aspect that of a man worn out even by his own success, spiritless, and heart-broken.

Parliament after parliament, convoked to settle the provisions of the nation, rebelled against his power, running, as had their predecessors, wild on abstruse religious doctrines, and anxious to plunge all things once more into anarchy, by striving to work out their frantic phantasies of perfect and unchangeable republics. Each after each he was compelled, not for his own sake merely, but for England's, which else they would have assuredly hurled again into the abyss of civil discord, to break up and dissolve them.

Nothing could crush the tameless hardihood with which he bore up, nerved by their very pressure, against burdens, to a slighter intellect wholly unbearable—conspiracies of enemies, false-heartedness of friends, treasons and anarchy at home, insults and wars abroad. All yielded to the active vigour with which he sprang to grapple them; but by that very vigour was his own mighty spirit, like a bow overstrained by too long tension, despoiled of its own strength, its pliability, its power of renewed exertion.

The capture of the rich West Indian isles—the persecutions of the Vaudois remitted at the first hint of his potential voice—the all-important port of Dunkirk, so long the secret aim of England's politic ambition, ceded to his victorious arms—cast a bright gleam, indeed, on his declining years; but it was like the last effort of the wintry sunshine, that gilds, but leaves no impress of its glory, on the snow-mantled earth.

A nearer sorrow, a more domestic grief, was destined to wear through the last link of the

corroding chain—a mere affliction, such as befalls each father of a family many times in a life, and for the most leaves but slight traces even on minds less firmly moulded, annihilated the gigantic energies of that great master-spirit which had, throughout its mortal course, met nothing that could cope with it, nothing that had not been subdued—enslaved—and overwhelmed by its indomitable will. Elizabeth, his best beloved daughter, a woman of invaluable worth—modest, and delicate, and feminine, and gentle ; yet of a character the most decisive—a principle the most undeviating—a permanence and rectitude of purpose, the most immovable—and above all an influence on her father, the most peculiar and impressive—lay wasting on a bed of mortal sickness.

Throughout the whole of his broad realms—those realms wherein the sweet and calm home-affections have ever flourished the most greatly—there lived not any father, more kind, solicitous, forbearing, and devoted in his paternal love, than the unconquered victor—the merciless avenger—the stern judge—the regicide—

the ruler! Hard as he was abroad, cold and unbending in all outward show, in his domestic hours none were more warm than he, more playful, or affectionate.

Thus constituted toward all his children, the dearest to his feelings, as the most prized and valued in his judgment, was Elizabeth; who, now consumed by a mortal malady, was waning, hourly before his eyes. She was the only one of all his family, the only one of all his friends save Edgar Ardenne, who had dared ever to remonstrate with him during the upward course of his ambition. She had confronted many a time his sophistry with that most sound of all philosophies, the pure creed of the Christian; she had rebuked his zealous and fanatic superstitions with regulated and sincere religion; she had accused him of that restless and insatiate ambition, which she perceived, or fancied she perceived, to be the instigator and the planner, it might be unsuspected even by himself, of all his darker actions. She had rebuked him during the trial—she had besought him on her bended knees before the execution of the iKng,

to spare, not his crowned victim only, but his own deathless fame—his own immortal soul. Her wishes set at naught, her prayers unheeded, she had not once—no not for one brief moment—complained, or murmured, or revolted!—She had not once reproached him, with that which it was now too late to remedy, but she had ever been the soother of his disquiet mind. When fits of his accustomed hypochondriasm had overcome him with remorse and terror, and visions ominous of woe, she had been ever his calm monitress, inculcating a milder and a holier creed—exhorting him to penitence, as the sole path to pardon and to peace.

It was strange that now, in his most lordly plenitude of power, the two sympathies which he most keenly felt were toward the only two of human beings, who had seen through—perceived the earliest, and opposed the latest, the most darling objects of his soul. Abandoned now by all—the leader, revered but not loved by his followers—the monarch, self-upheld above rebellious subjects—the master, flattered and courted and perhaps betrayed—he clung

with a sharp painful yearning, as to the only feeling of his heart entirely pure and unmixed with aught worldly, to his affection for Elizabeth, and his regret for Ardenne.

Never, since he had fixed his firm seat on the bloody throne of Charles, had his most cherished daughter been what she was in his more innocent and humbler days. Her smile was as sweet, yet it was now no longer joyous; her cheek lost its roses, and her form its roundness; a glassy film veiled her soft eye; and he—the father—saw it, and knew, yet could not reconcile himself to the approaching woe. He felt himself to be (unutterable anguish!) the slayer of his chosen child! And seeing, knowing, feeling all this—it was his lot to deal the last blow to her gentle being—to launch the last shaft that should ever rankle in her bosom with the envenomed barbs of mortal sorrow.

Hewet, who with Sir Henry Slingsby, had on most positive unquestionable proof been condemned for conspiracy against the power and life of Oliver,—whom party prejudice cannot deny to have been guilty of the intent to kill—

an intent hindered only by premature discovery of their plot—nor the most jealous scrutiny discover to have been otherwise than justly executed,—had been the preacher on whose ministry she had for many years attended ; had united her to Claypole by the service of the church ; had been her friend, her comforter, her teacher ; and looking on him only in these amiable and endearing lights, Elizabeth forgot to view him as the intended murderer of her father—argued in his behalf, half-justified his crime under the plea of loyalty to his true King, prayed zealously and piteously for the remission of this punishment, and finding all her supplications vain, mourned over him with so intense and terrible a storm of grief that it half-overcame her intellects, and quite wore out her frail and fading body.

With a dull apathy Oliver heard at first that her life was despaired of. No sign of sorrow was displayed, scarcely of sense or feeling ; but after a short space came the revulsion, the breaking up of all the vain restraints of pride and stoicism and man's affected hardihood ; the

loosing of the floodgates of the soul ; the awful vehement outpourings of a strong man's despair.

From that day forth he left not her bedside, neither by day nor yet by night, tending her with all a woman's care and more than all a woman's love ; soothing her every phantasy—feigning to be, or it may be persuading himself also that he would be, all she could wish him—praying and weeping with her.

Nothing could be more beautiful, more pious, or more touching, than the conduct of that gray-haired usurper, mourning as one that had no hope beyond her grave, beside his daughter's deathbed. But wretched as the consolation would have been, to have caught on his lips her last expiring sigh, to have felt reflected on his own the last glance of her glazing eyes—that wretched consolation was denied to him ;—for as the body of his sweet child wasted, so did her mind wane likewise ; and, for many days before the termination of her sufferings, she would at times burst into fits of the most frantic and insane delirium.

These, as the time of her decease drew nearer, became more and more vehement and frightful ;

and it was strange that she, whose pains had ever seemed less bitter, or at least more easily endured when her hand rested in her father's—now at the sight of him she loved so dearly, nay at the mere tones of his voice, or his suppressed and cautious footstep, started at once into the most furious paroxysms.

“Blood! blood!” she would shriek, till the whole pile of Hampton court rang with her awful ravings—“I float, I smother in a sea—a sea of human blood!—Who comes?—who comes?—red with the gore of monarchs—red with the slaughter of the saints?—Father?—*not* father—no—no—Oh, not *my* Father!”—and then again she would take up the cry—“Blood! blood!”—Struggling and wrestling on her couch, as if amid the weltering waves, till those who watched about her were wellnigh distraught with terror, and till the boldest of her medical attendants in the most positive terms insisted on the absence of the despairing father from the sick chamber of his child.

He withdrew silently, and with a quiet patience, that perfectly astonished those ac-

quainted with the imperiousness of Cromwell's will. But he withdrew only from her death-bed, to lie down upon his own.

Shattered before by the incessant cares, which he for many months had undergone, the whole weight of the government resting upon his single shoulders; relaxed by nervousness, suspicion, superstition, and remorse; this last blow broke him down. His old complaint, the ague—which had attacked him first in Scotland, and shaken, if it had not actually undermined his constitution—returned upon him with redoubled violence, and in a few days brought him down to the very threshold of the grave.

But it was not, in truth, the ailment only of the corporeal shell—it was the intolerable burden of “that perilous stuff, that weighs upon the heart.” Had the mind been at ease, the sickness of the body would have been of small account. “The sorrows written on the brain,” were not to rage out, nor the stuffed bosom to be cleansed. The scabbard, fretted long ago, was now at length worn out by the keen

weapon that lay hid within it; the earthen jar was burst by the inscrutable workings of the spirit it contained; the pharos was consumed by the same fire which had, for many a year, been the sole agent of its glory.

CHAPTER III.

Then happy, low, lie down !
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown !

King Henry IV. Part II.

The garlands wither on your brow,
Then boast no more your mighty deeds ;
Upon death's purple altar now
See where the victor victim bleeds.
All hands must come
To the cold tomb ;
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.

SHIRLEY.

ON a sweet August evening the streets were fast growing thin, as the many-tongued and busy crowd that had chafed and fretted throughout the day, like waves, in every channel of the great metropolis, gradually

passed away to seek for relaxation in their peaceful homes from all the cares, anxieties, and sorrows, which had increased to them the heat and burden of their daily labours. A few, however, might be still seen standing in scattered groups in the shadowy thoroughfares, some hurrying, as belated men, with hasty footsteps homeward, some loitering aimlessly along as if to catch the pleasant coolness of the evening breeze.

Among these groups was one, if it could properly be termed so, consisting of two persons, the one a man perhaps a little past the middle age, with soft and pensive features, and long light-brown hair waving in loose and natural curls over the collar of his plain gray doublet; the other a boy, richly attired as might beseem the page of a high family, upon whose shoulder the elder person leaned somewhat heavily with his left hand, while with the right he moved a staff of ebony before him as if to feel his way, for he was blind, although no scrutiny could have discovered any speck or blemish in the clear but cold gray eyes

which, seeming to see all things, were in truth sealed up in rayless night.

No words were interchanged between the pair as they passed onward to Whitehall, at a pace suitable to the infirmity of the chief personage; but when they reached the palace-gate, the page spoke shortly in a low voice to the sentinel on duty—who was engaged in parleying with a gentleman on horseback of military air, and noble bearing. The blind man was already passing in, when suddenly the stranger, who, it seemed, had been refused admittance, cast his eye on the boy's companion, and instantly addressed him.

“Well met—and in good season!” he exclaimed, “if my eyes play me not a trick, my excellent friend Milton.” — The blind man's countenance flashed with a joyous light, as he replied, “Well met, indeed! Well met, and welcome, after long years of absence; for sure I am mine ears deceive me not, though it be one, whose accents I but little counted should ever greet them more, Sir Edgar Ardenne!”

“It is indeed!” answered the horseman.

“After long years of wandering in the transatlantic wilds, I have at length turned my feet homeward; I landed only three days since at Portsmouth, and riding with all diligence, have but this hour arrived in London. Right glad am I to see one of the two sole persons, with whom I have now any ties on earth, so early, and, if I may judge from appearances, so well in health.”

“I thank you,” answered the poet, grasping affectionately his friend’s hand, “I thank you heartily, by His great mercy, and, beside my one infirmity, I am sound, as I trust, both mind and body! But, tell me—for in that I see you here, I judge who is the other person with whom you still esteem yourself united—can I do aught for you—I am, you know, *his* secretary?”

“I would, if it were possible,” Sir Edgar answered, “see the Protector—I owe him some amends, and would fain tell him, how highly I esteem the fruits of his good government at home, and his wise policy abroad. The soldier, here on duty, tells me that he is ill at

ease, and has denied me entrance. I trust he is not seriously diseased ?”

Milton shook his head, and the expression of his countenance, so joyful at the recognition of his friend, altered perceptibly.

“ He is indeed much ailing—we trust not mortally; but his old ague hath returned to him, and what with that, and deep anxiety for Lady Claypole’s health, and over labouring in the service of the state, he is reduced so greatly that his physicians *fear*. Yet is he marvelously held up by faith in the Lord; and all his chaplains have assurance, strongly impressed upon their hearts, that he shall live, not die! I doubt not he will see you, and forthwith; for often hath he spoken of you lately, and as of one whom he once cherished greatly, and greatly regrets always !”

Without further words, Milton bade the page send some one straightway to lead hence Sir Edgar’s horse, and to desire the chamberlain acquaint his highness that John Milton was below with an old friend and comrade, Sir Edgar Ardenne.

After a few minutes, which the friends consumed pleasantly in slight, though interesting conversation, a private of the guard relieved Sir Edgar of his horse, and shortly afterward an officer of the Protector's household made his appearance, and informing them that his highness was engaged at present in his meditations with worthy master Peters and others of his chaplains, but that he shortly would find leisure to receive them, ushered them with no little courtesy into an antechamber, as Milton whispered to his friend, of the same suite which Oliver at present occupied.

Nearly an hour passed away before they received any further word; but each of those congenial spirits had so much to hear and narrate to the other, that the moments did not lag, and it was with a feeling nearly akin to wonder that they heard the clocks striking ten just as the chamberlain announced to them the wish of the Protector to see them in his chamber.

They entered, and propped up by cushions, on his feverish bed, care-worn, and hollow-

cheeked, and heavy-eyed, and with a wild expression of anxiety and pain on his thin features, there lay the mighty being, from whom Sir Edgar had last parted in the pride of manhood, in the plenitude of power, in the indomitable confidence of his own unresisted faculties.

On one side of his pillow sat Hugh Peters, his familiar chaplain, a stern and gloomy-looking fanatic, intently occupied as it would seem in studying his pocket-bible. On the other side sat his wife, a lady of majestic bearing although wanting somewhat in the easy dignity which is acquired only by residence from childhood upward in courtly circles; also two of her daughters, the ladies Falconbridge and Rich, who had been summoned from their sister's deathbed, by an express bearing tidings of their father's dangerous seizure.

An air of deep gloom pervaded the apartment, and melancholy sat like a cloud upon the comely faces of the younger ladies. His wife repressed all outward demonstrations of disquiet, in obedience to the wish of Oliver,

who pertinaciously maintained that full assurance had been vouchsafed him from on high, that he should yet be spared, until his usefulness should be completed to the Lord, and to the people whom he had been placed in trust to govern for their good.

Calm, as he was, and self-restrained at all times, Ardenne could not so far command his voice as to prevent its trembling, as he addressed his old commander; and tears rolled slowly down his cheek, as he beheld the ravages which grief and time and terror had wrought on his expressive features and Herculean form. But Cromwell saw not the tears, nor noticed the unusual tone of Edgar's salutation. As he perceived his chosen officer, a mighty gleam of exultation flashed over his worn lineaments, and his pale lip was curled with honest triumph. He well remembered, and had often pondered on, the last words he had heard from the sincere and conscientious man who stood beside him. He knew his former doubts; he had interpreted aright his silence, his protracted absence; and now, that

he had sought him out unsummoned, he felt the proud conviction, that this man's mind was altered—that this late visit was a confession of his error—a token of his approbation and goodwill. All this rushed on the dying ruler's soul at once; and in the midst of pain, and doubt, and peril, he exulted—exulted, that the only man in his whole realm whose disapproval he had dreaded, and whose applause he valued, had by this long-delayed approach to reconciliation sealed his avowal that in ruling England, *he* had governed not for his own aggrandizement, but for his people's welfare.

“Ha! Edgar Ardenne,” he cried in tones resembling more his ancient voice of power than any which for many a mournful day he had sent forth. “Though late, I greet thee—I rejoice to see thee—yea! as a trusty friend—a valued and long-lost companion! Verily hath it relieved me of wellnigh half my ailment, to grasp again this honest hand of thine, to hear once more the accents of a voice, which no man ever heard to utter aught save words of truth and honour. I thank thee,

good John Milton, that thou hast brought to me this — I had wellnigh said — this son. Surely, though not a prodigal, for him shall there be slain a fatted calf, and that right early!”

Again Ardenne was much affected, so much that Oliver perceived it, and pressing Edgar’s hand, which he had still retained in his own burning grasp, “Think not,” he said, “so gravely of this matter; ’tis but a little sickness—a paltry fever. Surely we two have ridden on such real perils, and ridden, though I say it with an unblenching heart and a calm brow, that it is not for us to quake and tremble in the soul, if that a petty ague shake these our mortal sinews. I tell thee, man, the Lord hath heard our prayer—mine, and these holy men’s—HE hath yet need of me in mine appointed place on earth—nor will he yet yield up his servant into the jaws of death. I tell thee *years* are yet before us—years full of usefulness, and happiness, and glory—and we will part no more—Thou wilt not leave me any more, Sir Edgar?”

“Not on this side the grave,” Ardenne replied. “When last we parted, I was—I own it—blinded!—blinded by wrongful and unmerited suspicion. I thought you selfish, and ambitious—I foresaw that you *must* be the ruler of this land, and I fancied that to be so had been the aim and object of your life—that you had wrested circumstance to your advantage—made time and tide your slaves. I own, I was in error—and with me, to own is to repair. The elder Charles was, I confess, unfit to reign, unfit to *live*!—for had he lived, we must have warred with him for ever. He dead—there was no choice save between you, and a republic—and pardon me, that I believed it your intent to seize the reins of government at once on the King’s death; and that, believing so, I deemed your agency in that great trial as mere deceit and fraud. Justly however—honestly—you suffered the experiment to work; and had the people been—as in my poor opinion never people were, nor will be, while this universe exists—capable of self-government, fit to elect their rulers, or willing

to submit to laws of their own making, they had been still self-governed, and—as they term it—free! I thank God that they are so no longer. Better—far better—if it must be so—*one* tyrant, than ten thousand. But you, sir, are no tyrant; but the sagest, boldest, and most prosperous monarch that ever yet has governed Britons. Dreaded abroad, honoured at home, you have indeed, as you did prophesy to me long years ago—you have indeed caused the mere name of Englishman to be as greatly and as widely honoured, as ever was the style of antique Roman. You know that I nor flatter, nor deceive; but always speak straight onward my own thoughts. I owed you reparation for unjust suspicion—and I have made it.—So far then we are quits! Now then—as to the man who has made England mightier, freer, happier than ever she has been before—as to the undisputed and only fitting ruler of the soil, I tender you my service and allegiance!”

“ True friend!” cried Cromwell. “ You, and you only, have judged of me dispassionately,

and have judged aright—the boldness of your former censure confirms the frankness of your present praise. *You* only dared upbraid me with ambition—*you* only envy not the greatness which has been thrust upon me. Surely, could England have been free and tranquil and at peace, never had I sat on this thorny eminence. But the Lord willed it so—and as he wills, it must be. I thank you, and most cordially do I accept your service, and frankly do I tell you, it will avail me much;—for you I *may* trust; and save only you, and excellent John Milton, I know not any other. The heathen have come round about me, and digged pits, and woven snares on every side. Traitors are in my guard—false prophets in my chamber—spies and assassins are every where—daggers around my pillow—and ratsbane in my cup! Yet, by the Lord's help, have I set them all at nought; and confident am I that he will not abandon me. Truly of all his mercies, none do I esteem more wonderful than this, that he hath given me once more in you a friend after mine own heart, and a faithful coadjutor!”

The veteran's eye kindled as he spoke ; and his cheek wore a healthful colour, and his voice sounded with all its wonted firmness. It was indeed, as he himself had worded it, as if one half his ailment had been banished by this most opportune and unexpected visit from the man, whom perhaps *alone* he truly loved and honoured.

There is no truth more certain, than that those most practised in deceit themselves, most sensibly perceive, and fully honour, the absence of deceit in others ; and it may be that Cromwell, who was unquestionably in some sort, though for the most part self-deceived, a deceiver of the world, admired Ardenne for that very frankness of bold honour, which he himself possessed not. It may be also, that misguided by his wild fanatical opinions, he at one time, believing himself the object of immediate inspirations, looked on his own worst actions as his brightest deeds ; and at another, when the dark fit succeeded to the fancied vision, brooded despondently over his own misdoings till he conceived himself entirely reprobate and

outcast. Doubtful and wavering, then, in his own sense of right, in his own conscience, how natural that he should draw deep comfort to his unquiet soul, from the assurance that a man, whom he knew to have perused his heart more narrowly than any living being, and to have judged of him at one time with such harshness as to abandon him, now looked on his career with an approving eye—now bade him hail as the protector of his country's honour—now tendered his allegiance, and professed his willingness to follow, wherever he should lead. How natural that he should feel this as a confirmation of what he would fain believe—as a proof to himself of his own half-suspected honesty.

Such were, it is most probable, the causes of the powerful effect produced on Oliver by the return of Ardenne; and truly, it was wellnigh supernatural. Till a late hour of the night he kept him by his side, conversing cheerfully, nay almost joyously, on his own future prospects, on the advancement of his country's interests abroad, on the diffusion of intelligence, and of religion, at home. And Ardenne, — feeling that he had wronged Cromwell in his first

suspicion, when he expected him to seize the sceptre immediately upon the death of Charles, convinced, that when he *had* usurped that sceptre, he was entirely justified in wresting it from the vile faction, which was plunging England into misery and madness; perceiving that he had in all things used his acquired power with wisdom, justice, and moderation, for the present welfare and the future glory of his people,—Ardenne, we say, had rushed perhaps too hastily to the conclusion, that Cromwell had acted in all things, and from the first, on motives purely patriotic. In any case he responded to Cromwell's cheerful mood; and amid pleasant memories of those past evils which it is often pleasurable to contemplate when we are safe and happy, and amid high anticipations for the future, the hours wore onward; and midnight was announced from many a steeple, and yet that friendly conclave thought not of separation.

At that dead hour of the night a guarded step was heard without the door, and an attendant, entering, called out the Lady Cromwell.

After an absence of some small duration she returned, far paler than before, and with the

traces of fresh tears upon her cheek ; and whispered Lady Falconbridge, who in turn left the chamber for a while, and coming back again called out her sister.

It was most strange, that although this dumb show continued for so long a time that Ardenne, and even the blind poet, perceived that something must be seriously amiss, Cromwell did not notice it. He was, however, so much reinvigorated—his spirits had so wondrously regained their elasticity—that he talked on, and smiled, and even jested, until so deep a gloom had fallen on his auditors, infected by the evident and hopeless sorrow, engraved in characters so legible upon the wobegone and pallid face of Lady Cromwell, that he could not continue longer in his happy ignorance.—

“Ha!—what is this?” he cried, looking around from face to face in blank bewilderment—“What is to do? speak out—I say”—he gasped—his voice, which had but lately been so strong, now scarcely audible—“Ardenne, speak out—*you* never have deceived me.”

And then, before he could receive an answer, had it been possible for Edgar to have answered, as his eye met his wife’s—“I see,” he said—

“I see”—in tones resigned, but inexpressibly sad and heart-broken. “Elizabeth is dead! my daughter, oh my daughter!”—

Gradually he sank down from the pillows upon which he had been raised in a half-sitting posture, and though he struggled hard still to maintain his wonted and severe composure, the effort was too great for his enfeebled frame. For a few seconds’ space, he was successful; then stretching out his wasted arms, while his teeth chattered in his head, and all his limbs shook as if palsied, and the large scalding tears poured down his hollow cheeks—“My God,” he cried, “my God, why—why hast thou forsaken me?”—

Then pulling the coverlet about his temples, he turned his face to the wall, and burst into an agony of sobs, and groans, and fierce convulsions, that haunted Edgar’s ears long after he had quitted the apartment of the bereaved and dying parent.

CHAPTER IV.

Beneath

His fate the moral lurks of destiny ;

His day of double victory and death

Beheld him win two realms, and (happier !) yield his breath.

Childe Harold.

It was the third day of September—the anniversary of Worcester and of Dunbar—the lucky day of Cromwell—the day marked out, as he believed, by planetary influence—the day whereon he never yet had undertaken aught, but he therefrom had reaped a golden harvest ! And it would have appeared indeed, to any who beheld the conflict of the elements that day, that something of great import to the nations was portended ;—for, at the earliest dawn, the skies were overspread with a deep lurid crimson, and the sun rose, although there was no mist on the horizon, like a huge ball

of heated metal, dim, rayless, and discoloured; and as he rose, the unchained winds went forth, raving and howling through the skies with such strange fury, as not the oldest men could liken or compare it to aught they had themselves beheld, or heard of from their fathers. The largest trees were uprooted from their earthfast roots, and hurled like straws before the whirlwind; chimneys and turrets toppled and crashed incessantly; cattle were killed in open fields by the mere force of the elements; the seas were strewn with wrecks; the lands were heaped with ruin.

Nor did these prodigies occur in one realm only, or in one degree of latitude. From north to south, from east to west, the same strange tempest swept over every shore of Europe, and at the selfsame hour, marking its path with desolation. The same blast dashed the vessels of the hardy Norsemen against their sterile rocks, and plunged Italian argosies into the vexed depths of the Adriatic—the same blast shivered the pine-tree on the Dofrefells, and the cypress by the blue waves of the Bosphorus!

Thunder, and rain, and hail, and the con-

tending fury of the winds, shifting and veering momentarily from point to point round the whole compass, and the incessant streams of "fire from heaven" united to make up a scene of horror such as the Christian world never perhaps witnessed, either before or since. And amid that strange din and warfare, the parting soul of him, who had so swayed the mightier influence of human passions to his will, who had so ridden fearlessly through the more murderous, if less appalling, strife of human warfare, was struggling to take wing—to flee away and be at rest.

On the preceding night, all Cromwell's physicians had pronounced his cure impossible—his dissolution speedy and certain; for since the death of his beloved daughter he had not closed an eye by night, or enjoyed any intermission from the recurring fits of ague and of fever. Yet still, his preachers buoyed him up with their insane and impious blasphemies; asserting that the Lord, even the Lord who cannot lie, had promised them that this his servant should recover; and even when the mortal pains had yielded to the weakness of

approaching death, they still forbade him to fear aught, or to make any preparation.

On the preceding evening, seeing the tribulation and alarm depicted on the anxious features of his wife, he took her kindly by the hand, and said, "Fear not for me, my love, nor think that I shall die; I am sure of the contrary."

"Oh! sir," said Ardenne in reply, who, since their reconciliation, had scarcely left his pillow for a moment, "oh! believe it not!—They are no friends to you, who would deceive you any longer. Your trust must be on High, for you have wellnigh done with earth. Not one of your physicians believes you can outlive to-morrow. They that would tell you otherwise have lost their reason."

"Say not," he instantly replied, "that I have lost my reason. I tell you the plain truth. I know it from authority far better than any you can have from Galen or Hippocrates. It is the answer of the Lord himself to our prayers; not to mine only, but to those of others—others who have an interest with HIM more close and intimate than I have. Go on,

then, cheerfully, banishing all sorrow from your looks. Ye may have skill in the nature of things, yet nature can do more than all physicians put together; and God is far more above nature!"

It was in vain that Edgar, who could not endure that he should go hence in this wild and terrible delusion, argued with him, professing his sincerity with tears, and urging on him the necessity of immediate preparation, unless he would rush headlong into his Maker's presence, unhouseled and unshriven!—It was in vain that he remonstrated with the fanatical and blinded monitors, who to the last assured their victim of speedy restoration. By Peters, Sterry, and the rest, Ardenne was rebuked as an unthinking carnal-minded person, setting at nought the intimations of the Holy one—a scoffer, and blasphemer!—and Cromwell was admonished to put from him one whose presence in his chamber might well draw down upon its inmate some dread manifestation of Divine displeasure. But to this Oliver objected so decidedly, that they dared urge it no further.

"He is sincere," he answered to their exhortations, "but in much error. The Lord

hath not vouchsafed to *him* the light which guides *our* footsteps—yet is he most sincere and pure, according to his lights;—and so—although those lights be darkened—more justified, it may well be, than *we*, who have more opportunities of grace, and less excuse for sin! He shall not leave me. Tush! tell me not—I say, he *shall* not! Begone, all ye—*he* shall alone be near me!”

His will was instantly obeyed, and through the livelong night Sir Edgar watched beside his bed; and on that night, for the first time since Lady Claypole’s death, did sleep visit his weary eyes:—but sleep how terrible!—not the soft nurse of nature, but its convulsion! As his eyes closed in slumber, the delusions, which he cherished while awake, forsook him, and death in all its terrors glared on him face to face. His features, bold, still, and firm, though pallid and emaciate, were frightfully distorted by the agonies of terror and despair,—the sweat stood in dark beaded bubbles on his brow, and his thin hair seemed, to the sight of the excited watcher, to bristle on his head;—his hands were cast abroad, like those of a man drowning, and the whole bed was shaken by the convulsive shivering of his limbs.

“Keep them away!” he cried, in words painfully clear and thrilling, “keep them away!—What would they with me? No! no!—I am not ready—I will *not*—do they not hear me say—I will *not* die!”

And he ground his teeth violently, and struggled as with persons striving to drag him down.

Appalled beyond expression, Sir Edgar touched him gently, and he awoke; but still unconscious and bewildered he continued for a moment to resist and mutter, “Avaunt! get thee behind me! for what have I to do with thee thou Evil one?”

Then, recognising Ardenne, he forced a feeble smile, and muttering something of a fearful dream, composed himself again to rest; and, after a few moments, was again asleep. But instantly again the vision came upon him; and this time his eyes were opened wide, and stared abroad as if he were awake.

“Away with it,” he gasped; “away with that blood-stained and headless trunk!—why dost thou glare on me, discrowned spirit, thou canst not say *I* judged thee?—King! King!—there be *no* kings in England—the *man*, the

man Charles Stuart!—Beseech me not, I say—*I* cannot save thee!—It falls! it falls! that deadly-gleaming axe!—Ha! ha! said I not so?—there be no kings in England!”

Again he woke, and once again after a little time he sunk into a perturbed and restless slumber, which lasted, although fitful and uneasy, until the morning cocks had crowed. Then, with a start that raised him from his pillow,

“Devil!” he muttered through his clenched teeth; “ha! devil, was it thou?—thou that didst break my childish sleep, telling me I should be the First in England—thou that didst plunge my stainless soul in blood—oceans of blood—my king’s—my people’s—my own child’s?—Blood! blood!”

He shrieked aloud, and once more Edgar touched him; but as he was aroused, unwilling to encounter or abash him, he feigned himself to sleep, and heard him say, “Happy, oh! innocent and happy!—lo! how serene he slumbers. But it was a dream—a foul dream only.”

For a time he kept silence, but once or twice groaned deeply; and after a little while

Ardenne beheld him through his half-shut lids raise himself on his knees, and with clasped hands, pour forth a prayer befitting rather, as Ludlow afterward observed when it was found transcribed among his papers, "a mediator's than a sinner's deathbed!"—"Lord," he exclaimed, "although I am a wretched and a miserable creature, I am in covenant with thee through grace; and I may, I *will*, come unto thee for thy people. Thou hast made me a mean instrument to do *them* good, and *thee* service; and many of them have set too high a value on me, though others wish and would be glad of my death. But, Lord, however thou dost dispose of me, continue to go on to do good for them. Give them consistency of judgment, one heart, and mutual love; and go on to deliver them, and with the work of reformation, and make the name of Christ glorious throughout the world. Teach those who look too much upon thy instruments, to depend more upon thyself. Pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm, for they are thy people too; and pardon the folly of this short prayer, for Jesus Christ his sake, and give us a good night if it be thy pleasure."

Having, to the unspeakable astonishment of Ardenne, who, when he saw him rise, expected a confession of his crimes, and an appeal for pardon, poured forth these strange ejaculations, he laid him down and slept a calm and as it seemed refreshing sleep, until the first beams of the lurid sun shone into the apartment. Then starting up again, "Hell!" he shrieked out, "hell hath got hold upon me! the pains of hell have compassed me!" and he would have leaped out of bed upon the floor, if Edgar had not caught him in his arms.

At the same moment the awful uproar of the tempest burst suddenly and without warning upon the terrified and reeling world. But the storm fell unheeded on the ears of Oliver, and of his sole attendant; both were too deeply moved, the one by the remembrance of his tremendous dreams, the other by compassion, pity, and dismay, to think of any thing external.

In a short time Oliver regained his wonted calmness, and making no allusion to the occurrences of the past night, Edgar disturbed him not by speaking of them. As the day now advanced, his wife, his children, some of his officers, and all his chaplains, crowded into his

chamber. He spoke to all, kindly and cheerfully; but Edgar saw at once that all the overweening confidence of the preceding day had left him; and, though the fanatics continued to rave in his ears, promising present health and future glory, he listened with indifference, and his eye no longer flashed at their bold prophecies, nor did he answer any thing, nor prophesy at all himself, though called on frequently throughout the day, by Peters, to say something to the Lord, and to make intercession.

For the most part he lay still upon his back, with his hands folded on his breast, and his face perfectly composed and calm; but twice or thrice a short quick spasm twitched the muscles of his mouth; and once he wrung his hands, perhaps unconsciously. He spoke but seldom, and then only in short sentences, evidently growing weaker every moment. Once he remarked upon the day—*his* anniversary—but, strange to tell, he noticed not at all the furious tempest, which shook the very palace-roof above him, and, saving in its lulls, drowned every sound of voice or motion.

Toward noon he dozed a little while, and on his waking called to Peters.

“Tell me,” he said, “I pray you—and on your life, here and hereafter, I charge you tell me truly—for, look you, ’tis a grievous thing and sinful to lie unto a man, situate like to me—can one who hath been once in grace, fall off by any means, and ever become reprobate thereafter, so as to peril his salvation?”

“Surely he cannot!” answered the fanatic. “He that is *once* in grace, can never more backslide, nor fall, nor even falter! all that he doth thereafter is of grace, and therefore holy! his life is precious—his salvation certain!”

“Soh!” answered the dying man, “I then am safe—for sure I am, that *once* I was in grace!”

Shocked beyond all expression, Edgar would fain have once again renewed his exhortations; but, just as he began, Cromwell asked for his family—embraced them one by one, and almost instantly sank into a lethargic stupor, from which no efforts of his now alarmed attendants could arouse him. At length, just as the clock was striking three, a louder crash of thunder than any of the claps which had rolled almost incessantly throughout the day, broke on the melancholy silence!

“Cannon!” he muttered faintly, as he woke,

the sound commingling with his recollections of the day. "Lambert, bring up the cannon! charge there! charge with your pikes, valiant and trusty Goff!"

"His mind is at Dunbar," whispered one of the military men to Ardenne. "But lo! wherefore do they torment him?"

The question was produced by a late effort on the part of some about his person, to induce the dying ruler to declare who should succeed him. To a direct straightforward question he gave no answer; then he was asked, should Richard be the next Protector? and a faint motion of his head—casual, as it seemed to Ardenne, and unmeaning—was construed to imply assent.

A little longer he gasped feebly without speaking. Another crash of thunder appeared to split the very firmament, and the blue flickering lightning fearfully glanced upon the dying soldier's pale stern features. They kindled in the glare, and the eye flashed, and the hand was waved aloft.

"On!" he exclaimed. "On, ironsides! Down with the sons of Zeruah!" Then, in a feebler tone, "Ha!" he continued, "have at thee! What again? Dismounted—oh! dismounted!"

Ho ! rescue—help—help ! Ardenne—lost !
lost !—Ardenne !—help !—resc—”

The sharp death-rattle cut short the unfinished word—the eyeballs glazed—the lifted hand sank nerveless—the jaw dropped. The strife was over !

There was a deep hush in the chamber, awfully solemn and impressive ! A woman’s sob first broke the spell—and then the voice of his first follower—his last friend.

“There passed the spirit of the greatest man, England has ever seen ! Peace to his soul ! His faults die with him !—but never—never, while the round world endures, shall his fame be forgotten, or the good he hath done his country, pass away. Weep, England, weep ! Your benefactor is no more—and I foresee much strife, much anarchy, much blood ! But he, who hath gone hence, hath sown the seed of thy prosperity, thy freedom, and thy glory ; and thou shalt reap the harvest, thou and thy sons for many a deathless age, when he who now is nothing—and I who mourn above him shall be dust rendered unto dust, and ashes unto ashes !”

THE END.



